

# Personal Spiritual Growth

## Week 6 Owing the Message

### ***Week 6 – Summary***

Our personal spiritual growth involves responding to the message of Christ in faith, living out our lives by the same faith in a relationship with God and sharing those experiences with others. The message of Christ is more than a collection of facts. It is more than a collection of beliefs or Scriptures. It is a message of real life experiences expressing how my relationship with God has shaped my life. Owing the message is different than simply knowing the message. Owing the message means that the message of Christ is my message, it's about my life with God.

### ***Owing the Message***

As we think about the message of God's work in this world Peter encourages us to "be prepared" to share the reason for our hope. There are three aspects of this topic that warrant some reflection. The first is thinking about the story of God's work in this world. The second concerns the Bible and the third aspect is reflecting upon our life with God.

### ***About what is God up to in his world? (The Mission of God)***

When we think about God's activity in our world we realize that we are looking at God's mission, not our own. The activities of God are an expression of what He is up to, what He is trying to accomplish and bring about with His creation. We find some of the broad themes of this mission in the following passages

- ❖ **Genesis 1-3** – Here we see that God's motivation to create is an expression of his nature. In love God creates a world that supports life and forms humans who bear the image of God. The themes of these chapters include life/death, sin/righteousness, near God/separated from God. These are the themes of God's work.
- ❖ **Genesis 4-11** – In these primitive stories we see the effects of sin on the culture on humanity...it leads to excess sin
- ❖ **Genesis 12** – God decides to enter the story, to enact a plan to rescue his creation. This plan works within history using people who live and breath in the world God is working to rescue
- ❖ **2 Cor 5 / Col 1:13-22** – Jumping far ahead we find Paul's reflections on what God was accomplishing in Christ. The mission of Christ was God's means of reconciling the created world back to Himself. He is creating a path to live in the presence of God.
- ❖ **Eph 1** – The outline of this grand passage tells us that God has had a plan that includes us since the beginning. His plan, demonstrated in Christ, was to "adopt" to himself a special people. His people would be adopted to become holy (set aside) people. This adoption is an expression of His love, pleasure, and grace. The grand plan of God is focused on the mission of Christ, whom God has placed as head over all things. In the adoption as "sons" of God we have been given an inheritance, hope, and power. We also find that God's plan for the redemption of His creation is embodied in the church.
- ❖ **1 Cor 15** – In this apologetic for resurrection we see with clarity that mortality, the "sting of sin," has been conquered and the reality of life after death is clearly spelled out.
- ❖ **Rev 22 / Rom 8:18-25 / Phil 2:6-11** – It is fitting to close this broad outline of God's work in this world with the final chapter of the English Bible. In this chapter God reveals to John that there will be an end to life as we know it. The end of time will be the display of God's triumph over evil. The themes of this last chapter are life/death, sin/righteousness, near to God/separated from God. They are the same themes found in Gen 1-3.

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## **What Story does the Bible tell?**

- ❖ 75% Narrative
- ❖ Koller: *"The Bible was not given to reveal the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but to reveal the hand of God in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; not as a revelation of Mary and Martha and Lazarus, but as a revelation of the Savior of Mary and Martha and Lazarus"* (1962, 32).
- ❖ **Trevor McIlwain** of New Tribes Missions: *"We must not teach a set of doctrines divorced from their God-given historical setting, but rather, we must teach the story of the acts of God as He has chosen to reveal Himself in history. People may ignore our set of doctrines as our western philosophy of God, but the story of God's actions in history cannot be refuted"* (1987, 81).

## **The Story of Lives Involved in the Mission of God**

1. **Abraham:** The doubter who became the father of the "faithful" (**Gen 12**, 15, 17; Heb 11)
2. **Joseph:** God was with him in all situations. (Gen 49)
3. **Jacob:** From deceiver to father of a nation (Gen 32:22f)
4. **Moses:** born, saved from death, passionate for justice, fled, called, sent
5. **Hanna:** Sovereign God gives children
6. **Isaiah** – sees God, realizes sinfulness, cleansed, sent
7. **Jeremiah** – (1:4-7) Formed, chosen, sent, empowered
8. **Ezra:** The gracious hand of the Lord was on him (Ch. 7-10)
9. **Jesus: God himself enters the story.** The Son of God sacrifices his perfection for our sins
10. **Panoramic Lesson:** How sin came into the world and what God is doing about It.
11. **Commissioning of apostles (Matt 28:18f)**
12. **Peter:** called, energetic, ignorant, failed, restored,
13. **Paul:** (Acts 26:17f) sent to the Gentiles
14. **Us:** God sent Jesus; Jesus sent Us (John 17:18; 20:21)

## **What is the Story told by the people in the Bible?**

- ❖ **Acts 7:1-50** – Stephen outlines the whole story of God's plan of salvation as it has involved people and nations
- ❖ **Acts 13:16-43** – Paul retells the grand story of God to the people in Antioch
- ❖ **1 Jn 1:1-7** 0- John uses his poetic style to paint the picture of God's grand story. He emphasizes his personal involvement in the story.

## **They Tell the Story as it connects to their lives**

- ❖ **Acts 2:16f** – Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost begins by telling the story of God's relationship and promises to the Israelites and emphasizes the fulfillment found in Jesus. 2:32 emphasizes where the story connects with the life of Peter and the others present that day. It is their testimony about what they themselves have seen and experienced and how it fits into God's story.
- ❖ **Acts 3:11-26** – Again Peter tells the short version of God's grand story and emphasizes his personal involvement as a witness of God's actions in Christ.
- ❖ **2 Cor 1:3-11** – Notice how the grand story of God's plan of salvation is woven together with the stories of Paul's life. Paul's story is a mini-version of the story of God.
- ❖ **1 Thes 1:2-10; 2:10f** – In this letter to the Thessalonians, Paul praises their change of life. In fact, it is their demonstrated response to the story that Paul uses as the evidence of the truth of the story.
- ❖ **Acts 26** – Paul offers his defense before king Agrippa. His defense consists of simply telling his own life story and how it was radically changed when God entered his life. Paul's life, his response to encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus, is the story of God.

## **The "Old, Old story" = How my life was changed when I encountered God somewhere on the road.**