

Thoroughly Equipped: A Disciple-Making Curriculum (DC) Weekly Devotions for DC Memory Verses: An Introduction

Welcome to the DC journey/adventure/challenge that you have signed onto. Please be prepared and know that this experience at times may feel like you are:

- Riding a roller coaster
- Training for a race/sports season
- Back in school

Also know that while this path will push you, persevering and sticking it out can lead to a greater sense of fulfillment. It will empower you to “connect people to **Jesus** and one another.”

Jesus is bold and underlined to emphasize what this path is all about. Working through DC may tempt you to “puff out your chest” and say “look at me.” Jesus warned of such people in the Bible- one group was the Pharisees.

“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God’s sight.” (Luke 16:13-15).

Being “Thoroughly Equipped” is not about you, we all must check our egos at the door. DC is more about what Jesus can do through us (and many times in spite of us).

About the author ...

Who I am is not important; what I am matters more. I strive daily to be a more completely and devoted follower of Christ. I am a DC graduate. I only say that to point out that as you read the following pages, I am writing from the perspective of someone who has been in your shoes.

Intro assignment: The weekly memory verses will challenge and even possibly overwhelm you. The point of this devotion book is to hopefully help relieve some of that anxiety and have you think through the question, “How does this week’s memory verse apply in my life/to this week’s DC study?”

Ask God to uncover the Bible verse that highlights where you are in life - your present spiritual journey - and write it down below:

DC 101 Week 1 Memory Verse

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever! Amen.” (2 Peter 3:18)

As I neared college graduation, Dean Cannon – one of my more memorable communications professors – so rightly pointed out that “graduation” is the wrong word we use in many of these situations. He suggested that “commencement” was a more appropriate word. He furthered his point by stating “graduation” makes it sound like such a finality, but “commencement” more accurately portrays a state where the learning should continue.

So too, you should be encouraged to “commence” (continue) your spiritual journey by embarking on this D.C. adventure. Maybe you are someone who is fairly new in your relationship to Jesus, or maybe you are someone who grew up in the church. Christ invites you to come as you are “[but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.](#)”

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Pray for God to give you patience, strength and courage for this 21-month journey. Also, ask Him to reveal obstacles that are in your path to fully being able to “[grow in the grace and knowledge ...](#)” during this journey.

Whatever obstacles He reveals to you, write them down below and add them to your regular prayer time:

DC 101 Week 2 Memory Verse

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10)

Growing up, I had dreams of playing pro tennis, basketball for the University of Louisville, and even wanted to be President of the United States.

While those dreams are natural when we are younger, reality usually sets in when we are older.

What about you? What did you dream of being when you were a child?

Even though many of us don’t realize our childhood fantasies coming true, discovering our God-led “calling” is much more important.

Don’t fret and have regrets about what wasn’t, but embrace the opportunities and possibilities of “... God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do’.

Doc Graham, a character from the movie “Field of Dreams’, said it best. His childhood fantasy was to play professional baseball in the mid-20th Century.

"Son, if I'd only been able to be a doctor for five minutes. Now that would have been a tragedy."

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Make a list of your childhood fantasies answering the question, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Then write the career path you have traveled in adulthood. Moving forward, meditate and ask God to reveal His guidance and will in your life by asking Him – “What are the “good works” you have “prepared in advance for (me) to do’?”

P.S. Also realize such “good works” may not involve a “professional” ministry position, but God may want you to serve as a “Fisher of Men” – ministering in your work place.

DC 101 Week 3 Memory Verse

“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

When you think of the word “made”, what image comes to mind?

For me, I think of:

- A ball of clay that has been turned on a potter’s wheel **made** into a plate or bowl.
- An artist’s masterpiece, for example, Leonardo Davinci who **made** the “Mona Lisa.”
- As a parent, when I ask, “Who **made** this mess?”
- When someone does something unexpectedly nice for me, “You **made** my day.”

With this devotion, I am drawn to the first two examples. Perfection is considered achieved in such classic artwork as a “Ming Dynasty Vase,” and also in the “Mona Lisa,” just to name a few possibilities. Such creations are considered priceless, definitely irreplaceable.

Now consider the example we have in Christ “... who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Christ is the ultimate example of perfection, sinless, the unblemished “Lamb of God.” He is definitely irreplaceable.

And just like con artists have tried to imitate/copy many classic works of art, so too have many others tried to imitate (replace) Christ.

Don’t fall for the imitation, fall in love with Jesus all over again “so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

This week’s application of the main memory verse: How often do we, as sin-filled creatures, try to pass as an “original” follower of Christ, when we may have been faking it, living in blatant sin? Ask for His forgiveness. Also, know that God wants to help. Ask him to strengthen your relationship with Him and point out areas you need to improve upon. Remember that our becoming more like Jesus is a lifelong commencement/transformation.

DC 101 Week 4 Memory Verse

“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”
(Galatians 5:16)

Why is it so easy living out the “desires of the sinful nature,” instead of “living by the Spirit”?

Murder and burglary are two such sins. However, the Bible also talks about lusting as a sin.

Many times such sin starts in the heart or mind. A seed of doubt or a thought may lead our mind to start planning, at least fantasizing. And that process can quickly lead into an irreversibly damaging action.

It's easy to “gratify the desires of the sinful nature” because many such actions give instant power and pleasure to us. However, those feelings are short-lived and many times replaced with long-range/eternal consequences, i.e. serving time in prison. Not to mention the tremendous feeling of guilt and regret that also usually occurs.

‘Living by the Spirit’ involves asking God for help. Trying to tackle our problems/issues alone really only leads to bigger problems. We are all sin-filled creatures. Our goal should be to each day commence to be more and more like Jesus.

This week's application of the main memory verse: The themes, “If it feels good, do it,” and “Worry about the consequences later” are embedded in our culture. Every day we are bombarded with such messages from what we watch, read and the people and places we are around. Ask God to reveal the changes you need to make to help you more easily “live by the Spirit.” Write down those changes below. Finally, commit to consciously stay away from/ make the changes you need to for the next month. As you continue this routine, it will be easier to “live by the Spirit” and you probably won't even miss those former places, people or programs.

P.S. If it's a workplace issue, i.e. your office or job, that is more complicated. You might need to make the difficult decision to walk away.

DC 101 Week 5a Memory Verse

(For those DC'ers going on retreat this week, this is a suggested preparation verse/devotion. If you are going on retreat the next weekend, simply skip to 5b and come back to this devotion as you get ready for your retreat.)

“Be still, and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10)

Silence and/or being still can be a tremendously hard thing to obtain. In a society where we have phone devices that we can call with, text with, check our emails from anywhere with, even write documents with – it's not surprising that this exercise is a “lost art” if you will.

Besides the technological challenges of finding silence, we also must contend with everyone who wants a piece of our time—spouses, kids, co-workers, etc. I am not suggesting that we shut those people out completely, but I am simply saying we need to find time to allow “to be still and know that (He is) God.”

Dictionary.com defines **silence** as: To put (doubts, fears, etc.) to rest; quiet

Dictionary.com defines **stillness** as: The absence of motion.

This week's application of the main memory verse: Since this week's devotion is meant for those of you who are going on retreat, consider this a preparation for “getting away.” (If this isn't the week you are going on retreat, please complete the exercises for Week 5b and then do 5a next week). One of the hardest things to practice on retreat – at least it was for me anyway – is for about an hour, early in the morning, where you are supposed to:

- Focus your mind.
- Let God fill your thoughts and meditations with what He needs to tell you.
- Don't get distracted.

I often tell people that if you are too busy talking to others, or don't have enough still time, imagine what you miss that God is trying to tell you.

To build up to this retreat exercise, take 10 minutes each day leading up to the retreat where you can get away. Put aside your phone and emails, and escape from other people to find your “quiet place.” Practice clearing your mind and putting aside the distractions to hear what God wants to tell you. Write down what you “hear” God telling you below. Then, when you go on retreat, the hour-long exercise may not seem so daunting.

DC 101 Week 5b Memory Verse

(For those DC'ers not going on retreat and the official memory verse this week)

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

‘All’ is a word we use regularly, you may hear it on a daily and sometimes several times a day basis:

- Did you eat **ALL** your broccoli? (I usually would say no unless it's smothered in cheese sauce)
- Did you finish **ALL** your homework?
- Do you believe that **ALL** laws apply to everyone, or do only some of the laws apply?
- When reading the Bible, do you believe **All** of it to be true, or only some of it?

Not eating all of your broccoli – cream sauce or not – probably won't get you in trouble for too long. Also, not doing your homework does not have eternal consequences, and the same can be true of some laws you might choose not to obey, for example the speed limit.

Not taking the whole Bible as “all scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” is another matter all together.

Someday when we stand before the “creator of the universe” after we have died, what do we tell God if he asks why we didn't follow the Bible the way it was written? Do you really think the argument “I just knew better than you God” will hold up.

But beyond that point, let's look at the second part of the memory verse, if we try to conduct our own interpretation of some parts of the Bible, we are missing His blessing by not following all parts of the “good book” to be a “servant of God (that) may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

This week's application of the main memory verse: Ask God to clarify any part of the Bible you may have struggled with and ask Him to help erase any doubts you may have. Also, ask God to reveal to you what you need to be open to Him “equipping you for every good work” “as a servant of God”.

DC 101 Week 6 Memory Verse

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

God is many things in our life – Father, Creator, Judge, Caretaker – but what about Him as our boss? Because he loves us so much, He gives us free will to choose to come to Him. But when you think of God as our supervisor, do you imagine His management style to be:

- A micromanager.
- Not present very often, just letting you do your thing.

Those are one of two main characteristics we might assign to our human bosses. However, when I think of God as such a leader, I picture more of a relationship where we are a son/daughter working for our Dad. In such a “working” relationship you want to “do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

As a parent, I tell my children that there will be times when they disappoint me, but I will always love them and want them to know that they can always come and talk to me about anything.

The same is true of God and what we may do to Him and that He has an “open door” policy.

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Think about your career and reflect on times that God may have been disappointed by some of your actions in the workplace. Ask for His forgiveness (after all he already knows about them). Also, ask for His help to not only be a better worker that He can be proud of, but also a worker that people around you will notice there is something different about you (in a positive way).

DC 101 Week 7 Memory Verse

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

The way that I cook – and sometimes the way I do other detail/plan oriented tasks (like putting furniture together or putting up bead board on a wall) I simply use the directions or plans as a “guide”.

If you’re like me, how has that philosophy worked out for you? From my perspective, I can tell you using those recipes (while free styling) for making a dish has worked some of the time, but other times that “dash of this” hasn’t always worked. In the furniture and construction dept., we won’t even talk about some of the lopsided creations that I’ve made, or the “middle schooler could do better with the bead board” because I simply used the directions as a “guide.”

God’s plan for our lives is better than we can do on our own, if we just give our lives and freely follow His leading/plan for our lives. I have heard this stated in different ways, something like, “I told God my plans and He laughed.”

Why is that? Just like in a previous devotion when we talked about not taking “all” the Bible at face value, the same philosophy is true when seeking His plan for our lives. Do we really think we know better than the all-knowing Creator of the universe?

Of course, you can try it your way, but I am drawn in to God’s promise to each of us to have “...plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Set aside the plan you have for your life for a moment – whether it is what you think you want for a career, family or lifestyle and listen to try to hear God reveal His plan for your life. After all, if you follow God’s plan first, you might not have to endure bad-tasting food, funny furniture, or childish construction jobs. Imagine that!

DC 101 Week 8 Memory Verse

“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)

Words can build up or tear down. I like to also look at God’s word as sometimes being in the “constructive criticism” category. Those are the hardest words for me to hear. What about you?

I probably realize that the person giving the criticism is right, but openly admitting they are right and being willing to change my behavior and mindset are tough. Part of my conflict is due to the fact that I struggle with the sin of pride, as I suspect many of us have from time to time.

God cuts to the chase with this week’s memory verse. Why not be open to letting Him delve into our deepest subconscious? Even if we don’t confess them to God, He already knows our thoughts and shortcomings. I have found that confessing such things to Him lifts a heavy burden that felt like it was holding me down.

Let’s strive to be more like Him with actions and words that are “[living and active.](#)” When a friend needs to be lovingly rebuked – “calling a pig’s butt pork” – sometimes our words need to be “[sharper than any double-edged sword ...](#)’

This week’s application of the main memory verse: This is around the time in your DC study – at least this is about the first time someone said this to me – where a close friend or family member may utter, “Yea, you’re in DC all right. I can really tell.” The way it was said to me had a lot of sarcasm behind that statement. At first, I reacted offended, but then I stepped back and really thought about how my actions and words had not matched the beginning inner transformations I had experienced so far.

Ask God to not wear your DC study as a badge or status symbol, but something that will transform your life and those around you. Also, pray that God will give you patience and the courage to not be offended by someone who calls you out in this area, but be open to a true transformation. Let that process begin today!

Suggested devotion after completion of *Thoroughly Equipped: DC101*

Congratulations, you have completed the first stretch of your DC journey. Take a moment to celebrate this achievement! But don't celebrate too long, for your learning and DC journey will hopefully continue. Always remember, learning about God and walking with Jesus are lifelong pursuits.

This is a refresher on part of what you have been learning. Each week's memory verse and the Bible Chapter and verse are listed at the left, your job is to fill in the blanks with each week's memory verse.

2 Peter 3:18:

Ephesians 2:10:

2 Corinthians 5:21:

Galatians 5:16:

2 Timothy 3:16-17:

2 Timothy 2:15:

Jeremiah 29:11:

Hebrews 4:12:

Celebration Assignment: Reflect back on the past few weeks and what God has done for you, how He has blessed you, and what He has taught you. Now highlight the verse above that has made the most impact/meant the most for you during these past few weeks. Now write below why that is so. This way when you reflect back on this time (in the days, months and years ahead) you will be able to remember how God really showed up and made His presence known to you:

DC 201 Week 1 Memory Verse

“This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Listen! I am going to bring a disaster on this place that will make the ears of everyone who hears it tingle. For they have forsaken me and made this a place of foreign gods; they have burned sacrifices in it to gods that neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah ever knew, and they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent.” (Jeremiah 19:3-4)

Don't panic! The verses mentioned above are not “official” DC memory verses as we kick-off DC 201. However, it is from the assigned reading of the 52 chapters of Jeremiah that you should have read during the break.

I highlighted the verses above using a method I simply call “faithfully taking a shot in the dark.” In the past, I have simply prayed asking Him to show me what He wants me to hear. Then I simply “randomly” open the Bible to a passage and whatever chapter is on that page I read and look for God's application in my own life.

For the Jeremiah exercise above, I did the same thing, but I just held up the pages containing the book of Jeremiah and I “randomly” landed on Jeremiah 19.

This week's application of the main memory verse: Pray for God to guide you through this exercise and that you are able to put aside all distractions so you can really focus on hearing what God wants you to hear and learn. Separate the 52 chapters of Jeremiah and “randomly” open to one of the chapters. Then read the chapter(s) contained in that page. Write down the verse that sticks out to you and write below why this passage spoke to you/what you think God is trying to tell you:

DC 201 Week 2 Memory Verse

“Be completely humble and gentle, be patient, bearing with one another in love.”
(Ephesians 4:2)

I remember having a conversation with an older fellow once - where without losing a beat - I also inserted myself into another conversation in the same room. While I was talking with the older gent, the other conversation started out with, “He could talk to a brick wall.” To which I inserted, “But the brick wall wouldn’t talk back.” Then I continued my other conversation.

I am not proud of that moment – the way I didn’t focus on my talk with the older man, but was distracted by a side conversation. This memory reminds me to not disrespect others but to be “completely humble and gentle, be patient, bearing with one another in love.” That is a hard lesson for me to hear and almost seems impossible at times. That’s why the Spiritual Disciplines Retreat exercise of being still and silent and intently listening for God was extremely challenging, but rewarding at the same time.

Maybe you are like me and since that retreat experience you haven’t worked on building that spiritual discipline into your day. The good news is it’s not too late to restart this exercise. It’s good news for me to hear, anyway.

This week’s application of the main memory verse: If you have carved 5 minutes out for this weekly memory verse routine, today let’s stretch that time to 10 minutes. If your usual memory verse routine has looked more like 10 minutes, why not carve out 15 minutes?

As you pray and ask God the questions highlighted below - after meditating and quietly listening for an answer at least 30 seconds per question - then write the first word or phrase that comes into your mind. Also, remember that I’ve heard God answers prayer in one of three ways – yes, no or not now. If you don’t sense God giving you an answer right away, be prepared when He might reveal this to you and write it down later:

- God when have I “tooted my own horn” and not given you the credit?
- God reveal to me what neighbor I have not been the most gentle to?
- God who has received the least amount of my attention or patience?
- God please show me who I have not been “bearing with one another in love?”

P.S. Now write down how you plan to reconcile with the person or situation that God revealed to you in the answers to the questions above.

DC 201 Week 3 Memory Verse

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”
(Ephesians 4:29)

In high school, I was excited to land a part in the senior play. However, there was one significant drawback – I had to use language (curse words) that I had rarely, if ever used. And it wasn't like there was just one or two here or there, but they were constant parts of the script and my part in the production. I tried to convince myself it was not me, but just a character that I was playing.

Thanks to some parental persuasion and realizing that the words were more than just make believe, but they could really tarnish my witness and also start me down a “slippery slope,” I withdrew from the play. My dad especially helped me see that I was doing what this week's memory verse warns of, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths ...’

Fast forward to years later, and my wife lived out the other part of the Bible verse sharing “but only what is helpful for building others up to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” In this case, my wife reminded me that I needed to focus more time and attention on my children when I was with them. And that was not a reminder to just be physically present, but those times when I was “with them” I needed to make sure to give them my undivided attention when possible.

Thank God for wise, loving wives and sage fathers.

This week's application of the main memory verse: I know that I have said things that have hurt people, and in less often occasions, I have shared counsel that is “helpful for building others up to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

- Write down a time below where you remember you said something that hurt someone (then if it is possible ask for that person to forgive you – if you didn't ask for forgiveness originally):
- Write down a time below where you said something that was “helpful for building others up to their needs.” Thank God for that opportunity and also confess to God that such moments aren't possible without His intervention. Far too often our pride and ego gets in the way. Live with a “more of Jesus and less of me” mentality:

DC 201 Week 4 Memory Verse

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” (1 Peter 4:10)

My parents gave me a thoughtful college graduation gift, a cell phone that included a 6-month contract. It’s not that I was ungrateful for that gift, it’s just as a then new college graduate (who had yet to land a job), I worried about how I would pay for the cell phone bill after the first 6 months.

In short, the gift fit an immediate need, but it was not necessarily a good fit for the long haul.

That example can also be applied when talking about our spiritual gifts. We should be more mindful of using the spiritual gifts that God has given us. For me, I know that being a comedian and making others laugh doesn’t come naturally. However, and unfortunately, that hasn’t stopped me from trying.

Truthfully, I feel God has “gifted” me more as an encourager and leader, not so much as a comedian. So I shouldn’t waste my time trying to write jokes or be the “life of the party” making others laugh, instead I “[should use whatever gift \(I\) have received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.](#)”

What about you?

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Pray and ask God to reveal the spiritual gifts that He has given to you. Then write down what gifts He revealed to you. Lastly, then meditate upon how you can use those God-given gift(s) to serve others and write down those ways below too.

DC 201 Week 5 Memory Verse

“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” (Proverbs 27:17)

I remember helping clean out my grandfather’s barn after his death. A film of cob webs, rust and dust covered much of grandpa’s tools and other things in the barn. One such item was a two-man saw that rust had discolored many of the blades.

There were many things in the barn that had been useful through the years – a pitchfork, several shovels and bales of twine - but due to abandonment and lack of use, the barn tools resembled more of a “graveyard.” However, resting in peace was not what most of those items had endured in meeting their end.

For a knife, sword, saw or similar tool to remain sharp, what has to happen?

You have to take care of it and use it regularly. If you don’t use it, rust can build up on the instrument, and if you don’t also regularly sharpen it, it will become dull and almost useless.

So the same is true of our spiritual “sharpness.” “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” is a useful whetstone to keep in our “tool sharpening” kits. For if our accountability to others, Scripture memorization and Christian duty to serve others starts to “rust” due to lack of use, we become useless to others, and most importantly we will not be able to use one of our more important God-given gifts.

This week’s application of the main memory verse: We are called to be spiritual leaders. However, if there is rust eroding this part - or other similar areas of your life – take action before it is too late. The good news is it is never too late for God to restore and re-sharpen this part of your life. Ask God to knock the rust off and stay sharp in the areas He commands and wants us to be. Write down below the steps He reveals for you to become more of an “iron sharpens iron, so one man should sharpen another” type person.

DC 201 Week 6 Memory Verse

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.” (Phillippians 2:3)

A friend tried to “help” me memorize this verse by slightly changing the words. Instead of, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility **consider others better than yourselves.**” He tried to mess me up by changing the bold part to “consider yourself better than others.”

While obviously he wasn’t serious with his revision, how often in life do we really live out my friend’s suggestion and not live by the Bible’s intent?

I’m calling myself out on this one too. Many times I tend to stay in bed and either let our dogs and cat wait to eat or let someone else take care of them. Yes, they usually want to be fed around 6 a.m., but if I don’t get up with them that task then falls to my wife (who, by the way, would love to stay in bed and sleep longer too).

So with my neglect I am putting the needs of myself first and not being the servant the Bible tells me to be and the example that Christ displayed for all of us.

What about you?

This week’s application of the main memory verse: In this “me first” society, it’s easy to get caught up in our own wants, desires and needs. However, this week intentionally put others first. For me, that involves stepping up more often to feed our pets. What are you going to start doing this week to put others first? Write it down below, but don’t tell the person who you are putting their needs ahead of yours what you are doing. If you did a “look at me” kind of attitude that would fall more into what the Bible warns of as “selfish ambition and vain conceit,” instead “in humility consider others better than yourselves.”

DC 201 Week 7 Memory Verse (for men)

“Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”
(Ephesians 5:25)

Please don't simply turn the page and ignore this week's devotion if you are not married. We can always learn a lot and experience positive life change if we simply look to live, act and love the way that Jesus did, no matter our current situation.

While I have told others my priorities in life are my relationship with God and Jesus first, followed by my wife, children, extended family and work, my actions haven't always backed up my stated priority list.

Sometimes work has gotten pushed near the top, while other times I have given my passion for golf way too high a place on my priority totem pole.

I'm not saying work isn't an important part of our lives.

And golf, or any other hobbies or activities aren't bad in themselves. They can provide a much needed chance to unwind and retreat. The point is – whether it is work, golf or anything else that engulfs a large part of your attention – when such things become a higher priority over Jesus, or your wife, or family, then there is a problem.

This week's application of the main memory verse: So how can each of us act on this week's memory verse?

Give up control of the TV remote for an hour tonight? Put away the golf clubs for a day? (Just to name a few options)

Those are small tasks to start acting on the memory verse, but I would challenge you that those are really just symptoms of the overall problem. Those who we tell are most important in our lives – Jesus, our wife, kids or other family members or significant others – need to know we mean what we say, not just on Sundays, not just when the weather is bad, but every day, all the time.

Start giving such importance to those people today!

DC 201 Week 7 Memory Verse (for women)

“Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.” (1 Peter 3:3-4 verse 3 is optional).

My wife is constantly baffled by other women who talk about designer clothes and high end cosmetics who put so much of their worth in wearing the “right” garments and looking the “right” way.

What is “beautiful” to the world is not always what is “beautiful” to God.

Think about the tribes in the Amazon jungle who don’t know what designer clothes or makeup are, yet alone have access or have a need for them. Those women possess a beauty that is not defined by what they wear or how they look.

My wife is not saying dressing up or looking nice is always a bad thing, however it is a bad thing when such things are more important on your priority list than having a relationship with Jesus.

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Make a list of the things in your life that at one time or another may have had higher importance in your life than Jesus. If you still own several of these possessions, I encourage you to consider selling some of these things and giving the money to charity, or donating these items to an organization that serves the needy.

After all true “beauty” is not based on what you own, but “beauty” to God is more about the intentions and motives of your life and of your heart.

“Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.” (1 Peter 3:3-4 verse 3 is optional).

Start being a different kind of “beautiful” today!

DC 201 Week 8 Memory Verse

“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. (James 1:12)

There are many verses in the Bible that talk about people who faced a trial or trials, but after “(standing) the test, receive(d) the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.”

What Biblical people come to mind when you think of ones who faced trials, but who persevered?

Obviously, Jesus persevered under many trials, including being mocked, scourged, beaten and crucified. John the Baptist was beheaded. Peter was crucified upside down. Paul was shipwrecked, imprisoned and suffered from what he called a “thorn in the flesh.”

The one who comes to my mind is Stephen. In Acts 7, he boldly stood up against the Jewish leaders of the day, retelling how God had led their people throughout their history and also how He had provided a “Righteous One” (Jesus).”And now you have betrayed and murdered him.”

For his boldness, and for challenging the religious authorities of the day, Stephen knew he could face harsh punishment, but he continued to press on.

Stephen’s death came by stoning. Don’t miss this. Not only did he persevere under this trial, but he also asked God to show forgiveness and mercy on his attackers as they stoned him. “Lord do not hold this sin against them,” Stephen prayed to God before he was murdered.

This week’s application of the main memory verse: What trial are you persevering today and how can you give God the glory for sustaining you through this situation?

Is there a trial you feel like you are going through in your marriage? At work? With your health? Battling an addiction?

Whatever trial it is, give it to God. Continue to persevere. The resolution to your test may not be until you die. Praise God. Those who persevere “[will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.](#)”

DC 201 Week 9 Memory Verse

“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Matthew 4 records the “Temptation of Jesus” where Satan comes to tempt Jesus after the Savior had been fasting for 40 days and nights. Yes Jesus is God’s son, but he also came to Earth as a man. So Jesus understands our struggles.

In that same passage it says “(Jesus) was hungry.” Who wouldn’t be famished after fasting for 40 days and nights?

For me, I could barely withstand 24 hours of fasting in college. A church I attended then challenged its members to fast one day a week before Thanksgiving. The goals were to humble ourselves, to realize how blessed we are to not know the real hunger of many throughout the world, and to donate the money we saved to help the needy.

I almost broke down as I walked into the church, because to commemorate our fasting, they had prepared a Thanksgiving Feast. We were tempted with the sweet smell of the turkey, but first it was decided to have a prayer service and time of communion. (I’m sorry Jesus—for my hunger wanting me to consume the whole communion loaf).

The church leaders’ decision to have a prayer service and time of communion followed the example of Jesus. We meditated on Jesus’ sacrifice and on the Bible. When Jesus was tempted, He too focused on what is promised in the Holy Scriptures and not on the “truths” Satan would have had Him to believe.

This week’s application of the main memory verse: As this week’s Bible verse states “... [When you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.](#)”

He does provide, but are you open to His “way out”? Do you ignore a friend or co-worker who tells you their concerns about you going to lunch with a co-worker of the opposite sex (when you have a spouse)?

This week pray and ask God to not only put a shroud of protection around your life and your family, but also ask Him to open your eyes to the “lifeline” He is throwing you when temptation comes a knocking.

Suggested devotion after completion of *Thoroughly Equipped: DC 201*

Congratulations, you have made it past the second milestone for the DC studies – the completion of DC 201. Take a moment to celebrate this achievement! But don't celebrate too long, for your learning and DC journey will hopefully continue. Always remember, learning about God and walking with Jesus are lifelong pursuits.

This is a refresher on part of what you have been learning. Each week's memory verse and the Bible Chapter and verse are listed at the left, your job is to fill in the blanks with each week's memory verse.

Ephesians 4:2:

Ephesians 4:29:

1 Peter 4:10:

Proverbs 27:17:

Philippians 2:3:

Ephesians 5:25:

1 Peter 3:3-4:

James 1:12:

1 Corinthians 10:13:

Celebration Assignment: Reflect back on the past few weeks and what God has done for you, how He has blessed you and what He has taught you. Now highlight the verse above that has made the most impact/meant the most for you during these past few weeks. Now write below why that is so. This way when you reflect back on this time (in the days, months and years ahead) you will be able to remember how God really showed up and made His presence known to you:

DC 202 Week 1 Memory Verse

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:2)

When I was young, I wore a sweatshirt that depicted this with a cartoon image of fish swimming upstream. In nature, God plays this picture out by salmon that swim against the current to travel to their spawning grounds.

Why would fish swim against what seems to be the natural flow? They are driven by a basic animal instinct to reproduce. Some argue it is also a way for the stronger to survive and to weed out the weaker that are left to die.

Making a human application of this verse and the animal illustration, is it easier to go against the flow or follow the crowd?

My college pastor demonstrated this theory very effectively. If you stand on a stool and try to pull someone up with you (in essence having their behavior change and lifestyle more closely match your values and morals), will that be easier or will the reverse happen and in reality they are more easily and able to pull you down to their “level”?

The laws of gravity cause that illustration to fail, but the will and love of God wants you to “not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

How will you make that change today and consciously go against the flow of this fallen world?

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Maybe you are involved in:

- ‘missionary dating,’ entering a dating relationship with a non believer in the hopes you can “save” them.
- hanging out with friends that bring you farther away from your walk with Christ.
- a job with a company that has questionable ethics and work practices.

Whatever dilemma you are facing don’t just give in and take the easy way out, but for your eternity’s sake you need to go against the flow and follow the will of God, not the ways of men. For “then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

DC 202 Week 2 Memory Verse

“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4)

What is it about young children that they can cut right through to the heart of an issue?

Perhaps as adults we have built up all kinds of walls, or our judgment has been clouded by our life’s experiences where we simply miss the simple truths in front of us.

God used my oldest daughter to make me uncomfortable and through my daughter. He showed me what “[training and instruction of the Lord](#)” looks like. At the time I worked for the American Red Cross recruiting blood donors. When she was about 6-years old, my daughter drove home the point of today’s lesson for me. And it’s a lesson that sticks with me almost 10 years later.

In Sunday School, they were talking about the importance of telling others about Jesus and having a relationship with our Savior. My daughter’s teacher asked her, “Don’t you think your dad talks to others about Jesus?” (I would like to think she just didn’t blurt it out and she had to think about it, but God convicted me differently).

‘Nah, he just talks about the Red Cross.’

Ouch!

This week’s application of the main memory verse: How have you built up your kids lately, or how has God used them to get your attention? Write below a recent example of how this has happened in your life.

Keeping in mind this week’s memory verse, “[Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord,](#)” plan an activity with your children to act out this Scripture. Perhaps you begin a family devotion time, prayer time or just take a walk as a family enjoying all of His creation.

Whatever you do, don’t delay, start today!

DC 202 Week 3 Memory Verse

“Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.” (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12)

Today’s devotion is another confessional session for me. I have a problem. (Okay, I have many issues, I am just confessing to one today.)

I am a talker. I don’t like silence. I get uncomfortable when those awkward times of quietness occur. I feel like during these moments in my life, it’s my job to fill the silence. The consequences of my urge to fill the silence don’t usually end well for me. I should have listened to my grandmother’s sage advice to remember the acronym K.Y.M.S. (Keep Your Mouth Shut).

I cringe retelling this story, but I give God the glory because it is an example He has used/continues to use to remind me of one of His simple truths in life, “[make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business.](#)” (I also confess that this issue continues to be a work in progress for me.)

Amanda and I rode the bus together when I was in middle school. She was just a friend, a neighbor. One bus ride home, during a lull in our conversation – I don’t know why my mind chose to go there – but I actually asked her, “So what do you think of the Space Program?”

Yes, I also confess/admit that I was a nerd in middle school. What of it?

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Embrace the “sound of silence” in your life. For example, why not be the “silent” partner in a conversation, letting someone else do most of the talking only voicing your opinion or thoughts when they ask for your input.

Another thought would be to “[work with your hands](#)” and take care of needed yard work or handy man projects before you’re asked to do them. While you are doing such a task, God can use the stillness/silence of the moment to speak to you where you can focus once again on listening, not on being heard.

Whatever way you chose to act out this week’s memory verse, work so “[your daily life may win the respect of outsiders.](#)”

DC 202 Week 4 Memory Verse

“Whatever you do, work at it with all of your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” (Colossians 3:23-24)

In a previous job, I felt like I was stuck in a rut. I tried and tried to find a way out. I sent out numerous resumes and worked to schedule a potential job interview for anyone who might consider hiring me.

I shared my frustration with a Christian brother, and his advice struck me to the core. It is a reminder for me today, whenever I feel any small sense of frustration or dissatisfaction at my current job to “bloom where I am planted.” My friend advised me to keep in mind maybe, “God has me where He needs me.”

I knew that reality, but didn’t the Creator know my severe level of frustration? Hello! Of course He did. God knows all. I became more focused on following my plans for my life, than really seeking out and looking for the path God wanted me to follow.

My friend’s advice backs up this week’s memory verse. In my state of job dissatisfaction, I had lost a connection to the bigger picture and disrespected God in the process. As the saying goes, “God’s ways aren’t always our ways.”

Now if my job has me work crazy hours, or when the stress level and workload builds, I often need to remind myself, “[it is the Lord Christ you are serving.](#)”

Who are you working for?

This week’s application of the main memory verse: On a separate piece of paper, make a list of the top five or 10 things that really frustrate you about your current job.

Now either shred, crumple or burn that list. In short, get rid of it.

Now repeat after me:

“Whatever you do, work at it with all of your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

DC 202 Week 5 Memory Verse

“Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.” (1 Peter 2:12)

How do you handle a situation when someone confronts you?

I am ashamed to say that I often a short fuse and get defensive, feeling like I’m backed into a corner. Many times, the friend has a good point, but...

Mr. Connor was my 7th Grade Math Teacher. This illustration is one example (unfortunately I can’t recount many others) how I correctly handled an accusatory situation. In this instance, I “live(d) such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”

One day, I was talking during class when I wasn’t supposed to.

Mr. Connor bellowed out, “Who’s talking?”

I don’t know if it was because I was caught, or because I was afraid of facing Mr. Connor’s additional wrath, but I raised my hand and confessed that it was me.

For my honesty, I was actually rewarded. Yes, I was in the wrong. But Mr. Connor told the class that because I confessed to my “crime” on the spot, he wouldn’t punish me this time.

To me, that also continues to be a small reminder of how God offers us His grace too. Even when we are in the wrong, God extends forgiveness and grace if we will just confess our sins to Him. Why do we try to hide our sins? After all, He already knows about them.

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Pray and ask God to show you how you can better “love” on your accusers next time a confrontation is brewing. If you tend to fall into the “fight or flight” response, don’t give into that temptation. Write below how you plan to diffuse such a situation next time, but don’t try to shed the blame on someone else either. If you are wrong, confess it, learn from it and move on.

DC 202 Week 6 Memory Verse

“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:5-6)

Perhaps you have heard the story of the woman who found a note among the letters and bills she retrieved from her mailbox one day? The note simply said, “I would like to come to dinner at your house tomorrow night.” signed Jesus.

Of course, the woman was honored to be hosting such a special guest. However, then a slight feeling of panic rushed over her as she looked over her house that was a mess. But what do you serve the Son of God for dinner?! Then she realized, “Of course, I need to buy food and prepare a feast fit for a king.”

Her food list included lamb, a fresh baked loaf of bread, grapes and Baked Alaska to top off the meal. After spending several hours cleaning house, she went to the grocery to buy the items for the next day’s banquet. On her way home from the store, at a corner about a block from her house, a “bum” was holding out a sign and asking for food. She hesitated for a moment, thinking that the food she just bought was meant for Jesus. But she had a sudden urge to give him her loaf of bread. The man thanked her and as she was driving away she turned around for a last look, but he was gone. “That was strange,” she thought.

As she walked onto her front porch with groceries in hand, she had to put the bags down to pull out a folded note someone had left in-between the screen door. It read: “Thanks for dinner, Jesus.”

This week’s application of the main memory verse: How often are we too busy or we feel like we have our own problems and we can’t be bothered by the troubles of others, especially when it comes to “freeloaders” who we feel like are just looking for handouts?

Ask yourself how Jesus responded to the cries of those in need, and even some “freeloaders” of His time? Pray and ask God how He would have you respond to such situations in the future. Then write down what you feel He is telling you to do about it.

By living this philosophy out, you will “**be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.**” After all, we may never know the identity of the “outsider” we help, but we should always ask ourselves, “What Would Jesus Do?”

DC 202 Week 7 Memory Verse

“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” (1 Timothy 6:10)

For our discussion this week, we need to point out a very important distinction. Money is not considered “a root of all kinds of evil.” Rather in context “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.”

Whenever I discuss this topic with a dear friend of mine, I know what they think and they know how I feel. We struggle to find a middle ground. They typically will try to reason with me, asking things like:

- Does anyone really need a 7,000 square foot house? Why not live more modestly and give away more money to those who need it?
- Do “high end” products always perform better?
- Does the extra cost justify the results?

My counter argument is usually:

- The Bible says “To He who has been given much, much is expected.” (my paraphrased version of Luke 12:48)
- I also point out that while some people are blessed with an overflowing of wealth and stuff, we really don’t know the extent of their giving (nor should we know if that giver is true to the Bible when it speaks of doing such things in private and not in a way to earn praise and favor with men).

I think we can boil this discussion down to the story of the Rich Young Ruler. Jesus knew that this man’s wealth is what defined him. His earthly treasure, Jesus also knew, is what would expel this man from an eternity in paradise. He asked Jesus “What good thing must I do to get eternal life?” I can almost put myself in the Rich Man’s shoes and imagine the part of the question that he left out: “What good thing (except that) must I do to get eternal life?”

What about you, what are you holding onto something so tightly that might keep you from fully embracing a relationship with Jesus, and in turn enjoying eternity in paradise?

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Make a list of your top five stated priorities in life. Then ask God to double check you to make sure your actions match your words. Lastly, ask your significant other, kids or your best friend if they see your actions matching with your stated priority list. The good news is it’s not too late to change.

DC 202 Week 8 Memory Verse

“Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops.” (1 Timothy 6:10)

I think for this week’s exercise, we need to replace the pronoun you with His. No, I am not trying to rewrite the Bible, or change the context of this week’s memory verse. The intent doesn’t change; I just believe this slight modification helps to drive home the bottom line of this verse.

All we have comes from God - not partially from God - but fully. That also includes our financial side of the house.

Instead of, “Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops,” my suggested change would then read, “Honor the Lord with (His) wealth, with the firstfruits of all (His) crops.”

If we tend to our money, wealth and crops as if they were our own, are we more likely to become the “cheerful giver” God tells us to be in the Bible?

By being self-centered about our possessions we then become like the pelicans from the movie Finding Nemo. When these birds cornered their potential fish dinner, the flock of pelicans hungrily bellowed out, “Mine!”

Is it my wealth or God’s?

This week’s application of the main memory verse: By giving God “our” best, we submit, admit and humbly acknowledge where the source of our wealth comes from.

After all, He gave it to us and He can choose to take it away. Why take a chance? And by following God’s leading, including on our financial spreadsheet, He may chose to bless you with more than before.

How will you change your thinking and actions toward “your” finances today?

DC 202 Week 9 Memory Verse

“We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”
(1 Thessalonians 1:3)

This week’s memory verse is very counter cultural in this “me first, striving for microwave wealth, instant gratification rat race world” we can get easily pulled into.

Let’s make a checklist:

- Work produced by faith.
- Labor prompted by love.
- Endurance inspired by hope.

The first part of the memory verse simply states, “**We continually remember ...**” Pointing that out is great, but many times we may ask “What’s in it for me? What is my reward?” In our jobs, we want our work to be “remembered” by a pay raise or some other form of recognition. At home, we want to be “remembered” and “paid back” with some form of gift or “Thatta boy” if, for example, we help more around the house. With friends, if we paid the check the last time you went out to eat, you want your friend to “remember” you did that last time so they will “remember” to pick up the check this time.

Let’s refocus on the memory verse one more time, “**We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.**”

To be a truly devoted follower of Christ, we have to put our motives and our desire for rewards on the back burner. In short, I have heard it said like this, we should strive to live a life that is “more of Jesus and less of me.” How will you put that into action this week?

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Random Acts of Kindness has become somewhat of a popular “counter-culture” trend. For example, when you are in a drive thru line at a restaurant, instead of just paying for your meal, also pay for the person behind you. Keeping the “more of Jesus and less of me” philosophy in mind, when you do such an act, it should not be done with a prideful or arrogant mindset of “look what I have done,” but humbly bless someone else and you should not expect anything in return. What “random acts of kindness” will you start today, in Jesus’ name, instead of your own? Write them down below, but make it a point not to share what you’ve done with others.

Suggested devotion after completion of *Thoroughly Equipped: DC202*

Believe it or not, after several months of God reshaping, refining and challenging you through this DC journey, you are almost halfway through this part of the adventure. But always remember, that your learning is a lifelong “commencement.”

Be encouraged. I remember at this point it is easy to get bogged down with thoughts like, “I’m only halfway through!” However, instead of saying it in a downcast and discouraged tone, proudly proclaim it like you would when your favorite sports team wins a big game, “I’m halfway through! Praise the Lord!”

This is a refresher on part of what you have been learning. Each week’s memory verse and the Bible Chapter and verse are listed at the left, your job is to fill in the blanks with each week’s memory verse.

Romans 12:1-2:

Ephesians 6:4:

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12:

Colossians 3:23-24:

1 Peter 2:12:

Colossians 4:5-6:

1 Timothy 6:10:

Proverbs 3:9:

1 Thessalonians 1:3:

Celebration Assignment: Reflect back on the past few weeks and what God has done for you, how He has blessed you and what He has taught you. Now highlight the verse above that has made the most impact/meant the most for you during these past few weeks. Now write below why that is so. This way when you reflect back on this time (in the days, months and years ahead) you will be able to remember how God really showed up and made His presence known to you:

DC 301 Week 1 Memory Verse

In 301, we take a break from learning new verses and review the past 30 or so we have already committed to memory.

A refresher is never a bad thing, especially when we still have 40 new memory verses to go. Don't just look at this as something to mark off of a checklist, but really work to commit it to memory – and not just for the rest of this study, but beyond.

After all, how sad is it that Satan knows the Bible better than many Christians do today? After all, he used it to tempt Jesus when He was in the wilderness, and he uses it to tempt each of us too today. And in striving to be more like Jesus, we too should follow His example when He was tempted by the Devil, He simply responded by quoting Scripture back to Satan. If you are challenged or tempted, do you have the right verse(s) at hand ready to respond?

Praise God that it's not too late to build that discipline into your spiritual life.

How can we be better prepared to face this challenge?

- A) Seek out God and ask for His protection and leading to put a “lid” on Satan’s advances and for the Devil to “get behind thee!”
- B) Continue to be “Thoroughly Equipped” to lead a God-fearing, God-loving and God-serving life, with an emphasis on serving others more than focusing on yourself.

Below are “fill in the blank” memory verse passages of the three reviewed texts from previous weeks. Do the best you can to fill in the blanks without checking first. Then see how you did by checking your work. You can do it! You might not think you have remembered very much, but you might surprise yourself.

- “Be _____ in the way you act towards _____; make the _____ of every _____. Let your conversation be always full of _____, seasoned with _____, so that you may know how to _____ everyone.” (Colossians 4: ____ - 6)
- “For the _____ of money is a _____ of all kinds of _____. Some people, _____ for money, have _____ from the faith and _____ themselves with many _____.” (1 _____ 6:10)
- “Live such good lives among the _____ that, though they _____ you of _____, they may see your _____ and glorify _____ on the _____ He visits us.” (1 Peter ____: ____)

DC 301 Week 2 Memory Verse

“Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all of your crops.” (Proverbs 3:9) Make a list of the top 10 most priceless things in your life, i.e. possessions, people or experiences.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

“We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 1:3) Write down below:

- What work you have done that was the result of faith?
- What labor did you undertake that was prompted by love and not what was in it for you?
- A situation where you endured due to the hope you have in Jesus?

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever, Amen!” (2 Peter 3:18) Now circle back to the exercise at the start of this week’s devotion. How can you glorify God with, through or by sharing your 10 most precious possessions, people or experiences with others?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
10. _____
10. _____

DC 301 Week 3 Memory Verse

“For we are _____, created in Christ Jesus to do _____, which God prepared in _____ for us to do.” (_____ 2:10)

Make a list of five ways you see “God’s workmanship” in the life/personality of your significant other, child(ren), mom, dad or best friend. Share them with others.

Person: _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

“God made _____ who had no _____ to be _____ for us, so that in _____ we might become the _____ of God.” (_____ Corinthians _____:21)

Write a note of thanks to Jesus, telling Him why He is so special to you. Then consider sharing that with someone who needs to hear how special they are to the Savior:

Dear Jesus,

“So I say, live by the _____, and you will not _____ the _____ of the sinful nature” (_____ 5:___)

Confess to Jesus the two or three areas of your life you struggle with the most to “live by the Spirit.” One of those areas for me is I can become full of myself and my pride and ego trip me up. Write down your two or three areas you struggle with the most below and share them with someone who will hold you accountable.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

DC 301 Week 4 Memory Verse

so that the man of God	do your best to present	a workman who does	all Scripture is God
teaching, rebuking, correcting	for I know	training in righteousness	not need to be ashamed
yourself to God as one	declares the Lord.	approved, and who	the plans I have for you,
correctly handles	breathed and is useful	for and be	the word of truth. , Plans to
for and be thoroughly equipped	prosper you and	hope and a future.	for every good work
not to harm you, plans to give			

Arrange phrases above to put together this week's memory verses as you continue to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

- _____ (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- _____ (2 Timothy 2:15)
- _____ (Jeremiah 29:11)

This week's memory verses talk about God's work and plans for our lives and how we can glorify God through our actions. Write out your personal mission statement regarding your work:

Create a personal mission statement regarding your family life:

Lastly, make a personal mission statement regarding your spiritual walk:

My mission statement: I am a man fully reliant on God who confesses I continue to fall short and sin. However, keeping God's grace and compassion in mind, I want to love my wife, kids and family following the example that God and Christ have shown. At work, I want others to notice there is something different about me—not for my sake or my glory—but my work ethic and attitude to help point them to Christ.

DC 301 Week 5 Memory Verse

“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword; it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

(Hebrews 4:12)

Write down the three sharpest things that come into your mind:

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only for what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it might benefit those who listen.”

(Ephesians 4:29)

Write down below three instances that come to your mind as examples of when “unwholesome talk (came) out of your mouth”:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

“Be completely humble and gentle, be patient, bearing with one another in love.”

(Ephesians 4:2)

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me” sounds good in theory, but the truth is just the opposite. Harsh words are some of the sharpest weapons I’ve used against those closest to me. I am not proud of that fact, but God has convicted me of that sin in my life.

Looking back at the second exercise this week, is there a person on that list that was on the receiving end of most of your “unwholesome talk”? Have you asked for them to forgive you? Reach out this week and tell them what God has placed on your heart and that you are sorry for what you said and for the way that you behaved. Pray for God to allow Him to change your ways!

DC 301 Week 6 Memory Verse

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” (1 Peter 4:10)

Let’s compare and contrast several people below. Beside the first group of people, write down how each of them serves others:

- Billy Graham: _____
- Your wife or husband: _____
- Mother Teresa: _____
- Your children: _____
- Jesus: _____
- Your best friend: _____

Now write down how the person below serves others:

You: _____

The good news is it’s not too late to change. Also, it is never a bad idea to be like Jesus. This exercise might also remind you how those closest to you – your wife or husband, your kids or your best friend - also give good examples of serving others. Besides complementing them for their servant’s heart, why not serve alongside them?

DC 301 Week 7 Memory Verse

“Husbands ____ your wives, just as _____ loved the _____ and gave himself up for _____.” (1 Peter 4:10)

“Your _____ should not come from _____ adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold _____ or fine _____. Rather it should be that of your _____, the unfading beauty of a gentle and _____ spirit, which is of great _____ in God’s _____.” (1 Peter 3:3-4 verse 3 is optional).

“Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” He gave the ultimate sacrifice and not only knows us in our deepest, darkest places, but He wants to put us first in his life - all we have to do is accept Him as Lord of our life.

The Five Love Language Series talks about the five ways someone wants to be loved—through Acts of Service, Physical Touch, Gifts, Quality Time or Words of Affirmation. Husbands show love to your wife not the way you want to be loved, but speak her love language. Also, make sure to build her up regarding her “inner self” beauty.

“_____ is the man who _____ under trial, because when he has stood the _____, he will receive the _____ of _____ that God has promised to those who _____ Him.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Life has many types of trials. Write one trial below and how you responded.

Kids: _____
Marriage: _____
Siblings: _____
Work: _____
Friends: _____
Church: _____

“No _____ has seized you except which is _____ to man. And God is _____, He will not let you be tempted _____ what you can _____. But when you are tempted, He will also _____ a way out so that you can _____ up under it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

I struggle with lust and pride. I pray continually and ask God to shore me up against those temptations. My wife is one of my earthly “protectors” in those areas. What areas in your life are you tempted about the most and what is your plan to better deal with them?

DC 301 Week 8 Memory Verse

Match the portion of the Bible verse at left, with its memory verse counterpart at right.

Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will

Fathers do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training

With your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect

By the renewing of your mind

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the

And instruction of the Lord

Of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody

Now write out the assembled memory verses below:

Romans 12:1: _____

Ephesians 6:4: _____

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12: _____

DC 401 Week 1 Memory Verse

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather serve one another in love” (Galatians 5:1,13)

Earthly kings often force their servants to bow down to them. Sometimes not bowing down and following the king’s ways could lead to an unpleasant death. God is able to do anything He wants, but He gives us free will and allows us to choose to follow His ways. Why do you think that is? ‘It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.’”

My oldest daughter is early in her teen years. I think one way to look at the free will issue is the way a father and child relationship develops. When she was a baby she relied on her family to help meet all of her basic needs, i.e. food, shelter, and clothing. When she grew older though, she continued to rely on those family members around her to provide almost everything. Then middle school happened. At this stage, I have told her many times that even though there will be times that she disappoints me, I will always love her.

How often do we treat God as if we are His teenage child? We might tell God things like:

- ‘You have told me that before’
- ‘You don’t know what it’s like’
- ‘It’s not fair!’

To which God may respond something similar to:

- “And I will continue to tell you. Maybe one day it will sink in.”
- “You’re right. I only created you in my image. But remember I brought you into this world and I can take you out of it!”
- “Life is not about being fair, it’s about putting others’ needs before your own.”

This week’s application of the main memory verse: God gives freedom to you and to me, but too much freedom can also get us into trouble. Use your freedom, including your free time, to “[serve one another in love.](#)”

Why not start doing that to those closest to you? Beyond that, pick someone who expects nothing in return or may not be able to give anything back. For example, write a note of encouragement anonymously to a nursing home resident. Ask the nursing station to give your card to the patient who has the least amount of visitors.

DC 401 Week 2 Memory Verse

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.” (Matthew 19:5-6)

I know that marriage and divorce are sensitive topics for some participants in DC. But instead of focusing on what happened in the distant or recent past, why not use this week’s Bible verse to change things in the present and for the future?

If you have:

- Never been married – ask God to prepare your heart to become more of a servant putting others’ needs ahead of your own.
- Been married for a long time – renew your commitment to your spouse and put aside things of man and celebrate “[what God has joined together.](#)”
- Just gotten married – even though you are now married don’t stop investing in your now wife.
- Been divorced – embrace the possibility of what the future holds. However, focus on your relationship with God first. By doing that, who knows what future blessing He has in store.
- Grieved over the death of your spouse – thank God for however long you all were together. Reflect on what you learned about yourself and about what makes a good marriage and share it with a couple who needs to hear it.

God redeemed my pain and the torment I went through after being divorced when He gave me “beauty from the ashes” in my second marriage. By putting God first in our lives He brought us together when we weren’t looking for each other or expecting it. Also, as we have focused on doing things God’s way, He has blessed our lives and our marriage more than we ever could have imagined.

This week’s application of the main memory verse: “[For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.](#)”

‘[Becoming one flesh](#)’ is not always easy. I say that as someone who struggles with being selfish and prideful. Change your ways today. Work on refining the servant’s heart God desires for you to be as a husband or wife. How will you put your significant other ahead of the ways, desires or interests of the sinful nature?

DC 401 Week 3 Memory Verse

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

Do you know:

- What golfer holds the record for the most number of career PGA Tour wins?
- What the mascot is for South Dakota State?
- What high school and college, did football player Shaun Alexander attend?

I can tell you. It's not that such “significant” sports trivia isn't important. Okay, it barely matters on a scale of 1 to 10. So why is it that many of us can know so much more about sports events and figures than about the Bible and Jesus Christ?

If we follow this week's Bible verse what statistics or sports milestones will in anyway help to follow Jesus' command to “[Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.](#)”?

So let's change our knowledge of “significant” facts focusing not on trivial matters, but dealing with Trinity matters (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). Do you know:

- What punishment God told Satan he would have to suffer at the hands of Eve and her offspring after the Devil had tempted Eve and Adam?
- What the crowd heard from Heaven after John the Baptist baptized Jesus?
- What three things did Satan tempt Jesus with after he had fasted for 40 days? Also, what were Jesus' exact responses to the Devil's temptations?
- How critics tried to explain the behavior of those on whom the Holy Spirit came?

If we don't know God's story, how can we share it with others? But take heart, this isn't meant to be an exercise to punish you. After all, Jesus did encourage His followers by saying, “[surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.](#)”

This week's application of the main memory verse: Start by researching and coming up with answers to three of your own questions that are found in the Bible. Not only is it good to refresh yourself – or possibly learn for the first time some truly “significant” facts – but invite those closest to you, your family or friends to join in on the exercise. Why not make this a regular part of your devotion time?

DC 401 Week 4 Memory Verse

“But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned.” (Galatians 1:8)

What ways can we “preach” to others? With our words? Absolutely. But as the saying goes, “actions speak louder than words.” And in those actions we can give examples that are hard for others to overcome, even years later.

It is confession time again. One thing I have and continue to struggle with is being too competitive. Maybe you can relate?

When my oldest daughter was about five-years-old, I coached her church basketball team. I remember times when I became too emotional towards the referees. Yes, they were volunteers too. And no, I am not proud of those moments. It is in the past and unfortunately I can’t go back and change those memories.

I coached to spend some extra quality time with my daughter. We did have some good memories. However, apparently one of the main things she took away was how hard I was on the refs. I didn’t really understand that significant impact until this year (some eight years after I had coached her team).

During a tournament soccer game my youngest daughter was playing in, her coaches had become emotional and verbal over what they thought was a bad call. As Devotion Leader for the team, I felt like I needed to help calm the coaches down and put things in perspective, especially regarding the example they were setting for their young team members.

As I’m going to help calm the coaches down, my oldest daughter pipes up and says, “Dad, that’s just what you did when you coached my team!” Ouch. The truth hurts.

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Ask god to reveal to you times when you haven’t “practiced what you preached.” Also, ask him to change your ways in these situations for the future.

Whoever was involved in the situation or setting God brought to your mind, humble yourself, reach out to them and apologize for being out of line.

DC 401 Week 5 Memory Verse

“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the spirit of God. Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.” (1 John 4:1-2)

There are many accounts throughout recent history of leaders who turned out to be “false prophets” but people still believed in them. For example, I think of recent “leaders” like Adolf Hitler or David Koresh.

It’s hard to review such instances and not see how these people should have been called out for what they were. It really was just the hype, hysteria and emotion of the moment that most were drawn into. Also, as is often the case, people weren’t courageous enough to “test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

While I am puzzled how many people can fall for something so obviously evil, I must pause and examine my own life.

I did not do a good job of “test(ing) the spirits” in my first marriage. My then wife was besieged by things of this world regarding happiness, contentment and “if it feels good do it.” I did not stand firm. It wasn’t the hype and hysteria of this situation that did me in, but the emotions of shock and hopelessness that wore me down as things were happening around me that I felt I couldn’t comprehend or control.

This week’s application of the main memory verse: What about you? Is there something comprising your beliefs or a relationship that has fallen into the teachings of a modern day false prophet?

In those situations, make sure to search out and follow God’s leading and not the call of the world because “this is how you can recognize the spirit of God. Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.”

When it comes to such matters with eternal consequences I would much rather be on God’s side and not rely on things of the world. But don’t just keep this desire to yourself, tell as many people as you can how they too can have eternal life and not to “believe every spirit” or teaching they hear.

DC 401 Week 6 Memory Verse

“Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do you will save both yourself and your hearers.” (1 Timothy 4:16)

My grandfather had what we called “selective hearing.” If you knew him you might be surprised he could hear well at all.

On many occasions he would ask you to repeat yourself because even with a hearing aid he sometimes had trouble hearing you. He could hear the TV all right, but only after it had to be turned up to a level sufficient to be heard several rooms away.

That’s why I was surprised one day when I was talking to my grandmother about him, and from the other room he blurted out, “I heard that!”

How often does “selective hearing” apply to our spiritual walk too? In such situations we apply only part of what the Bible says on certain areas.

I was filling in as a sub coach for my oldest daughter’s church basketball team. The game had become rough and there was some pushing and shoving going on.

After the game, I asked the players about the situation they had to play through and how they should have reacted?

One of the players actually said, “Jesus said an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.”

I appreciated the fact that player knew part of the story. However, as I explained to her, in context, Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said, “Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.” But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.” (Matthew 5:38-39)

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Look for ways today to, “[Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do you will save both yourself and your hearers.](#)”

Who knows, not only can you help solidify your understanding and reading of the Scriptures, but you can also help straighten out those around you.

DC 401 Week 7 Memory Verse

“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.” (Romans 13:1)

Are you Republican? Democrat? Libertarian? Indifferent?

I am not saying you shouldn't be involved and not care about the political system. Politics, however, shouldn't become more important than your relationship with Jesus. After all, God will put in power that whom He has chosen. As sin-filled fallen humans, do we really think that we know who to “vote” into office more so than the “Creator of the Universe?” God also has the ability to take someone out of power with one breath of his nostrils.

I have teetered on the brink of this obsession several times in my life. At times, political talk radio was what I listened to more than other uplifting messages or similar-themed music. Guess what? That only made me agitated and hard to be around. I not only listened to the talk, tones and speeches on the radio, but I also became consumed with what was being preached and wanted to tell anyone that I could find what I heard. Such conversations would start off with phrases like,

- “Can you believe ...?”
- “Why would you support someone who ...?”

Eight years ago, I was drawn into my first bout with this false worship. After moving past that election and realizing how I'd sometimes replaced God with politics, I decided to reprogram my radio for more wholesome choices. Six years later, I was sadly, drawn back into the fight. Now on the other side of the latest election—and once again realizing how I worshipped the god of politics—I have rededicated myself to kicking the habit. I will still participate in the political process, but hope my conversations are more like:

- “How can we honor Jesus through our political choices?”
- “How can we pray for those who win an election, despite my opposition?”

This week's application of the main memory verse: Jesus isn't running for President of the United States, He is running for a more important office, Lord of your life. How will you “vote” for Him today?

DC 401 Week 8 Memory Verse

“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it, she also gave some to her husband, who was with her and he ate it.” (Genesis 3:6)

Of the four main characters in this Bible verse what blame would you assign to each character?

Eve: _____

Adam: _____

Satan: _____

God: _____

Maybe the blame you assigned looked something like:

Eve: **She caused her husband to sin by eating the forbidden fruit disobeying God.**

Adam: **Even though God forbade it, Adam listened to his wife and disobeyed.**

Satan: **By placing a seed of doubt in Eve’s mind, Satan caused the couple to sin.**

God: **By forbidding Adam and Eve to eat from this fruit, God caused them to sin.**

God gets a pass because like the title of the old TV show states, “Father Knows Best.” Sometimes people try to blame Satan with a statement like, “The Devil made me do it.” The truth is Satan didn’t do the deed, you did. Eve is sometimes a scapegoat. Yes, Eve sinned, but just like Satan doesn’t make others do the deed, Eve didn’t force Adam to eat the forbidden fruit. He willingly took a bite—and he was standing there while Satan tempted his wife!

This week’s application of the main memory verse: This story should serve as a wakeup call for all men. We are supposed to be the spiritual leaders of our marriages, families and homes. Don’t play the blame or shame game, but instead assume the leadership role that God requires us to be and that our wives and families want and need us to be.

If that hasn’t been the case in the past, don’t let Satan use that against you. Today is a new day.

“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it, she also gave some to her husband, who was with her and he ate it.”

DC 401 Week 9 Memory Verse

“These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.” (1 Corinthians 10:11)

The saying, “history repeats itself” was true during Biblical times, remained true during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and is definitely true today.

Many times, however, we forget this fact. That’s why a written/recorded history is useful.

Even recent history some people want to ignore. The Holocaust happened less than eight decades ago, but some argue the killing of six million Jews never really happened.

How alarming is it then, that an event that happened during some of our lifetimes, is being erased or denied in some peoples definition of true history?

How much more alarming is it then that some people are trying to rewrite the Biblical history of Christ’s life?

For this week’s devotion, let’s focus on the last part of the verse, “[on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.](#)”

Jesus is the one who fulfilled the hundreds of Old Testament Messianic prophecies in the flesh. Many of these prophecies were made several hundred years before Jesus’ birth, crucifixion and resurrection. But yet, even when the prophecies were coming true during Jesus’ life on Earth, so many still refused to believe.

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Now we are more than 2,000 years on the other side of Golgotha, and now still how many do not believe? Unfortunately, that number appears to be growing.

We must not forget the first part of this week’s memory verse, “[These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us,](#)’

Don’t miss the warnings, Jesus is returning. We must be ready.

‘[These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.](#)’

DC 402 Week 1 Memory Verse

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for ... And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must first believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”

(Hebrews 11:1-2, verse 6 optional)

One of my favorite movies is Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade. The plot of the movie revolves around Indiana Jones' quest to recover the Holy Grail (the cup that Christ used at the Last Supper). To save his dying father - whom the Nazi's had shot and left to die - Indy must solve three riddles as he works to find the Grail. By having his father drink from the Grail, the legend was that that person would not die.

Isn't it ironic how our faith can grow when we are faced with seemingly impossible situations? Why can't our faith remain strong when things are going well? After all, as this week's Bible verse states, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”

Indy's trial pushed him to be “certain of what (he did) not see.” As the hero comes to the last riddle, his faith waivers momentarily. After coming out of a narrow cave passage, Indy almost fell to his own death. So close to his destination, but there was a good 100 feet or so gap standing between him and his prize. After he collects himself, Indy ponders the riddle out loud, “Only in the leap from the lion's head will he prove his worth. Impossible! Nobody can jump this. It's a leap of faith.”

“You must believe boy,” Indy's dying father hollers to him. Indy's circumstances force him to rely on faith. He can't possibly jump the chasm. What should he do?

This week's application of the main memory verse: Let's push pause on the movie and insert yourself into Indy's character. Maybe the “leap of faith” you are facing is:

- Giving up a week of vacation to take a mission trip.
- Staying in a seemingly hopeless marriage.
- Adopting a child.

Whatever you are facing, what are you going to do? Keep in mind that relying on faith will help you not focus so much on yourself, but on God the Father: “Anyone who comes to Him must first believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”

DC 402 Week 2 Memory Verse

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” (Hebrews 12:1)

I have competed in a handful of small to medium-length triathlons. Some were completed on behalf of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society – a non-profit organization that raises funds and awareness to help fight cancer. A certain t-shirt slogan from those events has stuck with me: “You think a triathlon is tough, try cancer.”

A modified t-shirt slogan regarding this week’s memory verse could read something like: “You think life is tough, try hell.” For non-believers that t-shirt slogan will be tough to swallow. For the Bible talks about an eternity not in Heaven, will be an eternity without God. Hell is real and will be painful. The Good Book refers to Hell as a place so painful that there will be “gnashing of teeth.”

The Bible also states that those in Heaven will live without pain, suffering or sadness. So for those non-believers, eternity will be full of torment. For those who believe and confess Jesus to be Lord of their Life, eternity promises to be a sweet blessing.

But while we are on this Earth, life will be tough at times for people in both camps. While we all are here together, why not make the best of the experience and take as many people to Heaven with you by sharing your faith and testimony with those who do not know Jesus.

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Maybe “let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles,” could be a “sin” of complacency where we don’t share our faith and the hope others can find in Jesus. We might say, “I’ll show the love of Jesus to my neighbor tomorrow.” But you are not guaranteed tomorrow. Don’t wait.

Write out your faith story and testimony. Practice it out loud. It shouldn’t be more than about 2 – 5 minutes. By writing it down and rehearsing your story that will allow you to more easily share it.

Now after completing this exercise, share your story with someone and watch how God uses you to win this race.

DC 402 Week 3 Memory Verse

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth.” (Acts 1:8)

You hear about witness protection programs, usually on television shows and movies. What is their purpose? To offer protection to those who are going to testify against a criminal or someone who is accused of doing wrong. The protection is needed because there is a fear the person they are testifying against might find a way to retaliate and do harm to them or their family. In short, such a witness protection program is needed because the person wants to do the right thing, but feels powerless to protect themselves, as they fear for their life.

As believers, we should not feel powerless. Just as this week’s memory verse states, “**But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;**” Power to do what? To “**be my [Jesus’] witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth.**”

However, just like people in witness protection program’s lives may be in danger, professing our beliefs may put our life in danger too. However, part of the power of the Holy Spirit in us is boldly knowing where we will spend eternity.

Just as in the book of Acts, Stephen stood up and served as a witness to all that Christ had done – even with death staring him in the face – we too should be as bold.

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Do you hide behind “spiritual” witness protection programs? Maybe you don’t want people to know that you go to church on Sundays or that you regularly read your Bible. Perhaps you think that might offend your friends or your co-workers. Do you know who you really offend? Your Father, and your Savior.

Don’t put on a mask of political or spiritual correctness today. Why not post a Bible verse in your office or find other ways to share with your friends and co-workers about your faith? By completing such actions, you will be more closely living out this week’s memory verse.

DC 402 Week 4 Memory Verse

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28)

When my wife and I were married four years ago, we decided early on in the planning process not to be bogged down with all of the details and not to be stressed out on the small stuff. When making such decisions, we started asking ourselves (whatever we decided) “Will it make us any less married?”

So you may be asking yourself how does that apply to this week’s memory verse or to DC in general? For starters, if you are married, this is just a friendly reminder that if you haven’t invested more time, energy and attention into your wife than you did in planning your wedding, you should make that change now.

As for this week’s memory verse and how my wedding planning illustration applies, my wife’s and my thinking regarding decisions planning our wedding was similar to how our DC Group decided to deal with issues that led to debate any potential controversial topic, i.e. eschatology.

For our DC Group debates our question became “Will our discussion help lead others to Christ or potentially sidetrack our drive to lead others?”

Disagreement and speaking with passion is not a bad thing. In fact, it can offer a healthy opportunity to debate and force you to get past your passion and back up your viewpoint with facts. However, as topics like saved by grace, heaven, hell and the End Times will soon be discussed in your group, let me warn you. Do not let discussion, disagreement or passion get in the way of what our main purpose as Christians should be. And that main purpose boils down to bringing others to Christ.

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

This week’s application of the main memory verse: The next time you find yourself in a heated spiritual discussion, pause for a moment, and ask yourself am I helping lead others to Christ in this situation or am I more concerned about just winning the debate?

DC 402 Week 5 Memory Verse

“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? You believe that there is one God, Good! Even the demons believe that and shudder.” (James 2:14,19)

You have probably heard the story about a man whose home faced possible flooding. At first, as the forecasted strong winds and rain started coming down, some of his neighbors packed up and left their homes for higher ground. Firefighters were making their rounds in the neighborhood telling residents that they needed to evacuate. The man appreciated their concern, but simply didn't heed their warning and told the firemen, “I will be okay, God will watch out for me.”

He hunkered down on his front porch, waiting and watching to see how God would provide. As the flood waters continued to rise, lapping up and over the top step and started to get the man's feet wet, another emergency responder was evacuating residents using his motorized fishing boat. The man had the same response, “I will be okay, God will watch out for me.”

Hours passed and still God had not whisked away or protected the man in a supernatural sort of way. The man was getting somewhat frustrated, but he continued to place his faith in God whom he knew would save him. A local news helicopter offered to help him, but he gave his usual response, “I will be okay, God will watch out for me.”

Well, the man was not saved and he drowned due to the high water. When he met God in Heaven, the man asked the Creator, “Why didn't you save me?” To which Father God responded, “What else did you want me to do? I sent you a way out by foot, boat and helicopter.”

‘What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?’

This week's application of the main memory verse: The man in the house had faith, but his deeds didn't match his path. He knew God would save him but he wasn't willing to see how God was providing for him. How is God asking your deeds to match your faith today? Perhaps it involves on your career path, or a relationship. Whatever the situation is, ask God for your deeds to match your faith.

DC 402 Week 6 Memory Verse

“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” (1 John 5:13)

If there was a vaccine that was a guaranteed cure for cancer, don't you think most people would sign up for this? No matter the cost or how long someone would have to wait for such a cure, people would most certainly want it.

Why then do you think people are not as excited about the remedy for eternal life as they are for a possible cure for cancer?

Also, consider this, a potential cure for cancer is still a work in progress. Many advancements have been made in this area, but such a breakthrough has not been made yet. The remedy for eternal life with God has existed for more than 2,000 years. Of course, that remedy is believing and confessing that Jesus Christ is the son of God, born to a virgin, crucified, dead and buried and on the third day He arose from the dead.

“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” (1 John 5:13)

This week's application of the main memory verse: Pray for God to give you an opportunity this week to share the vaccine for eternal life with someone else. Besides praying about this, make sure to be ready to act when God presents you with such a chance.

DC 402 Week 7 Memory Verse

“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.” (2 Timothy 1:6-7)

I love to grill, what about you?

Many think that cooking with charcoal provides some of the best flavor. Truthfully, timing is everything with this type of meal preparation. If you put the meat on when there is still a large flame, “char”broiled takes on a new meaning. However, if you wait too long after the fire is nearly extinguished the coals may simply serve as “lifeless” ashes.

So too it is with our spiritual walk. If we are in a spiritual “lifeless” phase our embers may not be able to “fan into flame the gift of God.”

If you are reading this with concern, it’s never too late to burst back/reignite your spiritual fire.

You can stock up the woodpile for your spiritual “fire” with things like:

- Regular Bible study (outside of your assigned DC readings)
- Daily quiet time where you put down the distractions of life and intently listen to God’s leading.
- An accountability partner(s) who will help you to continually stoke your spiritual fire.

This week’s application of the main memory verse: How will you continue “to fan into flame the gift of God” this week? If your spiritual embers are approaching a “lifeless” phase, what will you do to reignite your flame this week?

Whatever your situation, pray for God to guide you on this path. Write below the actions you will undertake this week.

DC 402 Week 8 Memory Verse

“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” (1 Corinthians 12:7)

I have been known to exaggerate things from time to time. I would tell you that I have good intentions, but some might consider my exaggerations to be lies.

When I was younger I would regularly answer, “I will do it/be there in a minute” when I was regularly asked if I had started/finished my homework or cleaned my room yet. And, in many cases, those minutes might turn into a half-an-hour or more.

One of my more recent exaggerations might be a little thing where I say, “I am leaving in just a minute” (when 30 minutes pass until I actually leave work).

The root cause in these areas for me, probably involve my issues dealing with time management and conflict resolution. Added to that situation is the fact that I also fight being a procrastinator.

Yes, some might consider my exaggerations and procrastination to be small issues, but when you act that way in seemingly small areas, how does someone know they can trust you regarding the bigger picture issues?

For me, the “[common good](#)” that can come from the “[manifestation of the Spirit](#)” has come from a best friend who is not afraid to call me to the carpet. They might not think that it has helped me, but it has. Now it is just a matter of not only realizing the needed change in this area, but being more intentional to change my actions in these areas.

What about you?

This week’s application of the main memory verse: How has God or who has God placed in your life who shows you, “[Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.](#)”

Don’t dismiss that person that God wants you to listen to or that habit that He wants you to change. For me it’s about being more forthcoming with the little things and building more trust and earning more respect in the bigger picture.

DC 402 Memory Verse Review: Below are the memory verses from DC 402. Pick one word that God is telling you to hold onto from one of the memory verses below—e.g., faith from week 1. Write the word below and come up with an acronym.

For

All

I

Trust

Him

Week 1 “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for ... And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must first believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:1-2, verse 6 optional)

Week 2 “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” (Hebrews 12:1)

Week 3 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth.” (Acts 1:8)

Week 4 “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28)

Week 5 “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? You believe that there is one God, Good! Even the demons believe that and shudder.” (James 2:14,19)

Week 6 “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” (1 John 5:13)

Week 7 “For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.” (2 Timothy 1:6-7)

Week 8 “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” (1 Corinthians 12:7)

DC 403 Week 1 Memory Verse: “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:3)

My two biggest weak spots – chinks in my spiritual armor – are lust and pride/arrogance. I don’t celebrate those facts; I just admit that I know those are the two biggest areas that I must always be on guard against. What area(s) do you need the most defenses against?

Look at it this way, if you know you have an electrical wiring problem in your house - but do nothing about it - should it really surprise you if someday an electrical fire destroys your home?

For this week’s memory verse – and focusing on my weak spots – I want to share with you profound advice that was shared by one of my fellow DC brothers. My pride and arrogance issues primarily show up in areas when:

- I am backed into a corner and feel I am bottled into a defensive position
- I am in a disagreement where proving being right is more important than actually listening.

Instead of knocking against each other – like when you put one fist against the other or when rams lock horns – what if one in the disagreement isn’t more interested in continuing to fight but instead, lets their guard down. In essence, the other person isn’t facing resistance and so they won’t feel the need to ramp up their disagreement or anger.

Doug’s advice is great theory and wisdom that I am working to implement. However, for me that continues to be a work in progress. But I am committed to continuing to improve in that area.

Dropping your guard doesn’t mean you’re giving in. I have been known to “give in” with statements like “Yes dear” or “Whatever.” I am still a work in progress! When I do that, I miss the point of Doug’s advice and this week’s memory verse:

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

I underlined “every” as a reminder to me and to you that the verse doesn’t apply some of the time or it also isn’t intended only for some of the people we come in contact with, but every person and every time should be our goal.

This week’s application of the main memory verse: How will you work to keep the “unity of Spirit through the bond of peace” this week at Home, Work, and Church?

DC 403 Week 2 Memory Verse

“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.” (Philippians 2:1-2)

“How much more stress can I take?”

“Why did I commit to do this?”

“How much longer can I go on?”

I asked myself these questions regularly while running cross-country in high school. Typically those queries became most intense where I was at the point of total physical and mental exhaustion. In runners’ terms, this was where I had hit the “wall.” It was then while part of my mind and body wanted to quit, I had to push through the “wall” and stay focused to persevere to finish the race that I had started—enduring to keep up at least the same pace. We also can face a similar dilemma when we reach a spiritual “wall.”

This week, I want to focus on encouragement. Since you only have a few weeks left until you “graduate”, look back to where you started and how you have been able to push through the time or times when you faced a spiritual “wall.” Or perhaps you are staring at such an obstacle now.

To be “united with Christ... having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.”

During Christ’s ministry on Earth, He led in many ways, demonstrating love, fellowship, tenderness, compassion and joy.

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Think back to when you first started this DC journey. Now, fast forward almost 21 months later and make a list celebrating how He has changed you through this study, specifically highlighting changes in the 5 areas above. As a way to double check your progress, see if your spouse or someone else close to you would agree with your self-evaluation.

DC 403 Week 3 Memory Verse

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far.” (Philippians 1:21,23)

I have to admit that I struggled with this verse in the past. Not so much the first part of “For to me, to live is Christ...” but the last portion of the first part of the verse of “to die is gain” challenged me and it still does somewhat to this day.

Yes, I am looking forward to eternity and spending that time in Heaven with Jesus. The part that tended to trip me up was thinking about the possible painful death that I may have to go through to get there.

My earliest fear about the possible pain in death goes back to my teenage years when I was a part of a Revelation Bible Study in my church’s youth group. As a part of the study we watched a movie depicting what the end times might look like. For those that did not take on the “mark of the beast” and bow down to the anti-Christ, those people would be beheaded by guillotine. That was a traumatic impression on a 15-year-old.

I was reminded of my fear while watching the news reporting of a recent terrorist attack at a large shopping mall in Kenya, Africa. According to news reports, the attackers were a group of radical militants with ties to a group linked to Al-Qaeda. The alarming part of the story is that the attackers apparently decided who lived and who died, based primarily on the criteria of their faith. If someone could speak Arabic or could recite any verses of the Koran, they lived. Otherwise, they were murdered.

A man who learned that his sister, a non-Muslim, was one of the potential captives in the mall, texted a Muslim prayer for her to memorize and recite it if she was apprehended by the terrorists. For me that was my real-life “guillotine” moment, where it forced me to think about what would I do if I was in the sister’s shoes. What would you do?

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Pray and surrender any area that you may be holding onto that keeps you being “torn between the two” (this life and eternity with Jesus).

For me, it is letting go of the fear of a painful death and embracing what lies beyond my earthly grave with a “desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far.”

DC 403 Week 4 Memory Verse

“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather be afraid of the One who can destroy both body and soul in hell” (Matthew 10:28).

Satan has many tools in his arsenal, including using many addictions – i.e. drugs, alcohol, lust, food, pornography, etc. –to lead people down paths that can “destroy both body and soul in hell.” Those addictions are real and we must always be on guard against those temptations in our lives and in the lives of those closest to us. They are the false gods that separate us from the One True God.

But what do we do when Satan doesn’t necessarily come on a frontal attack, but twists the idea of free will to his advantage, similar to how he appealed to Eve and Adam’s nature in the Garden of Eden? ‘You will not certainly die,’ the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Genesis 3:4-5)

Maybe he waters a seed of doubt about God’s intentions or prods us to have a “hands-off” approach and stand by passively not intervening in another Christian brother or sister’s immoral choices. As an example, during my first marriage, an inappropriate relationship developed between my then wife and another man. The inappropriate relationship spilled over at work, in our home, and even at our church. Many people witnessed and knew of their behavior. But to my knowledge, nobody but me confronted them or held them accountable for their relationship at work or even at church.

It’s almost like Satan convinced those witnessing this behavior to rationalize with reasoning like, “Their marital problems are none of my business. I shouldn’t meddle.”

‘Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather be afraid of the One who can destroy both body and soul in hell’

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Satan’s evil ways are becoming more evident each day. And in this politically-correct culture, many people are content to stand on the sidelines and not participate, but just watch the continual degradation of our core principles and beliefs.

How will you make a stand to not only protect yourself and those around you, but proclaim to your sphere of influence that they should “be afraid of the One who can destroy both body and soul in hell”?

DC 403 Week 5 Memory Verse

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the order of things has passed away.” (Revelation 21:4).

In preparing to write each week’s devotion, after I read the memory verse, I pray to God, “Reveal what you want others to hear and guide my thoughts and ideas in a way that gives You the glory.” God talks and I try to listen. The process for this week’s devotion didn’t come as easily or quickly. Then it hit me. I think that you too will see what I realized after you answer the question below regarding different areas of your life.

What has caused you to mourn, cry or be in pain in your life regarding:

- Sports – I have been known to mourn, sometimes inappropriately, when my favorite team loses a game; but I also have been in a great deal of physical pain suffering through different sports injuries, including the concussion I suffered playing tennis. What about you?
- Love – I suffered far too many break-ups throughout my dating life which caused the pain of a broken heart. What about you?
- Family – I was blessed to get to know 3 of my 8 great-grandparents and all 4 of my grandparents. But I have mourned the loss of most of that older generation. What about you?

Which part of our lives hasn’t suffered through tears, pain, or mourning? NONE.

It’s hard to comprehend something that is impossible in our lives, but when “[the order of things has passed away](#)” Heaven is a place free of crying, mourning, death or pain. I think I will be crying tears of joy that is for God loving me and welcoming me into eternity despite my sin-filled, selfish nature.

This week’s application of the main memory verse . Think of one of the most painful, grief-stricken moments of your life. Now imagine that God “[will wipe every tear from \(your\) eyes.](#)” It gives me joy and relief to imagine God providing me such comfort.

With that sense of a load being lifted feeling, now write down or draw a picture of what you believe Heaven has in store for you?

DC 403 Week 6 Memory Verse

“In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.” (Proverbs 16:9).

One example, for me, of this week’s memory verse coming to life happened several years ago. I was heartbroken and lonely after my divorce. I tried to fill the void by jumping immediately into dating. Not surprisingly, none of those relationships lasted.

For me “In his heart a man plans his course” I was looking around for love of someone else, when I should have been looking up only to the One who can wholly and fully fill the void I was feeling – Jesus Christ. It wasn’t that I didn’t believe in Him, or even trust in Him, but I tended to place loving someone else, and feeling their earthly love back, higher than loving Him first.

I really shouldn’t be surprised, then, that things changed as I focused on serving and loving Him above all others. My service and focus on Him involved preparing to retell His story in our church’s Passion play. By reprioritizing my love life an amazing thing happened. When I wasn’t looking for love through someone else, He placed an amazing woman in my life as a new friend. Christ then built that new bond into a romance and then into a marriage.

It’s not a fairy tale marriage – and I must tell you that “happily ever afters” only happen in Disney movies. Our union is what my wife and I would call a realistic God-centered adventure. Yes, we do regularly let each other down, but by focusing our lives, marriage and homes on Him first, He has blessed us beyond what we ever thought possible.

Maybe your “plans” revolve around your love of job or of money. And perhaps, like me, you have found that no matter how hard you try to reach a higher sense of satisfaction it is not working for you, and maybe even you feel a decreased amount of contentment.

If you let go and let ... “the Lord determines (your) steps”, don’t be surprised if He blesses you with a new level of contentment and satisfaction.

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Think how you have planned your course in your Faith, Love, Family, and Work. Now pray about a “detour” by letting “the Lord determines (your) steps”. Ask God to reveal where He needs/wants you to go from here. What do you sense God is telling you about your Faith, Love, Family, and Work?

DC 403 Week 7 Memory Verse

“Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

I have been amazed by two groups of people:

- Cancer patients and their families I have gotten to know through work, volunteering, and church
- 3rd-world residents living in what was called “the Hole.” I witnessed this group’s incredible level of contentment on a mission trip to the Dominican Republic.

Both groups joy was evident and very visible. Many of those people lived out this week’s memory verse to “Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances...’

The cancer patients (and their families) had a magnified sense that they (or their loved one) might not live to see another day. If they lived, they would face pain and traumatic side effects from cancer treatments. Yet, they lived in the moment, not worrying about the future or fretting over the past, but relishing the opportunity to lean into the Lord.

The 3rd-world residents had no sanitation or clean drinking water, had a landfill dumped in their creek, and lived in “homes” made of cinder blocks or shacks with metal siding and roofing. They had a small fraction of what the “average” American family possesses and has access to. But their contentment level was far greater than a typical American.

Both groups display a stark contrast with my reactions when faced with hard times:

- My first wife betrayed our marriage and divorced me. I was filled with bitterness and depression.
- I was laid off after 12 years with a company. I reacted with anger and frustration.
- I interviewed for new potential jobs, but was passed over. I felt disappointed.

Joy, prayer and thanksgiving eventually replaced my negative reactions. It wasn’t always easy for that transformation to remain, but God showed up in my life in amazing ways:

- After my divorce, I discovered a renewed, deeper relationship with Jesus.
- Following being unemployed, I was blessed with a job about a month later.
- Going through the interview process encouraged me to sharpen my skills and be better prepared for my next opportunity.

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Pray and ask God to show what area of your life that you are being a “Negative Norman or Nancy” and ask Him to transform you to a “Joyful Joe or Joyce.”

DC 403 Week 8 Memory Verse

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.” (James 1:2-3)

Joy is not the word I would use to describe the middle of the trial I faced on September 30 and October 1, 2006. **Exhaustion, fear** and **desperation** are more appropriate words.

I had planned a hike in the Spring Mountains of Nevada with a friend of mine. Our goal for the first afternoon was to hike four or five miles and reach 10,500 feet above sea level to set-up camp that night—before ascending onto Mount Charleston (the highest peak in Nevada at over 12,000 feet) the next day. Along the way, Jim was becoming more and more physically fatigued, while I was challenged more mentally. "Are we there yet?" took on new meaning, as I was sure our campsite "had to be just over the next ridge"

Dusk was starting to set in and there were no suitable campsites to set up along the way; we had to reach the ridge quickly. Through the next part of our ordeal. I can attest “[that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.](#)” While we had passed dozens of hikers earlier, we were becoming desperate that the trail had become deserted—so nobody could help us if we couldn’t go on.

Of course, we really weren’t alone; God was always there. At one point, while we waited for Jim to catch his breath, we asked God to sustain us physically and mentally and also for Him to send us a helper. (Later we would learn that Jim had started suffering from pulmonary edema—a buildup of fluid in the lungs, a high-elevation sickness that can be life-threatening if not treated.) We continued and then as I turned around to check on Jim behind me, I spotted another person hiking up the mountain. I excitedly hollered back to Jim, “There’s another nut coming up the trail behind us.” That “nut” turned out to be one Dr. Tom—a God-send. Not only was he a cardiac specialist, but he also had an inhaler with him that helped treat and lessen the severity of Jim’s condition.

After that experience, I am joy-filled to have been witness to the incredible way that God showed up. We did reach the ridge top later that night. The next morning we rightfully decided to reverse course and get back to the lower elevation of our base camp to aid Jim’s recovery as quickly as possible.

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Think back to a trial you faced in your life - perhaps it was at home, work or even at church. Write down how your faith was tested and how by persevering you were changed?

DC 403 Week 9 Memory Verse

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21)

In DC 202, we talked about 1 Timothy 6:10 and the “love of money.” While that same application can be made regarding this week’s memory verse, I want to take a slightly different focus. Yes, “treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy” can definitely be financial. But what about those treasures that dust can also erode?

- A dusty Bible can be a sign of an eroding faith.
- Cobwebs and dust gather on my childhood book collections.
- Trophies and sports memorabilia have become tarnished through the years.

While visiting my parents’ home a few years ago, I looked over some of my childhood collection and came across a “game ball” stored on a bookshelf, awarded to me for my pitching performance in a Little League championship game when I was 14—some 20 years earlier. The ball was preserved in a plastic case, but what was I keeping it safe from? It is fun to sometimes think of past awards and accomplishments. But it struck me that the only thing the ball was really doing at that point was cluttering up the bookshelf.

It’s almost as if holding onto the ball allowed me to relive memories and allowed me to feel better about the present. Now it’s important to remember the past, but not to try to relive or dwell in it. The lesson should be more about learning from it and making things better today. I decided to resuscitate the game ball and bring it back to “life,” so to speak.

I awarded the game ball to a teenager who I wanted to encourage. He happened to play in the same league I played in years before. In giving him the game ball, I also signed the ball with a note of encouragement and the challenge to him that when he felt the time was right I hoped that he would pass the ball on to someone else who needed to be lifted up. I also told him I hoped it wouldn’t take him 20 years to do so.

‘For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.’

This week’s application of the main memory verse: What earthly “treasures” are you holding onto? Maybe it’s something financial; maybe it’s a material item like a baseball or old book you haven’t read in years. Don’t keep those things to yourself, but pray and ask God how He wants you to use those things for His glory.

DC 403 Week 10 Memory Verse

“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” (II Timothy 2:2)

The “telephone game” was popular when I was a kid. As a refresher – or for those of you that aren’t familiar with this activity – here is the simple set of rules.

- The leader thinks of a statement—e.g, “Cars are a reliable way to get around.”
- Then he/she whispers that statement in the person’s ear next to them.
- The receiver then passes on what they heard to the next person.
- This repetition continues until you’ve gone all the way back around to the leader.

For those of you who have played this game before, what is the common problem that typically occurs as the message is being relayed around the group? Answer: The message can become quite twisted. By the time the last person recites what he was told, often times it doesn’t sound anything like the original version. “Cars are a reliable way to get around.” Might become something like “Going to bars is a good way to get yourself grounded.”

Sidebar: For those of you who text more than talk on your phone - I understand this game might be hard to comprehend – However, for those of us who didn’t grow up with texting, owning a cell phone or even a laptop, you can appreciate the point of “telephone.”

In this game, you don’t get a chance to reread a text or the instant message; you have to rely on the person next to you to reliably pass on the message that was started by the leader of the game. So equating the game of “telephone” to sharing your faith, what message are others hearing about Jesus from you?

You have invested the past 21 months to being “thoroughly equipped.” Now pass it on.

‘And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.’

This week’s application of the main memory verse: Give God the praise and thanksgiving for you reaching this milestone. But don’t stay in celebration mode too long. This is knowledge and spiritual truth you’ve been entrusted with. Now ask God to show you ways you can share what you have learned about the grace, knowledge and love of Jesus with others.

“Workin’ On It”

Congratulations on arriving at a significant checkpoint on what should be your lifetime Discipleship journey/adventure/challenge! But as we’ve said throughout, the learning should always continue.

“Workin’ On It” is something that I often told my kids when they were younger and we were at a local park. While I was pushing them on a swingset, one of my girls would quickly say, “Push Me Higher!” I would answer back, “What do you say?”

“Please,” as they looked back at me with a sparkle in their Kindergarten and early Elementary-aged blue eyes. “What do I say?” I asked them back. “Workin’ On It.”

Our lives should always be a work in progress – with that momentum focused on improvement. We should be a better person, spouse, parent, sibling, friend, child of God than we were yesterday, 21 months ago, or even five or 10 years ago.

Please don’t be too hard on yourself. The only perfect person who has ever walked the Earth is Jesus. We should always strive to be like Him. But there will be times in your life when it seems like your improvement slows down to an almost standstill. Don’t let the past bog you down or be distracted with thoughts of the future, and cause you to miss the abundant life in Christ right in front of you. Be the best child of God you can be today!

Of course, we can’t do it by ourselves. In fact, my selfish, human tendencies have many times gotten in the way of what God the Father wants for me.

So when you are on the spiritual “swing set” with God the Father, and you ask Him to “Push Me Higher!” When He responds with “Workin’ On It” don’t say “I can’t,” “I won’t,” “I need,” “Not now,” “But what about ...?”

Just be patient, listen, and wait to see the amazing things God can do through you – not because of you, but many times in spite of you. His timing is always perfect.

So as you journey to your next spiritual checkpoint, we really have circled back to the beginning: **“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen!” (2 Peter 3:18)**