

What in the world is God Doing? (Part One)

Five Things God is “Up to” in the Lives of Biblical Christians

“There are no political solutions for spiritual problems.” I have been using that expression for years now. Never, in our nation’s history, has it been more true or more on display. It would appear there are more millions who support an anti-Christian, anti-biblical agenda than those who oppose it, which is in itself a sad testimony to the state of our “one nation under gods.”

That may be perceived as political commentary, but I assure you it is a spiritual one. Those who read the Bible know honesty and integrity are high among Judeo-Christian values as they are in most other world religions. You need only look back to Germany, less than one hundred years ago, to see what results when dishonest, even demonic, people infiltrated the church and governments. (Read 1 John for his incredibly strong words on antichrists in the church of his day. I did a five-week series on his epistle and strongly suggest you watch those videos or listen to the podcasts.)

I am convinced—otherwise I would not write this— that the Holy Spirit is on a mission to use this demonically inspired chaos to stir up and call to arms (spiritual weapons) those who are real ***born-again Christians***, part of the corporate body of Christ. No doubt the virus has taken a toll on many churches in terms of ability to meet and worship, financial repercussions, and overall spiritual health of some churches. Many questions surface in times like these even among Christians who believe in the sovereignty of God. One such question is:

“What in the World is God Doing?”

Following are two of the five clear areas in which the Holy Spirit is working on and for Christians. The first three are painful but necessary as you will see if you have not previously experienced them. The last two are great encouragements to us—reasons that ours is an eternal hope.

Pruning. The Last Supper meal is over. Jesus had washed the disciples' feet as a sign of how we are to love and serve one another. This would be the last time they would be together alone. So He taught them much during these hours. Two discourses on the Holy Spirit bookend chapter 15 from which we read His powerful words on pruning.

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. "You are already clean (pruned) because of the word which I have spoken to you. "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned." John 15: 1-6

- If we are truly born-again in Christ, we have been grafted into Him (the Vine).
- God our Father is the Vinedresser Who works thru the Holy Spirit to produce His desired fruit. (See Galatians 5: 22-23)
- A branch cannot produce fruit unless it is healthily affixed to the vine. Neither do we.
- Apart from Jesus, we you can do NOTHING. Works of the flesh are futile and have no eternally sustainable value.
- Scary verse 6. Ought to scare the Hell out of you.

Purging. *"You must purge the evil from you."* (See Deuteronomy 13: 5)

God said this to Moses more than a dozen times in the Books of Law. I was amazed to find the number of times that phrase or one like it appears throughout the Bible in various translations—more than twenty. In nearly every context, it means the same thing:

God hates evil.

He hates what it does to His people—everything from idolatry to adultery. Evil has great power in and over our world today—including our nation. Evil distracts our minds from what we should be focusing on. Evil discourages, even depresses, even the strongest believers at some point. Evil destroys some people completely.

Jesus took it (and its source, Satan) very seriously. He taught us to do the same. He warned us of the coming destruction of evil and all who chose it over Him. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, taught the same message.

"The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly (purge) clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Matthew 3: 10-12

Jesus cleared (purged) the temple twice. The second time was on Palm Sunday as He entered the temple for the last time before He was crucified

"And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who

were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. And He said to them, "It is written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER'; but you are making it a ROBBERS' DEN.'" Matthew 21: 12-13

"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?" 1 Corinthians 6: 19

The Holy Spirit coupled these verses today to remind us that Jesus cleared the temple of God from evil and things considered unclean or outside the purpose of what God intended. The Apostle Paul reminded us that our bodies are considered by God as His property and temples of a sort to be holy and used for His purposes not ours.

Answering these questions will help you understand if you are allowing the Holy Spirit to ***purge your temple?***

- Is our temple (mind and body) used to glorify God, self, or man?
- Is it a house of prayer (time spent with God) of a "den of thieves" (stealing His time and money) ?
- Is it so contaminated with the things of this world, our "branches" are shriveling—being starved of the essential food from the Vine (Jesus)?

For Christ's sake,

Walter

On November 4th Jesus is still the Light of the world and remains our only Hope

Many Christians, including me, consider the upcoming election the most important in our lives—one of the most important in the history of our nation. One side will win—the other lose as is always the case in our democratic political system. But for spiritual and socio-political reasons, this time it feels different. And, indeed, it is.

The spirit of antichrist or Satan, as the Apostle John refers to it, has never been stronger in our world—especially in our nation. There is greater deception, even within the church, than ever before in my lifetime. Jesus told us Satan was the father of lies and a deceiver from the beginning—think Garden of Eden.

Defining what a true Christian is has never been fuzzier to some. Phrases like *cultural* or *progressive* Christianity have emerged. My observation is there are people who are truly born-again question their salvation, while others who clearly are not claim they are. [I understand the latter sounds judgmental, and God alone is judge. But Jesus gave us clear identity markers to help us determine both. So I made that statement in light of His clear teaching.]

Beyond that, our nation overflows with anarchists, Marxists, and socialists, all of whom would tear down the fabric of our nation – democracy – and, at best, rewrite the Constitution. Suffice it to say things are a mess right now in the United States of America. The two parties are polar opposite on most substantive issues. The choice has never been clearer.

On November 3rd, the outcome should be decided, but it could

take days, weeks, even months to get it all finalized due to the fundamental distrust that exists. On November 4th, assuming there is a clear outcome, one group will be ecstatic—the other completely crushed in spirit. Some will claim it was God's will—others will contend it is Satan's power this side of Heaven.

That brings us to the title of this lesson—a clear word breathed into my spirit by the Holy Spirit.

Regardless of the political outcome,

On November 4th, Jesus will still be the Light of the world and remains our only Hope.

This message is for Christians—the born-again, biblical ones. It will be helpful for any watching, listening, or reading and the offer of salvation in Christ follows. But the Spirit gave me three clear directives to teach His people.

♦ Reminders ♦ Reprimands ♦ Responses

Reminders

“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands— remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2: 1-13 NASB)

- *We were who these enemies of God are now. We were His enemies.*
- *Same God. Same love. Same Jesus. Same Salvation offered to all.*
- *We were separated from Christ and without hope and God.*
- *Therefore we must love others as Christ loves us. See them thru His eyes.*

Reprimands

Idolatry. The Apostles John and Paul wrote that some within the church love the world and the things of this world more than God: Money. Position. Power.

"By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him...By this we know that we are in

Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked...Little children, guard yourselves from idols." (From 1 John 2: 3-6; 5: 21)

Worshipping the world's systems and governments to the point of believing they control the outcome of what happens to you is a form of idolatry.

Anything we put ahead of or between God and us makes that an idol.

Doubt. This next event happened immediately after Jesus fed more than five thousand with just two loaves of bread and five fish—one of the greatest miracles.

"But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"" Jesus used that phrase four times.

Jesus called us out for doubting Who He is. Believe He is Who He says He is.

Outcomes of elections have zero impact or affect on our eternal purpose and place. No matter who wins, Jesus is still Lord if we keep Him in that place. Have you?

Fear.

"Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, A people in whose heart is My law; Do not fear the reproach of man, Nor be dismayed at their revilings (insults)... So the ransomed of the LORD will return and come with joyful shouting to Zion, and everlasting joy will be on their heads.

And the redeemed of the Lord will return and come to Zion with joyful shouting, and everlasting joy will be on their heads. They will obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. "I, I Myself, am He who comforts you. Who are you that you are afraid of ^[a]mortal man, And of a son of man who is made like grass, that you have forgotten the Lord your Maker, Who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, that you fear continually all day long because of the fury of the oppressor, as he makes ready to destroy? And where is the rage of the oppressor?" Isaiah 51: 7, 11-13

This is a great reprimand from God about fearing what men, whether kings or warriors, can do to us. We have God fighting our battles. **We know the final outcome.**

Responses

▪ Conviction

"And (the Holy Spirit), when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; John 16: 8

"Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge." Psalms 51: 4

▪ Confession

"Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" Romans 2: 4

"So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin." James 4: 17

▪ **Christ-likeness**

"Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" Luke 6: 46

Seven Attributes of Christ-likeness

- Love
- Serve
- Give
- Humble
- Gentle
- Peacemaker
- Speaking the truth in love

There is only one response for those who remain outside the faith – apart from a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. I implore you today. Stop where you are. Repent of your sins by confessing them before Him. Receive Jesus as your Savior today.

Then you will understand, as Christians should, that elections and nations come and go, but the Word of our God and His existence in all three persons of the Trinity endure forever. If you are born again in Christ, so will you! Amen.

For Christ's sake,

Walter

Does My Life Matter (Part One)

Written version of this strong message to help those struggling with all that is going on around them.

Billy Graham – Another Mighty Soldier of the Cross Goes Home! Hallelujah!



Chose this pic because Billy Graham always pointed people to the Cross of Christ and told them the empty tomb secured our salvation.

So many great and wonderful things have been written, posted, and said concerning Billy Graham, such an amazing, faithful

man of God who finally arrived safely Home today.

I can only add to such beautiful testimonials what the Holy Spirit impressed upon me this morning as I sat praying and praising the Lord for his life during my QT. I found myself in Isaiah 50—a passage that is both poetic and prophetic. The Servant (Jesus) spoke clearly—calling out the unfaithful nation of Israel, reminding them (us) of His power and willingness to help. He was faithful and obedient to the Father's work. Verses 4-5 stood out to me.

*"The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples, that I may know how to **sustain the weary one with a word**. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. **The Lord God has opened My ear; and I was not disobedient nor did I turn back.**"* (Isaiah 50: 4-5 NASB)

I could not help but think of Billy Graham and his amazing ministry of more than seventy years. I feel certain God would have no problem with me saying the words of verse 5 about this dear preacher and evangelist. For clearly the LORD God opened his ears, and Billy Graham was not disobedient – neither did he turn back away from this powerful and profound call on his life.

Praise God, not only for not turning away from our sinful nation, but loving us enough to send Jesus as our Savior to redeem us from death into life eternal. Those of us who are in Christ long to join you, our dear brother. And until He also calls us Home, may He find us faithful as you were.

For Christ's sake

Walter

Hope Lives Here – A Message for Homeless Men That Applies to All of Us

“Secret Sins” – Finding Forgiveness

“Secret Sins” – Finding Forgiveness

“...be sure your sin will find you out.” (Numbers 32: 23 ESV)

Pastor Thomas got caught. The fourth *desperate man* character in the book, *All Men Are Desperate Whether They Admit It or Not*, Thomas made a rather stupid mistake that uncovered his “secret sin” of pornography—forgetting to close out one of the porn sites he frequented on his computer. One day when her iPad battery was dead, his wife decided to check Facebook on the computer in his study. Uh-Oh!

What she saw stunned her. As she checked the URL history in the drop-down menu, she began to weep bitterly because this was no discovery of a random act. Many of the sites led straight into the abyss known as the *dark Internet*. How could her husband, a Christian father and pastor, get involved with something evil like this? Composing herself, to the extent this shock allowed, she went in to confront Thomas—his “secret sin” was secret no more.

No one wants to get caught doing something he knows is wrong or violates a trust—especially when it brings consequences

that devastate our families, as well as our own lives. But that kind of forward-thinking does not precede sins such as pornography and others from the realm of “lusts of the flesh” Satan uses to tempt us. He has one purpose in mind—enslave ours.

Jesus’ warning in the Sermon on the Mount seemed over the top when we first read it. From Matthew 5: 29, Jesus said, “*if you right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away...*” Surely not. But then He gave it again in Matthew 18. We know Jesus wasted no words when He taught. And when He said something twice, it was not to get out attention—that should have happened the first time. It was to save us from ourselves. Both passages speak to the consequences of not taking sin seriously enough—Hell.

[I want to interject here I am not a licensed, professional Christian counselor. Dealing with any addiction and/or secret sin revealed (and the consequences) usually requires that level of help. If this is where you are, I strongly urge you to seek that level of help. Do not think you are strong enough to climb out of the abyss by yourself. Going downhill alone into such is not that difficult. Climbing out alone is impossible. There are many qualified Christian counselors whose methods are biblically based. Find one!]

Finding Forgiveness is a two-way proposition. Unfortunately, we only control one side of the deal. This is one of the rare times that demands we focus initial attention on ourselves. Three biblical prerequisites come to mind to facilitate the process and give it a chance to be successful. These are based on many years of working with hundreds of men from all walks of life dealing with these and related issues.

1. We must **confess our sin**. The sin most frequently discussed among Christians is *someone else’s*! Admitting we may have a problem is lame. Admitting we have a problem and are willing to consider addressing it is still weak. Admitting we have a

problem with sin is the correct biblical response—also the hardest. Why? Easy answer—PRIDE.

David provided the best examples of *true confession*. Despite his issues (and there were many), he was the only one God called “a man after My own Heart.” I believe that is, in large part, because David spent time confessing his sins to the Lord. He taught us to understand that our sin is first against God.

“Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge.” (Psalm 51: 4 NASB)

He also taught us the consequences of holding onto or harboring sin—physical and emotional pain.

“When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long.” (Psalm 32: 3 NASB)

Confessing our sin means we own it and accept responsibility for the consequences.

2. We must **ask for forgiveness**. When our youngest son was a little boy, he came up with what he thought was a sure-fire means of avoiding time-out or a spanking. Sometimes even before being confronted with his misdeeds, he would begin running around repeatedly saying he was *sorry*. As you might have guessed, those attempts, though well-conceived for a little boy, were unsuccessful.

He was not sorry. He was just sorry he got caught!

So it is with many of us. Caught in the act or confronted with our transgressions, we respond in much the same way hoping it gets us off the hook or mitigates liability and consequences. We are not sorry—just sorry we got caught. The Apostle Paul helps us understand *true sorrow*:

“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and

leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.” (2 Corinthians 7: 10 NIV)

The difference is evident to all involved. A repentant heart turns from sin, seeks forgiveness, and desires to reconciliation. That leads to the final prereq.

3. We must **commit to the process** of healing and restoration. Let's begin by stating two truths.

- *The unconditional love of God, in concert with His grace and mercy, makes His forgiveness immediate. He even promises to go beyond forgiveness and forget our sins. (Isaiah 43: 25)*
- *Unfortunately, because we are still human, that is not often the case with those whose lives are wounded or crushed by our reckless sins.*

There are many verses about our need to forgive others—even warnings about not doing so. Here are three that focus on the keys to success.

*“Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who **confesses** and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” (Proverbs 28: 13 ESV)*

*“And whenever you stand praying, **forgive**, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.” (Mark 11: 25 ESV)*

*“So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First **be reconciled** to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5: 23-24 ESV)*

God knows the human heart better than any of us because He created it—after His. He also knows most of us require time to work through the process of confession, forgiveness, and,

ultimately reconciliation. I hope those verses and words of encouragement do three things for Christians:

- Draw us closer to the loving, forgiving heart of God Who reconciled us to Himself in Christ.
- Encourage those who need to engage in this painful process to do so.
- Strengthen those who are engaged to see it through to the end God intends.

This is the hardest work assignment God gave us this side of Heaven.

Your desperate brother in Christ,

Walter

Review of previous lessons:

Thus far we drilled deeper into the lives of three of the five *desperate* men whose stories begin my most recent book, *All Men Are Desperate Whether They Admit It or Not*. One key takeaway from each is this:

We have more in common with these “desperate men” and their issues than we would like to admit.

- The Addict – The Addict and Is the Christian Man
- The Prisoner – “Not all prisons have bars.”
- The Rich Man – Taking Our Turn in the Crucible of Wealth
- The Pastor – Secret Sins

Secret Sins – Things We (Think We) Hide from God

“Secret Sins” – Things We (Think We) Hide from God

“For nothing is hidden...nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light.” (Luke 8: 17 NASB)

When our youngest son was a toddler if he could reach the cookies, left too low on a shelf, he would grab the bag and take off. He had two hiding places—in the curtains or under the comforter on our bed. It was comical to watch the covers shake and hear giggles coming out while he celebrated getting away with something because he “hid” himself from us.

As funny and silly as our son’s thought process sounds to us as adults (thinking he was getting away with something unseen), we do the same kinds of things when we attempt to hide our “secret sins” from others—especially the Lord. But, in our case, the Lord is not standing at the door smiling or trying to keep from laughing. He is not amused. His expectation of men who claim to be biblical Christians-devoted followers- is a continuous striving for perfection. (Jesus’ words in Matthew 5: 48)

Many sins readily fall into the category “secret sin.” As you may expect, and I am about to confirm in ways many may find startling, pornography has *wormed* its way to the top of the heap.

Pornography is the most well-known and popular “secret sin”—Satan’s most effective weapon against Christian men and pastors.

Consider these published sobering statistics that include only Christian men and pastors. If they do not get your undivided attention, check your pulse.

- 54% of pastors said they viewed pornography in the last year; 37% admit it is a current struggle.
- 95% of Christian men admit having looked at porn; 54% do so with some regularity.
- 18% of born-again Christian men admit to being addicted to pornography. (That is > 1 out of 6.)

Consider these stats on millennial men—the first generation raised in a large percentage of single-parent, absentee dad homes. They provide a scary glimpse into the future if we fail to act.

- 77% view pornography at least monthly; 36% do so daily; 32% admit having an addiction.

(FYI, the number of women, especially young ones, viewing and becoming addicted to pornography is increasing rapidly.)

This sexual sin, that leads readily to addiction, glides in low, like a stealth bomber, undetected until the problem is upon us. Such was the case with Pastor Thomas in the book where it snuck in through a misspelled URL during a web search. Most men are very visual—especially when it comes to sexuality. The first glance can be innocent (as it was for this pastor). But not so those second and third looks! They draw us in like a fly into a spider's web. If you recall that poem, the fly went away initially but eventually returned for another look and got a little too close to the web. Once ensnared, getting free becomes a war.

The impact of issues with and addiction to pornography cannot be overstated. The fallout is widespread, affecting many areas of our lives. Closer to home, collateral damage creates casualties by inflicting deep wounds—beginning with our wives and children.

The apostle John listed *“the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes”* (1 John 2: 16) as two of three primary categories of sins in the world today. Both contribute to incredible numbers cited above. The third category, *“pride of life,”* keeps men enslaved—we are too proud and ashamed to confess it.

Secret sins are areas of our lives we deliberately hide from others and think we hide from God.

Only God knows the extent of the truth of this statement, but I believe it safe to say all men harbor *secret sins*. Pornography is only one of them. They include *thoughts* and *behaviors* that, if exposed, would create issues, some serious, for the man believing they are hidden.

Before searching the Scripture, I imagined having trouble finding a key verse that would speak directly to *secret sins*. I was shocked. I found specific verses spoken by Moses, David, Isaiah, and Jesus. The fact that these mighty men of God and our Lord Himself addressed it requires no further explanation.

(Moses) *“You have placed our iniquities before You, Our **secret sins** in the light of Your presence.”* (Psalm 90: 8 NASB)

(David) *“When I **kept silent about my sin**, my body wasted away...groaning all day long.”* (Psalm 32: 3 NASB)

(Isaiah) *“Woe to those who **deeply hide their plans from the LORD**, And whose **deeds are done in a dark place**, And they say, “Who sees us?” or “Who knows us?””* (Isaiah 29: 15)

(Jesus) *“For **nothing is hidden** that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not...come to light.”* (Luke 8: 17 NASB)

I chose to end the first part of this lesson here so you can reflect on the Word of God and allow the Holy Spirit to invade

the most private areas of your heart regarding your secret sins, especially pornography– perhaps the most challenging sin affecting Christian men and pastors today.

I will follow up soon with the last two parts:

- Part Two: Secret Sins – Finding Forgiveness
- Part Three: The Key to Successfully Staying Out of the Web

From one desperate brother in Christ to another,

Walter

Review of previous lessons:

Thus far we drilled deeper into the lives of three of the five *desperate* men whose stories begin my most recent book, *All Men Are Desperate Whether They Admit It or Not*. One key takeaway from each is this:

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Mother's Day Tribute to Gigi Spires – amazing wife and

incredible mother

The timing of this worked out well, despite the fact that I had planned to write it for a while now well in advance of Mother's Day. A quick search through the men's lessons archives of this ministry reveals a tribute I wrote three years ago that esteemed and blessed our mothers and the mothers of our children. This one needed to be written specifically to and for Gigi, my wife and mother of our children.

Some will think this is personal with no purpose being a blog that gets posted, and that's fine. But most men do not know how to bless and esteem our wives and mothers of our children. Perhaps your dad was a poor example of this biblical mandate to honor the women He placed in our lives. Or maybe you have simply become, like so many of us men, consumed with everything else in your life that receives more honor and attention than it should-displacing our wives as second only to Christ in our lives.

The women God placed in our lives very often demand from us less than is due them and serve tirelessly without calling attention to themselves or seeking affirmation we should so obediently heap upon them. So let this meager attempt of mine serve to help or encourage you do that which, for many, may be overdue.

Wife. Gigi Rook entered my life in 1982 through an introduction at a Singles' group at Central Church in Memphis, TN. She is a native of that city and graduate from what was known at the time as Memphis State University. We dated about four months, were engaged six more, and married August 6, 1983.

Gigi took the biblical role of a wife and 'helpmeet' very seriously. The old KJV used the phrase *helpmeet—a helper (eve) suitable for Adam*. Gigi was (is) that in my life. While I took my role equally

seriously, I am certain she filled hers better than I did. Gentleness and grace are among her virtues that stood out most and filled some of the many gaps in my life.

[I have spoken to thousands of men over the last four decades and share the following as often as it fits and sometimes when it does not. *"Marriage is God's hardest assignment this side of Heaven."* It really is. It takes commitment and hard work to stay married. The commitment is to God first and then our spouses. The hard work is required to build a biblical marriage. Even harder work is required to maintain it or repair damage caused by attacks of Satan, our fierce enemy, and selfish remnants of our carnality that insists it is all about me.]

Gigi has been more than accommodating, forgiving, and unselfish over the course of our thirty-four years of marriage. There is a great verse toward the end of the book of Proverbs that is attributed to Solomon. He asked the question:

"An excellent wife who can find?" (Proverbs 31: 10a ESV)

In the margin of my Bibles, I wrote many years ago, "I did." And then wrote in the date of our wedding.

Mother. I could write another book on the early years of our marriage dealing with serious, painful issues related to becoming parents. In less than two years, we went through three miscarriages and a full-term stillbirth of our first daughter. The pain was excruciating-overwhelming and unbearable except that Gigi and I are believing believers. Enduring all of that was our first real test of faith and our marriage.

Many marriages crumble after such hardships. But the Holy Spirit intervened. He brought healing and forgiveness to our brokenness, and filled the holes in our hearts because He alone could. Finally, despite the expert medical opinions that we would never have children, the Lord God Who is our Father blessed us beyond hope with three

amazing children.

I always knew Gigi would be an amazing mother. All that happened to bring her to that point only strengthened her resolve. My children have the best mother, hand-picked by the Lord to love and nurture them as only she could and did. I am thankful that they know this and esteem her. Yet, I hope they read this every Mother's Day and remember to do as the Bible commands—honor her and rise up and bless her.

For all my shortcomings as a husband and father, I can say that I did my best to do that and make sure my children did so as they grew up in our home; even in the difficult teen years. Dads, it is critical that you do that for your wife and teach your children what it means and looks like to honor their moms.

I cannot move on without a couple of comments on the second-most difficult time in Gigi's life—her battle with Lyme Disease. The physical and emotional toll this took on her for several years was so painful to watch, much less endure as she did. Yet, she grieved more over the time away from and events missed during the high school years of our youngest son more than the pain she experienced. We praise God that after years of trying so many possible helps and treatments, she did find freedom and deliverance from the continual pain and many of the side effects. She has only minor flare-ups these days.

Dedicated Homemaker. Despite what you think, this is not about how well Gigi made our houses into homes and a safe, loving nest for our family because she did that so well. She had more practice than most. We recently moved into our twelfth home together in thirty-four years of marriage. I always tell men I am just glad to still be married to the same women after such a journey. She has been an amazing pillar of support through what has at times been very exhausting, mentally as well as physically.

www.gigisellsnashville.com The context in which I use the phrase, *dedicated homemaker*, now refers to another stage of life in which she

pours her time, talents, and gifts into helping others find and establish their homes. I never nagged Gigi about anything during our many years of marriage except for one thing. As our kids got older and hit the driving (we don't need you around now, Mom and Dad) years, I strongly encouraged her to become a realtor. She was born for this helpful role.

Gigi's dad was a home builder and spent many years in the building supply business in Memphis. She majored in a related field in college and used her talents in our twelve homes spread out across the southeast. She is the most conscientious people person I know, despite my bias. So I knew that if she ever chose to do this on her own, she would be the best at helping others do what she had done for us so many times. I gladly toot my own horn here because I was right. She does an amazing job.

So my dear Gigi, here we are thirty-four years into our marriage, having successfully raised three kids who are in Christ, and now not so patiently rocking babies in the nursery as we wait on grands! I am so thankful for your life as my wife and the incredible mother of our children. Here's to many more (years, that is, not children except grands!) I love you.

Walter Spires Guest Blog for Lifeway Men

Walter Spires guest blog for Lifeway Men

Great honor to be able to contribute to this excellent resource for men. You can help Desperate Men as a ministry and me as an author/teacher by going to this link and commenting. Thanks for your encouragement and support.

Desperate Men – A Call to Ministry

Desperate Men – A Call to Ministry™

Warning: Statistics ahead! A dangerous way to begin any important message. Some of us shut down pretty quickly when numbing numbers appear on the screen or are shared from the platform. Understanding the inherent risks of doing so, I chose to present the following staggering and sobering statistics specific to men in the U.S. and ask that you wade through them with me to the other side. To help hold your attention, read each line with the following truth in mind.

Each number represents a man with a name.

You and me. Our dads, brothers, or sons. Neighbors or co-workers. Every man reading this knows at least one other man who is or was on this list, including the man in the mirror. Making these stats personal opens our minds and hearts with compassion and a desire to help. Here we go.

– CDC reports approximately 105 Americans commit suicide each day. Suicide among males is 4x higher than females. That means ~ 80 men will commit suicide today. While reading this, a strong possibility exists a desperate man took his own life. Families, the real victims, are left with unanswered questions and grief unspeakable. Another scenario is he died without hope, believing no one cares. God does.

- 11 MILLION men have alcohol, drug, pornography, and other addictions. Most men will struggle in these areas (in secret) during their lives. Some of you reading this are in that battle now.
- 1.2 MILLION men got divorced last year. We are told around 40% of those were "Christian marriages". Some of you reading this have been there-done that.
- 2.2 MILLION men are in jail/prison, the HIGHEST number and percent in the world. 40-70% came from fatherless homes. Recidivism rate ranges from 67%-80%. That means they go back. Many sons follow.
- 400,000+ homeless men "live" in America. Many gave up and are without hope. Some were neighbors or classmates with whom you lost touch. If the market tanks (again), some of you may join them.

At this point, some readers have hit the wall with these sobering statistics that decry the condition of too many men. We long for some good news; something that gives men hope. Whether you are a man populating one of these statistical pools or a man of means struggling silently through difficult personal circumstances, I have for you Good News IF you read the right Paper. Here are three very encouraging storylines you won't find in mainstream media:

- God still loves us no matter what we did, where we are, why we left, or how we got there.
- God's 24/7/365 Help-line is only a prayer away. No busy signals or voice mail here.
- Hope abounds for all who are in Christ. No members only here. All are welcome. Meet at the Cross.

For more than a decade, I have been blessed with a platform for ministry to men. That "menistry™", as I refer to it, centers on developing biblical lessons and teaching them to men, many of whom at part of the stats above. Places of

service include the Nashville Rescue Mission and Men of Valor prison ministries (two outstanding organizations), among others.

Over the years, that birthed an email ministry sending the lessons to a list of men across the country with three purposes in mind: encourage, equip, and, at times, exhort men from all walks of life. The list includes surgeons, physicians, executives and businessmen at every level of corporate life, entrepreneurs and musicians, men in prison or aftercare, men addicted to drugs, alcohol, and pornography, and those in recovery. Many different men. Many places and positions in life. One thing in common. From the C-suite to the cellblock and the mansion to the mission,

"All men are desperate...whether they ^{admit} know it or not."

That piercing statement is the tag line for Desperate Men, this ministry we are now amping up with the launch of a new website: www.desperatemen.org It is also the subtitle of the book and discipleship study guide I am currently writing to encourage and equip desperate men everywhere...all of us. For men who are men already among the statistics or just candidates to join them like you and me, the Holy Spirit made this clear to me: "the need is great and the time is now."

To serve that end, God expanded my vision. Together we will take Desperate Men from a small email ministry off one man's computer to a global platform providing resources for men, from all walks of life, using every media available: written, spoken, video, and social, now the most dominant and best way to reach young men. Personally, I would like to see this reach or touch a million men before I go Home.

After months of work, we are excited to see this website launch and how God is going to work through men like you to take this a higher level and accomplish some of the "greater things" Jesus referred to in John 14:12. Desperate Men got to

this initial stage with help from a few friends and family, much like seed capital for a start-up company. I call it true "angel capital". For my part, I have invested time and money and commit whatever time God gives me this side of Home to see this vision fulfilled.

We are at a point at which I need to humbly do what can be hardest for men, ask for help. Financially speaking, your investment makes no sense at all in terms of producing ROI and multiples as the world measures those metrics. It will produce lasting returns and multiply in the lives of many men according to the ***Christian Guide to Wise Investing***...aka the Bible.

Please indulge my request to do the following. Launch the site and go to the Welcome menu item. Open it and watch the Welcome video. Browse the site and you will find Lessons for Men Only as well as several video lesson excerpts. I am very excited about the Encouraging Word icon. It links to short audios to encourage the hearts of men. There is also a prayer icon and link for those who need prayer for anything (John 14:14) Finally, go to the Encourage item on the Menu or Help icon and read the Why Pray and Why Give pages. (Hint re the icons: The link is the word title of the icon, not the icon itself.) We are just getting started. There is a lot more to come.

Let me close with this. If God uses the ministry of Desperate Men to help a lost man find his way to the Cross of Christ or a wayward brother find his way back; if something a man listens to or reads keeps him from walking out on his family, giving up on his marriage, or pulling the trigger, it is worth the investment of your resources and my life.

Many men have been great encouragement to me over the years to keep writing and teaching. I am very thankful for that. I hope your first visit to Desperate Men is a positive one and you find something that encourages your heart today. I also

pray you will engage with me in this fight for the lives of desperate men everywhere because we are all desperate whether we admit it or not.

Your desperate brother in Christ,

Walter

www.desperatemen.org