

Camelback Bible Church



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REFLECTING THE SELF-GIVING GOD

The Plan: Reclaiming All Things for God's Glory (Part 2)
Philippians 2:5-8

There have been many *eureka* moments in history.

Eureka is the ancient Greek word which means "I found it." It was used most famously by the Greek mathematician, Archimedes, when he stepped into his bath and noticed that the water level rose in proportion to how much of his body was submerged, indicating to him that the volume of irregular objects could now be measured with precision.

He was so excited by the discovery that he leaped out of the bathtub and ran through the streets of Syracuse naked shouting, "*Eureka!*" "I found it!"

Eureka was also the word used in 1848 at Sutter's Mill in California when gold was discovered. And now the word is enshrined on the state seal. "I found it!"

There have been lots of *eureka* moments. But none more significant than the moment the early apostles discovered the key to the most important puzzle in history. The answer to the question what does it mean to be in the image of God?

For centuries humans knew they were created in God's image. On the first page of their Bibles was inscribed this extraordinary word from God: *Let us create man in our image*. But no one could say definitively what the word meant.

And then it happened, the biggest moment in the history of the world. *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we saw his glory. Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

The Word became flesh and revealed God's glory. *He* [the Word] *made* [God] *known*. (John 1:14, 18)

Who is this Word? It is Jesus.

"*Eureka!*" the apostles must have shouted. We found it: the answer to the biggest question of all. What it means to image God and his glory. It means Jesus! He *is* the image of God.

If you want to know what the image of God looks like in a human being, look at Jesus. And no passage in the Bible provides a more penetrating look at Jesus than Philippians 2.

The Content of the Image of God

Here is my translation of Philippians 2, starting in verse 5 – *Have the same disposition in you that was also in Christ Jesus who, because he existed in the form of God, did not regard his lofty status of equality with God as an opportunity for self-grasping, but rather he regarded it as a calling to do just the opposite, to empty himself, taking on the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men, being found in shape as a man, and to humble himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of a cross.*

This may be the most important paragraph ever written about Jesus. It's very profound. I've spent hundreds of hours meditating on the riches of these words, always finding, as it is with God's word, something new, something deeper, something even more wonderful than what I had seen before.

Let's reflect briefly on some of its truths. First of all, Paul throws at us a series of contrasts. Verse 6 – Jesus existed in *the form of God* and yet verse 7 – Jesus took on *the form of a slave*. Paul uses the same phrases here, but changes one word. *The form of God. The form of a slave.*

Also in verse 6, Jesus enjoyed *equality with God*. He was God. He was equal to God and yet in verse 7 we read he was *born in the likeness of men*. All men are born to die and if Jesus is born in the likeness of men, then he too will die. And not just any death: verse 8 spells out the horror – *even the death of a cross.*

We are meant to recoil in amazement at what we're reading here, astonished that it could possibly be true. It strains our categories to the point of rupture; that one could be both in the form of God and in the form of a slave. That one could be both equal to God and yet in shape as a man. That the same person could be cloaked with the glory of heaven and yet condemned to death on a cross. Two more polar opposites you could not conceive than the exalted Christ of heaven and the humble Christ of crucifixion. In every specie of human reasoning the two are mutually exclusive, impossible to be bound together in the same person.

But we're not talking about human reasoning. We're talking the mind of God. He not only can comprehend this apparent contradiction - Christ of glory, Christ of the cross - he requires it. There's one word in verse 8 that we often miss and read over. Look at verse 8 – *And being found in shape as a man, he humbled himself by becoming **obedient** to the point of death, even the death of (on) a cross.*

The exalted Christ was obeying someone when he mounted a despicable cross. Who was he obeying? His Father in heaven. God, of course. It was God who demanded that Jesus do the impossible; embrace two mutually exclusive positions. Be both the Christ of heaven and the Christ of earth, both equal to God and die a humble death.

Self-Emptying Rather than Self-Grasping

Now the kicker!

How do you explain how one person can be simultaneously in the form of God and in the form of a slave? Give me a word to process what's happening here.

All right, says the Lord. I'll give you a word: *kenao*. It's the Greek word used at the pivot point in this majestic passage. Verse 6 – *Because he existed in the form of God he did not regard his lofty status with God as an opportunity to be used for self-grasping, but rather as a calling to do just the opposite, to kenao himself. Translated to empty himself.*

That's what explains the impossible transition from exalted in heaven to defiled on a cross – *He emptied himself.*

The scholars have spent many decades debating with this word *keano*, to empty. For a long time, they asked the question: of what did Christ empty himself? And their answer: probably of his noncommunicable attributes. Communicable means you can communicate. You can pass them on. There are certain attributes, however, that Jesus couldn't pass on to us, such as his noncommunicable attributes. Like his omnipotence, all powerful. His omniscience, all knowing. His omnipresent, everywhere present. These are the attributes, so say the scholars, he had to give up when he became a man; the things he emptied himself of.

There's a problem with this interpretation. This isn't a passage about *forfeiting* what he essentially is. It's a passage about *expressing* who he essentially is. Verse 6 – *Because he existed in the form of God he expressed himself by emptying himself.* It's not in spite of the fact that he was God, he emptied him. It was *because* he was in the form of God he emptied him.

This isn't a passage about Jesus divesting himself of something, but about Jesus investing himself completely.

This becomes very clear in verse 6 where Paul says – *Jesus did not regard his lofty status of equality with God as an opportunity for self-grasping, but rather as a calling to do just the opposite, to empty himself.* Jesus isn't tight-fisted with regard to who he is. He is not self-grasping. Rather, he is open-handed, self-emptying.

Have you ever met anyone who is prepared to empty so much of himself into you as Jesus?! He is willing to leave the accolades of the angels of heaven in order to mount the splintered beams of an abominable cross. Has anyone ever given so much of himself to you?

Jesus is infinitely self-giving!!! That's what Paul is saying here. Unlike us, Jesus is not tight-fisted, but open-handed. He is not self-grasping, but self-giving. He pours all of his infinite self into that cross for our sake.

Glory and love and peace and justice and truth and grace, all that he essentially is, poured into a cross for our sake. Are you standing in the flow of this infinite stream of the self-emptying of

Jesus? Are you catching draughts of its eternal refreshment? Are you being washed by its cleansing waters? Is your heart being renewed daily by the unlimited self-giving of Jesus?

Because there's one more thing we've got to say about this. The infinite torrential perfect self-emptying of Jesus is not just what God uses to make you a better person, forgiving your sins and saving you for eternal life. It *is* the better person God made you to be.

Go back again to verse 5 – *Have the same disposition in you that was in Christ Jesus who, because he existed in the form of God was not self-grasping but self-giving.* This phrase, *in the form of God*, is a phrase nearly synonymous with *in the image of God*. The two phrases are interchangeable.

Because he was in the image of God, he emptied himself, he was self-giving. Here is what it means to be in the image of God. Here is light shed on one of the most important phrases in the Bible – the image of God. What does it mean? Look at Jesus. To be in the image of God means to be infinitely self-emptying, infinitely self-giving. That is what God is like. To image him means to be like what he is like – which Jesus makes clear to us. Jesus didn't grasp for himself. He gave himself infinitely in obedience to God, in the cross, for us. This is a beautiful truth and yet it's easy to miss.

Image of God in Practice

Think of it this way. The triune God is a God in relation. God is a family of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Not three gods, but three Persons. The triune God in relation. Now what does the triune God do in relation? He does what is in his very essence to do: give and give and give. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit giving of themselves to each other, all three constantly pouring themselves out into the others. The Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Father, the Holy Spirit glorifies both the Father and the Son. There is no self-grasping or tight-fistedness in the triune Godhead in relation, only open-handedness and self-giving.

And what makes this relevant to us is that we were created in the image of God to bear his likeness. And for so long we've wondered what that meant. Now we know. The answer couldn't be more magnificent.

We were created to be images of the same self-giving that we see in God, in Christ, in the Holy Spirit when they empty themselves into each other.

What does this mean in practice? Well, what did it look like in practice for Jesus? It looked like this: first, Jesus looks down from heaven and sees humanity fallen in its sins, and his Father says to Jesus, "I want you to save them from their sins." And Jesus responds, "I will obey you, Father. I will do this." And he comes to earth and literally, after identifying our greatest needs, picks up our lives and bears them on his shoulders. He carries our lives all the way to the killing tree, and there bears the death for sins that we ought to have borne. He gives up his life so that we don't have to give up ours.

And we can almost hear God saying, “That is what it means to image me.” Picking up the lives of another and living those lives as though they were your own. Self-emptying – the willingness to carry our lives, no matter the cost, no matter the sacrifice, even the sacrifice of death on a cross.

Remember the lawyer who asked Jesus, “Tell us about love. What is it?” Do you remember how Jesus responded? He told them the story about the Good Samaritan. What is that story all about? It’s about a man from Samaria who sees a Jewish man lying in a ditch, the victim of brigands. And the Samaritan, rather than passing by on the other side of the road, stops what he was doing, picks up the victim, and takes him for help. And Jesus comments, “That’s how you love your neighbor.” It’s not a matter simply of loving your neighbor instead of yourself, as though you were dispensing to the neighbor the same kind of love you would give yourself. It’s much bigger than that. It’s taking up the life of your neighbor and making it your own, hoisting the neighbor onto your own back, living the neighbor’s life as though it were your own.

We were made for precisely this, made to manifest the image of God – to image in our earthly relationships what we see in the triune God in relation, namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit emptying their entire selves into each other.

Ministering to people at the point of their needs, no matter the cost; bearing up people in their needs. That’s what we were made for!

Have you ever heard this before? You were made in the image of God. Jesus perfectly reflects that image. In Jesus we see one who is not tight-fisted and self-grasping, but open-handed and self-giving. He took up the lives of others and made them his own, emptying all of himself in the process.

So must we. It’s our reason for being. We are a man and woman for others, and hence we are a man and a woman reflecting God.

That’s going to take a complete re-orientation of our outlook in life. We’re all pretty self-focused.

Precisely – and that’s why we need to get Jesus into us. You can’t reflect the image of God unless Jesus is in you because you won’t in your own strength have the ability to be infinitely self-giving. We’re all self-grasping. We need *supernatural* assistance. Jesus dwelling in us, reproducing within our hearts His own self-emptying goodness.

If Jesus is not in your heart, you can’t be fully human. You can’t reflect the image of God. You need the supernatural assistance of Jesus enabling you to be self-giving, like God is, like Christ is, who is the perfect image of God.

If Jesus is not dwelling in your heart, you’re never going to be as human as you want to be. You’ll go the self-grasping route and it won’t work. Jesus will come into your heart if you ask him for forgiveness of your sins, to clean up your heart so that he can come and dwell in you.

Is Jesus living in you? Do you see evidence that you are a new person no longer living for yourself, but for him, for others? Do you see evidence that you're imaging God?

Ask your wife. Ask her if she feels that you put down your life and pick up hers, and that you are now living her life as though it were your own, that her life is more important to you than your life. Ask your husband. "Do you feel like I've picked up your life and have made it my life and I'm carrying it now as though it were my own life?" Ask your children. Then when you get an honest answer, go to the Lord and say, "Lord, please help Christ to be formed up more fully in my life. I want more and more of Christ."

We can never be fully like Christ until the day we see him face to face, but, until then we can be in route. We can be in process. The supernatural work of God can be performed in us, in which we become more and more like Christ.

A couple days ago, I went into the bank to change the name on my dad's account to my name. I sat down with the teller and I told him why I was there. He said, "Oh, I'm sorry. I lost both my parents before I was the age of twenty. Legally I was an orphan until I was twenty-five." You know what I was thinking? "I don't want to hear this. This is the toughest week of my life. I've just lost my dad. And I really don't want to hear about your problems."

But you know what happened? The Lord supernaturally worked in my heart. That's all I can say. The last thing I wanted to do was give of myself to somebody at that point. But I said, "Oh really, I'm so sorry to hear that. That must have been so difficult. Tell me about it." We talked for an hour at his desk about the difficulties that he has had. I got to talk to him about the Heavenly Father and I got to talk to him about Jesus Christ. I got to talk to him about forgiveness of sins. I got to talk to him about new life in Christ.

The next day I had to go back and complete some of the work. He was there at the door to greet me. He said, "Tim, I've been thinking all night about what you talked to me about yesterday." Father, thank you. I didn't want to give in this way. But, supernaturally, because Christ, the self-giving One, is living in me, I did. Thank you Heavenly Father.

Maybe some of you are saying, "I don't know if I want to stop living for myself and start living for others. It might not work out in my favor. I might have to bear a few crosses." You will. Lots of crosses. In particular, the crosses of others.

Image of God in Exaltation

But you know what? Things worked out pretty well for Jesus, and they will work out well for you too. Right after we read that he has emptied himself and gone to the cross, we discover this in Philippians 2:9 – *Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

I'd say it turned out all right for Jesus. "Name above every name!" But that, one might say, is just Jesus. No, it's you too. When you, like Jesus, image God and start to pour yourself into others, your life will be filled with an exalted sense of purpose. You will discover a joy and a glory that you've been looking for all your life. Admittedly, you've been looking for it by self-grasping, but now, suddenly, you're going to discover that what you've always wanted, fullness of life, comes when you empty yourself on behalf of others. That's the path to exaltation. Exaltation by self-emptying!

I went away from the bank saying, "God, this has been the most painful week of my life and yet I'm experiencing a joy that's so fulfilling. This is why you left me on earth. If I can't go and join my parents right now, then I want to spend the rest of my life living the life of Jesus for others."

The biblical authors were not spinning their wheels when they wrote *it is more blessed to give than to receive*. That's not a throw-away aphorism that you put on Christmas cards. Think about it! Blessed, happy, more fulfilling to give of yourself as God gives himself, as Jesus gives himself.

Jesus said, "The most exalted thing is to become *a slave of all men*." (Mark 10) Oh man. Does that ever fly in the face of our day?

Again, Jesus said, "I didn't come to *be served*, I came to *serve*. You want to know what serving is? Giving my life *a ransom for many* people. I carried them to the cross and I set them free through my blood. *The first will be last, and the last will be first*." (Mark 10) It's just the opposite of the way that we think it ought to be. Exaltation by self-emptying – amazing!

Have you discovered what it means to image God by living for others?! I'm not saying have you discovered what it means to be God. None of us can be God, but we can be like him. We can image him. We have been created according to his likeness, which we fulfill by living for others. You want more exaltation? You want purpose? You want joy? Re-orient yourself. Stop being self-grasping, start being self-giving. Take up the life of others and make their lives your life, whatever the cost, and you will be exalted.

Can you see now why God created us male and female? We learned last week how God's image is effected relationally, globally, therapeutically, gloriously. Let's go through those each real quickly.

God created us in his image as male and female. You can't reflect God's image unless you do it relationally. If it's this radical thing called self-emptying love, you can't express that love unless there is another to whom to express it. To be self-giving like God is self-giving, there must be at least one other into whom your pour yourself. There must be a community of at least two in relation. There must be at least male and female.

We learned, secondly, about the global. Can you see now why God commanded us to be fruitful and multiply and fill the whole earth? To fill the earth with his self-giving image. Oh what a world it would be if we imaged the self-emptying God in relation to the ends of the earth. All the earth's problems, every one of them, would vanish.

Why? Because, thirdly, we effect the image therapeutically – subduing the earth through multiple expressions of self-emptying love. When we fan out across the earth and we're pouring out relationally God's love, Christ's love, into other people, what a beautiful and healthy world this becomes. Every problem solved. Everything that ails this earth would be solved if every human being inhabiting the earth would express self-emptying love. There would be no war. There would be no divorce. There would be no strife. There would be no discord. There would be no conflict. The Plan of imaging God works. It's sheer genius!

And the fourth thing we looked at last week, gloriously. Can you see now why God equated the image of God and the glory of God? What glorifies God more than imaging who he is, reproducing his glory? And what is the glory? It's the self-emptying God in relation. When we replicate his self-giving in the lives of others, we glorify him.

Did you ever wonder what it meant to glorify God? Well here you have it. Not just sitting back and enjoying him forever. But standing up and reproducing his likeness throughout all the earth – the likeness of his self-emptying goodness in relation.

When we were in Canada a few years ago, the Canadians were celebrating the 500th anniversary of the discovery of their shores by John Cabot, the Venetian explorer. As Americans, we don't even know the story because our own story features Christopher Columbus. But Canadians have a favorite explorer too. When we were there they wanted to glorify this man's achievement. The way they did it was by reproducing his original discovery.

In England, they built a replica of his boat, the *Matthew*. They built it to original specifications. They staffed it with the exact number of the original crew. They set out at the same time of year and arrived in the St. Lawrence River at about the same date as they did back then. The Queen was there with a retinue of bagpipes and they fired off a cannon salute. They were glorifying their favorite son by replicating his original achievement.

How do you glorify God? By reproducing the essence of who he is, by replicating his self-giving love. This is how we glorify God. We don't just sit back and enjoy him. We stand up and express his self-emptying goodness. We reproduce the same glory that we see in the Godhead. Not quite as bright, but just as powerful.

How Self-Giving Can Change the Character of Our World

You can see why I said last week that we can change the character of our world. You should expect to change the character of your world if Jesus is living within you – starting with your own life. Jesus will come out of you. His self-emptying goodness will be expressed through you when you begin to pick up people's lives, carrying them at their points of needs - the boss, the colleague, the classmate, the neighbor - and your self-giving expressions towards them will change them in the same way as Christ changed you.

As more and more of us image God in our community, we will see people in our community change. Christ will come to people, through us. They'll be saved, they'll be reborn, and He'll live in them too. And they in turn will become self-giving and the cycle will repeat itself.

The Self-Giving Love of William Wilberforce

I read a biography on my writing leave about a sickly man with a weak constitution who changed the entire character of his times and for generations to come. His name was William Wilberforce, member of the British Parliament in the late eighteenth century.

He was born into great wealth. He owned at one time five homes, the smallest of which had twenty-five rooms. As a young man he was a heavy partier and, in his words, completely squandered his education at Cambridge, wasting his life on worthless pursuits. But he used his wealth to purchase a seat in the House of Commons and quickly became closest friends with the Prime Minister at the time, William Pitt the Younger.

And then God came after him, convicted him of his sins, and drew him to Christ. And he began to fill Wilberforce with who he, God, essentially is. Wilberforce immediately gave up his membership in the five prestigious social clubs in London to which, in his self-grasping, had given so much of his time and he became, supernaturally, a self-giving man.

It alarmed Pitt the Younger. He wrote a bold letter to Wilberforce and said, "Please re-examine your ideas. I think you are mistaken." In other words, don't get religious on me. We've got important political work to do.

Fortunately, Wilberforce listened, not to William Pitt, but to the pastor John Newton, who wrote "Amazing Grace". Newton helped lead Wilberforce to Christ and gave him other counsel – "The Lord has raised you up for the good of his church and for the good of the nation."

Wilberforce saw his calling in Christ to be like Christ. Taking up the troubled lives of others and living those lives as though they were his own life whatever the cost. The obvious candidates for the title of "troubled souls" were slaves of the British Empire, who were enmeshed in the despicable practice of the slave trade. For the next forty years of his life, Wilberforce labored tirelessly and at great cost to his own health to abolish it.

And finally the day came, only a few hours before Wilberforce died. Trevelyan, the great English historian, wrote – "On the last night of slavery, the negroes in our Empire went up on to the hill-tops to watch the sun rise, bringing them freedom as its first rays struck the waters." They wanted to see that new day dawn. All because of the work of one sick, weakly man.

When Wilberforce first entered Parliament, there were three other Christians in a house of over five hundred members. When he left forty years later, there were hundreds of Christians in Parliament. It used to be that a person would join Parliament for reasons of personal advancement. During Wilberforce's tenure, that changed dramatically. A person joined

Parliament to make a better life for the people of the nation. It was Wilberforce's way. It was Christ's way, who indwelt Wilberforce.

As Wilberforce himself said: "Christianity assumes her true character when she takes under protection those poor degraded beings on whom the secular world looks down with disdain or perhaps with contemptuous condescension."

He worked his whole life for "poor degraded beings." He hoisted their causes onto his own shoulders. He lived their lives as though they were his own.

And not just the lives of slaves. He also worked for penal reform against flogging in the army, against female infanticide in India, against animal abuse in Britain.

He formed several societies. The Asylum for the Support and Encouragement of the Deaf and Dumb Children of the Poor. The Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor. The Institution for the Relief of the Poor of the City of London and Parts Adjacent. The Society for the Relief of the Industrious Poor. The British National Endeavor for the Orphans of Soldiers and Sailors. The Asylum House of Refuge for the Redemption of Orphaned Girls the Settlements of Whose Parents Cannot Be Found. The Institute for the Protection of Young Girls.

All of these were begun by Wilberforce.

Twenty-five percent of women in late eighteenth century London were prostitutes. Wilberforce couldn't abide this. He started the Friendly Female Society for the Relief of Poor, Infirm, Aged Widows and Single Women Who Have Seen Better Days.

One man did this. A weak and sickly man. Why did he do this? Listen to his own words: "I caught sight of the crucified Christ and it inspired me." He saw the self-emptying love of Christ on the cross and prayed that it could be reproduced in his life too.

And then he added: "If the contemplation here can produce these effects on my hard heart, what will the vision of Christ in glory produce hereafter?"

The Self-Giving Love of Christ in My Father

I think of my dad and my mom, what they must be like now, imaging God perfectly in heaven by their Christ-like love. How beautiful they must be now because they were amazingly beautiful here.

This week I have been going through my dad's effects. It's an interesting word. Effects. I like that word. Going through his effectiveness. When somebody goes through your life effectiveness, what will they find? Want to know what I found this week? I found hundreds of letters I didn't know existed; letters written by my dad, emptying himself into others.

He was a high powered businessman; appointments to keep, a full itinerary, everyone wanting a piece of him. I knew he gave himself to his children. Now I am finding out how much of himself he gave to others.

Listen to this letter. A man he met on vacation in Switzerland.

“Dear Jerry,

Do you remember our walk together down the Gornergrat by the Matterhorn? I think you will recall our discussion of the possibility of having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Knowing him as a living friend as well as Savior and Lord, possessing *now* God’s everlasting life and the inexhaustible benefits he wants to give in this life. Having absolute assurance of one’s eternal destiny. Of being present with Christ forever immediately upon death. I’m enclosing a little booklet, which I mentioned, has identified a few of God’s truths and promises which are so helpful in leading one to establish this relationship. Permit me to underscore that though the Lord is highly interested in the quality of one’s life, he repeatedly says this relationship and resulting salvation are not gained through man’s work but by trusting Jesus’ work, principally his perfect finished work on the cross.”

Jerry didn’t know what he was in for when he met my dad near the Matterhorn.

Here’s another one. You ever heard of Victor Mature the movie star? Victor Mature always played dark characters, and sometimes in real life he continued to reflect that sinister image. My dad used to tell me that no one at the club wanted to play golf with Victor Mature. He was cranky. But my dad did. He looked for Victor Mature specifically and would go out of his way to play rounds with him. This is a letter he wrote.

“Dear Vic,

It was good to see you yesterday after a three week absence. Though the last hole wasn’t all that you would wish, your swing did look better and you hit a lot of fine shots.”

Then he goes on to other, more important things.

“While you don’t talk about it much, I’m sure these are days of inner turmoil for you, Vic, as you see your beloved wife suffering. At the risk of being thought presumptuous, may I share with you the greatest discovery I have made in my first fifty-nine years? Some years ago, a couple of friends described the possibility of having a personal living relationship with God himself. I took a serious look into the prospect and was surprised to find out that it was simple, free, and wonderfully true. The benefits are both eternal and daily, broad in variety and profound in value. You said you like reading classics. Have you heard of the late C.S. Lewis? A fellow at Magdalen College in Oxford University and professor at Cambridge University, he was also a prolific, perceptive, yet popular writer. I enclose, for your enjoyment, what is perhaps his most famous book, *Mere Christianity*. A Christian classic by all measures. A book I hope you and I can discuss at some future point.”

Here’s another one to Charles.

“Dear Charles,

I think of you often, Charlie. I trust you’re experiencing progress towards the difficult adjustment you’re being asked to make.” (Charlie had just lost his job.) “Something that I have found to be most helpful when I’m going through a particularly difficult ordeal is to:

- a) Go to the word of God.
- b) Write down a few of the three thousand plus promises he makes to those who trust in him.
- c) Think through their application in my situation.
- d) Trust him to make good his promise.

In the event you think this practice might be something from which you could draw encouragement, I’ve written eight such promises he makes to his children. Each of which is quite astounding when one considers that the God Almighty should take this much interest in us.”

A full page of scripture verses then follows.

I called my dad’s landlord this week and told her that my dad had died. She burst into tears on the other end of the line. I thought to myself, “Why is she so sad? Did she know him well?” She wanted to tell me why she was crying. She said, “Tim, your dad has been sending me Bible verses for the last year. I read them every night.” Quite ill herself, she said, “I am finding hope in Christ through the Bible verses he sent.”

Can you write a letter? Can you take two minutes to walk across the street to your neighbor’s house? Can you put down your business duties and go over to your colleague at work and say, “How are things going?” Do you have eyes for those who are struggling, who are suffering? You got the love of Christ in you? Self-giving love. Supernatural love. So personally exalting.

I never saw my dad angry. I never saw my dad discouraged. I never knew when my dad had a bad day. He must have had one. Must have had many. We all do. One thing I do know is that my dad was so fulfilled in his relationship with Jesus Christ, so satisfied with the prospect of using his life to empty out the love of Jesus into others. Like Jesus, this was exalting to him. He knew fulfillment.

The Plan . . . God’s plan . . . is a good plan. It’s the only thing that makes sense of this otherwise senseless world. Are you living The Plan?

Yes you are. So many of you are. You’ve picked me up this week. After the passing of my parents, I don’t know how I’m standing here doing what I’m doing, preaching the word of God, except that you’ve loved me this week. Thank you. Please, for Christ’s sake, for the good of others, for your own exaltation – keep it up! Image God, reflect Christ, empty yourself into others for the good of others. Pick up the lives of others and live them as though they were your own.

Eureka! Have you found it? The reason why you’re alive, why God created you to glorify himself and exalt you when you reproduce an image of who he is. What a discovery.

It may be time for a course correction. A re-orientation. Give yourself to Christ, so that, with him filling you, you can give yourself to others.

[PRAYER]

Oh Holy God, thank you for what you have designed for us in your Plan. Father, we can't wait to get deeper into it, knowing that each episode will get better and better. We're already thrilled by what we have learned and we want more. Father, I pray for any friends here this morning who do not know for sure that Jesus is living in their hearts. Father, give them no rest until they are sure. Humble them, as you once humbled me. To bow my knee before Jesus as my Lord and Savior and say, "Come in to me. I need you in my heart. It's the only thing I really need and I couldn't get more than that." Help us to move onward and outward and to be relational and to be global and to be therapeutic and to glorify you by expressing the self-emptying love of Jesus for your glory, for the good of this planet, for our own exaltation. We thank you for The Plan. In Jesus name. Amen!