

“Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old.
Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not
know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the
desert.”

Isaiah 43:18,19

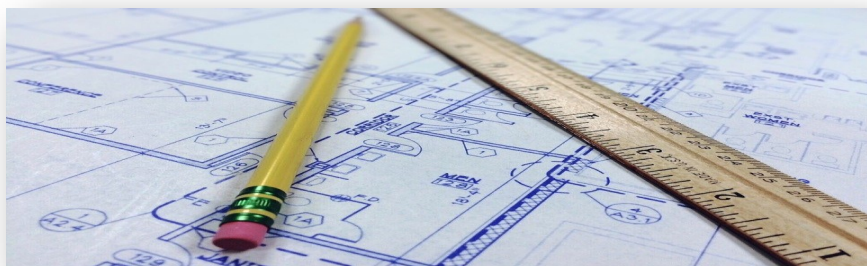


BLUEPRINTS

Reflecting God's Image Outside of Eden

January 2023





Blueprints

January 2023, Volume 5, Issue 1

Blueprints offers a bold message of original intent, which is that plan, purpose, and design God has inscribed into the heart of His men and women.

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Do you want to understand basic blueprints for living the life God designed for you?

If so, then sign up today for a 6-chapter course on what is sure to be a spiritual education you've never had before! We dedicate personal time to walk you through God's design for life and help you with other spiritual needs you may have.

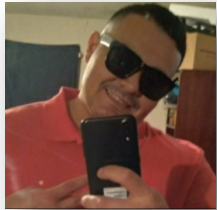
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Arthur Garcia, writing from behind the razor wire about his love for the Lord, encouraging others around him and sharing his mistakes to help others not forget what the Lord has done for them.

Eriac Corley, also writing from behind the razor wire, he plays the drums and faithfully mentors men in his life, eager to share with fellow inmates that mistakes don't define but refine us.



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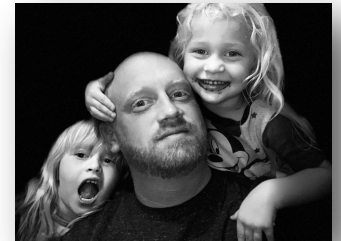


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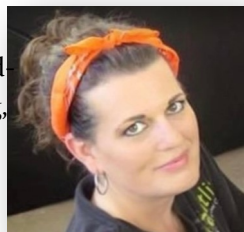
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From the Desk of Ruben

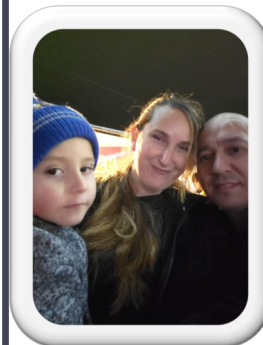
The new year is upon us, and we still look the same and are probably living in the same place and eating the same food, too.

But within each of us resides the ability to live differently no matter what the circumstances tell us. Sure, diets and disciplines are necessary for a healthy life, but what about the inside? What about what's going on within you? Is something bothering you that you have yet to address? Is the peace you desire eluding you because you are afraid to make a change?

Friend, no one is always victorious. No one is immune from fear and uncertainty. The hardships we often endure are part of the human experience, yet God has promised to see us through those dark days but to provide us with a way to overcome them.

I am often dealing with issues that I can't overcome, yet I never give up on what God can do in me, through me, and for me. And guess what? He always pulls me through.

He can do the same for you!



Ruben Constante, Jr.

When the Impossible Loses to God

Ruben Constante, Jr.



In 2012, I began drafting a vision while serving time at the Torres unit.

It was called Blueprints for Living Ministries, Inc. and in November 2022, the vision was materialized. For a few years now, our ministry has offered the Distance Mentorship Program, a trademarked correspondence course that allows incarcerated men and women to complete a 6-chapter curriculum in five biblical blueprints.

But this time it was monumental.

After Warden Luna, Program Director Gaines, and I met to discuss the need to serve our clients more efficiently, the first 30 men at the Kyle Correctional Center were enrolled and soon completed the “God’s Design for Life” class which is taught twice a week for three weeks and is offered to all SAFF and IPTC clients on a volunteer basis. The brevity of this class is aimed to reach as many clients as possible before they are released.

“Guess what, guys?” I told the first class. “This is

follow Me.”

Listen: I’m not looking to dismantle anyone’s ideology on mental health. But if you know Jesus as King like I know Him, then be ready to acknowledge spiritual warfare for what it is. Stop relying on a textbook diagnosis to resolve your every need. Stop thinking any special regimen will quiet your demons.

Get on your knees and be ready for a fight that will save your life!

Some things only He can take from you. I know judgment will be thrown at me for sharing this, but I don’t care anymore. I don’t live for anyone else but me, my family, and God. The only thing I am concerned about is making sure the medicine of Jesus is known by people like me who will eventually dehydrate without Him. “Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the Devil’s schemes” (Eph. 6:11).





so sick and tired of *dying* on the inside. And while all dolled up, concealing my black eye with makeup, my family could see past my upbeat online posts.

I was dwindling away. Doctors couldn't cure me. But I knew I wasn't alone. I wasn't starving myself. I was internally sick! I was spiritually ill. I was under **DE**monic op**PRESSION**.

You know what saved me? One day my pastor prayed over me and told me, "Release yourself from all the labels. Release yourself from your ugly past and give it all to Jesus!" I had known God, and Jesus had been my homeboy from way back, but I did not take our relationship seriously. So, I decided to begin a new journey with my sWord. I started seeing with new eyes, processing this world with a new mind, and I started listening to a new song.

Drinking was killing my ability to hear God's voice. It was time to fire those spirits! I stopped dabbling in the Devil's foolery often disguised as science, and I focused on inner healing. I had to work hard to gain a circle of spiritual advisors who wrapped me up and guarded me in love. Sometimes that involves hearing things I didn't want to hear and recognizing their judgment as accountability and protection of my soul.

Could I be here championing the mental health industry? Absolutely! Is it wrong for someone to be on medication? Heck no! However, when you rely on anything more than on God, just know that other attacks will come. Deliverance was what my soul was hungry for.

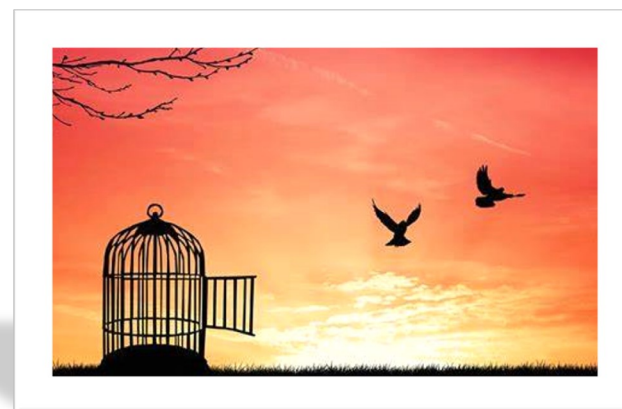
Thankfully, God healed me. Thankfully, I know who to turn to when those attacks happen again—because they could and will if given authority. Deliverance doesn't remove temptation any more than relocating to a new city fixes problems *you* caused. True deliverance is *surrendering* to your Savior any and all of which is in the way of your calling, and sometimes that calling is as simple (and difficult) as "take up your cross and

your last Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years in prison!"

A roaring applause followed my announcement as we all celebrated the fact that their 6-month drug treatment program was ending. Some of the men in the November class are leaving in January 2023, so the reality of breathing free world air was especially exciting.

"But," I continued, "only if you choose to."

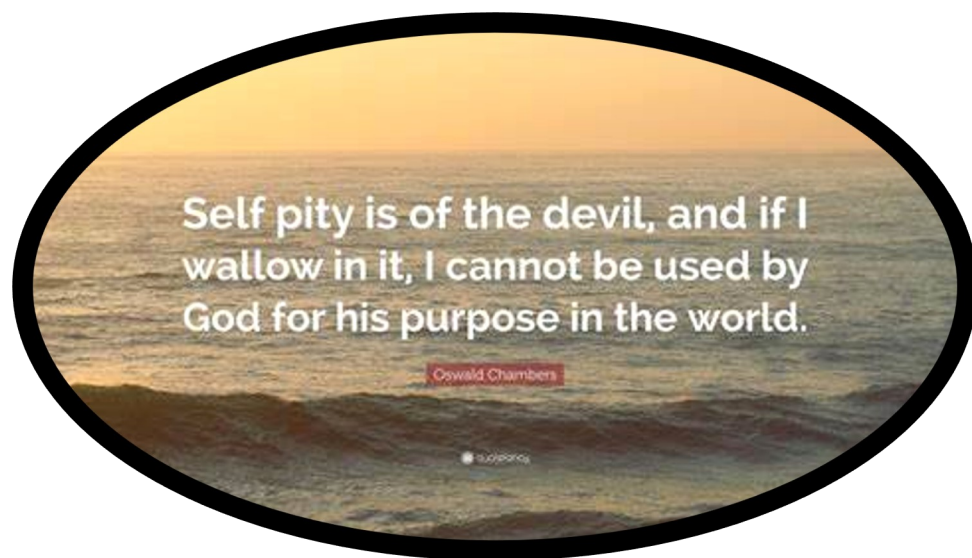
As much as we all want 100% success in life, setbacks occur and, sadly, relapse and recidivism are a real part of a felon's life. (Personally, I fell back into my sins but by the grace of God I didn't pick up a new charge.) For those riddled with addiction, the reality can be harsher. Specifically, "as many as 1 in 3 drug addicts relapse within the first year of their recovery program, and 1 in 5 relapses within 10 years" (Drug Addiction Statistics: Percentage of Addiction Relapse) Another Internet search stated "that there is a 67% chance of relapse after less than a year in recovery, a 50% chance after a year, and a 15% chance after five years or more" (Better Addiction Care: Relapse Statistics)



"Choosing" to remain sober may often ring controversial since addiction is often viewed as a disease, but for those of us

who believe in the power of the Gospel we know that in Christ we are healed by His stripes (Is. 53:3). The power of the *disease of sin* is broken by God, and we can enjoy the life He designed for us.

This is what “God’s Design for Life” teaches. 🖼️



Medicated me. Sedated me. Put me in a room. Gave me family leave from work. My boss started doing what she could to process my exit. Friends starting distancing themselves. Because of my cry for help, the world as I had known it became to stigmatize my existence. They began to coach me on how to apply for full-time disability.

At 18 years old, with a perfectly abled mind and body, I was told, “This may be something you cannot fight alone, Brittany. You need to be prepared to live a different life than others. You need to be honest with your personal limitations.”

They measured their statistics alongside my childhood and adulthood and projected my future to be filled with failure and disappointment, even if I didn’t rely on their science. I can assure you their diagnoses did not serve me. I left angry. I left hurt. I left scared. And the oppressions didn’t leave me at all. I would self-medicate. I still wanted to die but didn’t have the courage to take my own life. I still heard the voices *I don’t belong here. . . No one likes you. . . You will never have a family of your own.*

I then attracted and assigned people to myself that confirmed all those agreements to be true. I had insomnia and fought night terrors *every night*. Even as an adult I was afraid to be alone and/or in the dark because I knew those beings would come out for me. I saw darkness in pictures where people would come after me. I dated someone who told me when got married he would have me put away for being crazy if I didn’t listen to him. (That would have been easy to get done given my mental health history.)

Thank God that some of you who’ve struggled with mental health issues have benefited from medicine and science. Truly, I’m happy for you. My Savior, however, had other plans for me. I share this particular photo because years later as I continued to spiral down that same highway of hell, I was



Brittany's Blog



As I continue to see people fight battles of suicidal attempts, I can't help but revisit my own path of darkness.

Please know there are a lot of lonely people that are not truly alone when they take their life. When society recognizes depression can be heavily influenced by **DE**monic op**PRES**-**SION** is when we will have the conversation we really need. (See how that demon hides perfectly inside the details?)

Yes! Get help! But it isn't always as systemic as calling 911 or 988. I'm not saying don't call someone. Please do! Mental health should be taken seriously. So should spiritual health. This is coming from someone who has a long history of genealogical and personal experience with fighting depressive disorders. Sadly, I still watch and pray for other members of my extended family tree that fight it daily. If only they knew what they were really battling, perhaps things could be different for them.

Years ago, I opened up and told a medical specialist I was being followed—at work, at home, or with others. My mom begged me not to share it because she knew those without spiritual understanding would not receive it well and people would treat me as if I was crazy. But I didn't care (and still don't). Living as someone who is the mostly full of light, I couldn't stand another day with that dark cloud hovering over me.

You know what they did?



BREAKTHROUGH

Ralph Griego

“So, they went up to Baal Perazim, and David defeated them there. Then David said, “God has broken through my enemies by my hand like a breakthrough of water.” Therefore, they called the name of that place Baal Perazim.” (I Chr. 14:11)

Let 2023 be your year of Breakthroughs. Up to this year 2022 you may have been experiencing the Lord's hand upon your life. Or you may be reading this for the very first time. As you read this go read this chapter and know that if God broke through in David's life, He can also do it for you.

I can look back into my life and say prison was my Baal Perazim. My place of Breakthrough. Prison was where I came to myself and surrendered my life over to Jesus. The Lord broke through my life and changed my life. That was the first breakthrough. You may be saying how you would like God to breakthrough in your life. Well, let me tell you that God won't give you a breakthrough you won't be able to handle.

God knows you better than you know yourself. He will first change you for you to be able to handle the breakthrough you desire of Him. He will not give you what He knows you can't handle. So, while He knows the plans He has for you (Jer. 29:11), His plans may not be your plans. Are you praying, "God, not my will, but Your will be done"?

Like I said, my Baal Perazim was TDCJ. It was where I surrendered. Jeremiah 29:13 tells us how the Lord will be found.

“Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says

speechless. I ended the testimony and the kids in the room flooded me, surrounded me on all sides. Many were crying, some wanted hugs, and some wanted to share how my words had touched them.

I heard the story from a freshman girl how her biological father raped her for many years before anyone found out and how it has wrecked her life. I sat with that girl and talked to her for two hours and God just flowed through me. Later that night I received a Facebook message from her mom. It was a long message thanking me for showing up and being there for her daughter and the other kids.

Not even a week later I received another call from another school. With very little strength or motivation, I just showed up. God did the same thing, and the kids had the same reactions. When I was finished, the kids came up and the stories poured out. I left there and cried all the way home. I cried because God still used me even when I'm broken. I cried because these kids are hurting and don't have people that they can confide in. I cried because God is good, and He never fails.

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

God prepared good works for us even before He saved us. He has done all of the work. We just have to show up and walk them out. These good works don't depend on your feelings, situation, or strength to press on. He's big enough to press for you. Just show up. So please, as a reminder to myself and to the readers, don't forget to remember where He brought us from and how He uses us.

There are people waiting for you to just show up.

Don't Forget to Remember

Jason Cole

I've used this title before. I have to reflect back to this thought because I'm guilty of forgetting where I came from and how God saved, restored and used/uses me. Life has been hard for about two years straight. That's why I always tell men and women who are incarcerated that the only goal cannot be living for the day that you go home.

That goal isn't enough to sustain.

It has to be bigger than that, more purposeful. Life happens whether you are incarcerated or living outside of the barbed wire fences. You lose family, friends, and support. When you lose those things, you begin to lose or forget who you are. You can lose yourself if you're not careful. In the middle of my struggles and pain, the last thing I feel like doing is ministering. God is not moved by your struggles, pain, or feelings. He's still on a mission to save those that are lost.

"Not that I have already attained or am already perfected; but I press on...I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12-14).

Paul had ridiculous tenacity. Most days I find it very hard to press and very easy just to lay it down and let others carry the baton. Then the phone rings. "Jason, we want you to come out and speak to the high school, share your story with our kiddos."

The only real strength I have is to just show up and pray that God does something with my mess. I show up and stare at a crowd of students from sixth to twelfth grade. They are rowdy and could care less that I was there because they don't know me. As I begin to share, God sneaks in the room. His presence is thick, and you can hear a pin drop as I retell the nightmare of the day I went to prison. By the end of the talk, everyone was

the Lord, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive." (Jer. 29:12-14)

How bad do you want your breakthrough? Bad enough to do all it takes? I can say I had tried doing it my way, but I always ended up always back where I started, never able to move towards breakthroughs in my life.

Seeking God through application. Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near (Is. 55:6). While He may be found. I realized that while I was in TDCJ I had plenty of time to not only read the Bible but study and learn who God is and my relationship to Him. Don't waste your time just because you are in prison. Apply yourself it will pay off in the free world once you are released.

Today as I look back to where I started. I can say that 2023 will be my year of God's breakthrough in my life. Pressing toward 2024 my last year on paper. Will be even a greater year. If God did it for David and He has done it for me. He sure will do it for you. You have not been forgotten.

I pray that as you read this article it will spark up something inside you that will launch you forward into a new beginning and relationship in Jesus Christ. Your breakthrough. Your Baal Perazim in 2023. God Speed. 📸

Jacob was a cheater.
Peter had a temper.
David had an affair.
Noah got drunk.
Jonah ran from God.
Paul was a murderer.
Gideon was insecure.
Miriam was a gossip.
Martha was a worrier.
Thomas was a doubter.
Sarah was impatient.
Elijah was moody.
Jeremiah was depressed.
Moses stuttered.
Zacchaeus was short.
Abraham was old.
Lazarus was dead.

**God doesn't call the qualified.
He qualifies the called.**

place, where it would be easier to concentrate, thus preventing the absolute bane of all prayer time, a wandering mind.

And then there is another guide for this prayer enterprise (from my favorite theologian), derived from the acrostic A.C.T.S. The letters stand for: *Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving* and *Supplication*. It's maybe somewhat formulaic, but it *is* tried and true (at least in my prayer life), in that it focuses on the vital elements every prayer should contain. We can, with A.C.T.S., pray through the Ten Commandments, Psalms, the Apostle's Creed or any other sacred scripture as examples of supplication and intercession. For example, with "Hallowed be your name..." we can say, "O Lord, we live in an age where your name is not only revered but is used as profanity...Give me the grace to always respect Your sacred name in my heart and with my lips..."

Sometimes our prayers are invariably limited to appeals for whatever blessings we would like to receive from God, or request for our friends and relatives learned, for some of us, at an early age, e.g., "God bless Mommy, Daddy, my brothers and sisters...and my doggie Fido..." Of course, it is good to pray for those in need. But we must also understand that prayer is more than supplication and intercession.

Jesus could have answered the disciples in some other way when they request that he teach them how to pray, such as, "Well...immerse yourself in the Psalms...prayers inspired by the Holy Spirit", or He might have directed them to the prayers of Hannah or Nehemiah. Instead, we have The Lord's Prayer, a model for communicating with God that has inspired, comforted, and strengthened Christians for two thousand years.

The bottom line, whether we use as a model the Lord's Prayer, A.C.T.S., or something else altogether, the important thing is that we *pray*.

Next...Worship...

Five Essential Disciplines of the Faith: 2. Prayer, part 4.

Adrian Pasillas

A Prayer Model

The Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13) is a model (for some, *the* model), an actual prayer that is also a pattern to follow. Jesus invites us to begin prayer with the personal "Father", a radical thing the Jews never considered God to be at the time. The first petition is that the name of God be regarded as *holy*, which then proceeds to a request for the kingdom of God to triumph, the will of God to be done on earth as it already is done in heaven. Therefore, we need at the outset of prayer to bow in reverence before our God, acknowledging Him as our loving, gracious and holy heavenly Father.

A Kingdom Focus

Our prayers should also reflect the Lord's Prayer's emphasis on the kingdom of God and His glory, which is, among other things, to pray beyond our own circumstances and needs—envisioning a bigger picture, as we boldly but humbly petitioning for God's work in the rest of the world.

Practical Suggestions

(Five pastors were enjoying fellowship at the church potluck, when the topic of prayer came around, specifically, what posture was the most effective when it came to prayer. "Well...I stand and raise holy hands toward heaven!", one pastor interjected. "Well", said another, "I sit and bow my head with hands clasp!". Another said, "I do what the ancient prophets did...I lay prostrate face down!". The last pastor offered up his. "One day, while I was walking across a meadow, I stumbled upon a large hidden boulder, and landed head first into an abandoned water well. I was stuck... right to my socks! So...my feet up in the air is the best way to pray!")

There are suggestions...and then there are suggestions. But some of the giants of the faith throughout redemptive history have suggested (quite possibly because ancient everyday life was also rife with disruptions to prayer time), to reserve and/or schedule time for prayer every day, effectively in some quiet

IX

THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF "JELLY-FISH" SERMONS PREACHED EVERY YEAR—SERMONS WITHOUT AN EDGE, OR A POINT, OR A CORNER, SMOOTH AS BILLIARD BALLS, AWAKENING NO SINNER AND EDIFYING NO SAINT.

J. C. RYLE

THE CHURCH
IS SO IGNORANT ABOUT
THE GOSPEL
THAT WHEN YOU PREACH THE
TRUE GOSPEL
YOU'RE VERY LIABLE TO BE
VILIFIED FOR IT BY
THE CHURCH

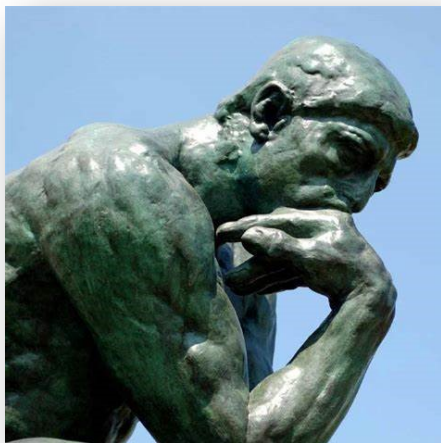
JOHN MACARTHUR

fb.me/ferocioustruth

What is Truth?

John MacArthur

Ask anyone today, "What is truth?" and you're sure to start an interesting conversation. Try it on a university campus and you're likely to receive laughter, scorn, and derision. The concept of truth has clearly fallen on hard times, and the consequences of rejecting it are ravaging human society. So let's go back to the starting point and answer the question: What is truth?



One of the most profound and eternally significant questions in the Bible was posed by an unbeliever. Pilate—the man who handed Jesus over to be crucified—turned to Jesus in His final hour, and asked, "What is truth?" It was a rhetorical question, a cynical response to what Jesus had just revealed: "I have come into the world, to testify to the truth."

Two thousand years later, the whole world breathes Pilate's cynicism. Some say truth is a power play, a metanarrative constructed by the elite for the purpose of controlling the ignorant masses. To some, truth is subjective, the individual world of preference and opinion. Others believe truth is a collective judgment, the product of cultural consensus, and still others flatly deny the concept of truth altogether.

law." The law does not bring life. It simply shows us that we cannot be good enough to be in the presence of God. The things we have done that break the law of God are called sin. We are all guilty of sin and need something to cleanse us from our sins. Sins cannot be done away with by good deeds. There are not enough good things we can do to make our standing before God right. One good thing does not do away with a bad thing. As people we deserve to be punished for our sins and rebellion to an infinite, all powerful God.

The good news of the gospel is that Jesus died on the cross and took the punishment for the sins of the world. If we place our faith in Christ, we get a new beginning. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 it says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." In Christ we get a real new beginning. We get a true clean slate. We are made righteous before God not because of what we have done, but because of what Christ did for us by going to the cross and taking on our sin. The punishment we deserved was poured out on Christ at the cross. Faith in the completed work of Jesus is what makes us new. This is truly a new beginning. Happy New Year!



New Beginnings

Randy McDaris

Happy New Year! The new year always brings about new year's resolutions. People love the idea of a clean slate. A way to start fresh. Every new year is like getting a new beginning. It is like starting a new job or moving to a new place. We get excited with the idea of new.

I once heard someone say that New Year's resolutions are made to be broken. I hate it when you feel like you get a new start or a clean slate only to find that you end up doing the same old things. The diet fails. The trips to the gym stop. The resolution to never do the bad habit again, breaks. This seems to be the cycle though. We plan to do good things and end up failing.

This happened in the Bible as well. In the Old Testament, God gave the law to His people. The people could never keep the law. God gave them fresh starts and chose to give them second chances often, but they would always turn around and sin again. It seemed that no matter how hard they tried they would eventually mess up. Even King David who was called a man after God's own heart would end up committing adultery with Bathsheba and then have her husband killed.

We always seem to mess things up. God in His mercy and grace though made a way for us. This way was by sending His one and only Son for us. This is the gospel. Many people see the message of the gospel as a new beginning that is just a second chance to try harder. This is not the gospel though. God does not expect us to try harder. God knows that we will never be able to keep the law.

Paul says in Galatians 3:21, "For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the

So, what is truth?

Here's a simple definition drawn from what the Bible teaches: *Truth is that which is consistent with the mind, will, character, glory, and being of God.* Even more to the point: *Truth is the self-expression of God.* That is the biblical meaning of truth. Because the definition of truth flows from God, truth is *theological*.

Truth is also *ontological*—which is a fancy way of saying it is the way things really are. Reality is what it is because God declared it so and made it so. Therefore God is the author, source, determiner, governor, arbiter, ultimate standard, and final judge of all truth.

The Old Testament refers to the Almighty as the "God of truth" (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 31:5; Isaiah 65:16). When Jesus said of Himself, "I *am*...the truth" (John 14:6, emphasis added), He was thereby making a profound claim about His own deity. He was also making it clear that *all* truth must ultimately be defined in terms of God and His eternal glory. After all, Jesus is "the brightness of [God's] glory and the express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:3). He is *truth incarnate*—the perfect expression of God and therefore the absolute embodiment of all that is true.

Jesus also said that the written Word of God is truth. It does not merely contain nuggets of truth; it is pure, unchangeable, and inviolable truth that (according to Jesus) "cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Praying to His heavenly Father on behalf of His disciples, He said this: "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17:17). Moreover, the Word of God is

eternal truth “which lives and abides forever” (1 Peter 1:23).

Of course, there cannot be any discord or difference of opinion between the *written* Word of God (Scripture) and the *incarnate* Word of God (Jesus). In the first place, truth by definition cannot contradict itself. Second, Scripture is called “the word of Christ” (Colossians 3:16). It is His message, His self-expression. In other words, the truth of Christ and the truth of the Bible are of the very same character. They are in perfect agreement in every respect. Both are equally true. God has revealed Himself to humanity through Scripture and through His Son. Both perfectly embody the essence of what truth is.

Remember, Scripture also says God reveals basic truth about Himself in nature. The heavens declare His glory (Psalm 19:1). His other invisible attributes (such as His wisdom, power, and beauty) are on constant display in what He has created (Romans 1:20). Knowledge of Him is inborn in the human heart (Romans 1:19), and a sense of the moral character and loftiness of His law is implicit in every human conscience (Romans 2:15).

Those things are universally self-evident truths. According to Romans 1:20, denial of the spiritual truths we know innately always involves a deliberate and culpable unbelief. And for those who wonder whether basic truths about God and His moral standards really are stamped on the human heart, ample proof can be found in the long history of human law and religion. To suppress this truth is to dishonor God, displace His glory, and incur His wrath (vv. 19-20).

want to totally surrender. Yet that night as I spoke to God, I knew that His peace could not be mine unless I did surrender. Psalm 32 was the first scripture I found, and it spoke to the depth of my soul. I began to weep, and I mean weep hard! I knew I needed to be redeemed, to be forgiven, and furthermore be transformed.

As I spoke to this brother, I explained that not all was perfect, not all was a bed of roses, and yet with the Lord I had a profound assurance and peace. See, as I read about the confusion of this world, of the pained and of those who are lost—of knowing how miserable they are—I know that Jesus is what they need.

Sin is heavy. Sin is confusing and shameful. This is what brings what we see in the depression of the youth today and in so many adults. I reminded this brother of the very words that Jesus spoke in the Gospel of John 14:27 “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

He just sat there, quiet and thinking. I know that we face so much, life has a million ups and downs—not to mention one’s own personal struggles—and yet we have this promise that Jesus Himself gave to each one of us. What a beautiful gift to give us!

Brothers and sisters, we do not face anything without the outcome of peace and fearlessness. Peace that nothing in this world can match or take away. There is not a circumstance that can undo what Christ for filled on the cross.

I sat with this brother as we spoke of all that I faced and face daily, and he shared his own battles and struggles. It seemed as if all was going wrong yet he saw in his own spirit that God granted him peace. I recall sitting in the dorm or in a cell and knowing that peace never left me, nor has it in the four years that I have been home nor in the future. Jesus is our Lord and Savior and our Redeemer. Inner turmoil will be overtaken by the peace that Christ has granted and gifted to us.

“When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer” (Ps. 32:3-4). 🌄

Inner Turmoil

Israel Garza

Just the other day I was speaking with a brother about the joy and peace in my life and told him one of the biggest surprises I have experienced in my Christian life. It occurred when I was in prison working at the print shop of the unit that I was assigned to. While working there I had a co-worker—a man that had done about 21 years on a 25-year sentence. I recall that he was a cold and secluded man by his own reason, and he didn't trust anyone.

During the time that we worked together I simply offered coffee, told him “Good morning” and later in the day “Good afternoon.” Since we lived in the same dorm, I would always tell him to have a good night and if he needed anything he just had to let me know. After many months he pulled me to the side, and he asked (in not so nice words!), “Why are you always so full of peace and joyful?”

I was shocked by the question and the intensity in which it was asked. He seemed so mad. I began to tell him about what Jesus had done and was doing in my life. I shared how His promise was to leave us peace, a Helper, and how His redeeming of my soul had freed me of my heavy heart, mind, and spirit.

I recall the night that I was saved. The night that I had my personal Jacob moment with the Lord. But the weight of my sin was too much to bear. I had all the flesh desired, but my soul was barren, heavy, full of anger and frustration. I was asking God to free me, but my struggle was that I still desired my sin. I didn't



Still, the only infallible interpreter of what we see in nature or know innately in our own consciences is the explicit revelation of Scripture. Since Scripture is also the one place where we are given the way of salvation, entrance into the kingdom of God, and an infallible account of Christ, the Bible is the touchstone to which all truth claims should be brought and by which all other truth must finally be measured.

An obvious corollary of what I am saying is that truth means nothing apart from God. Truth cannot be adequately explained, recognized, understood, or defined without God as the source. Since He alone is eternal and self-existent and He alone is the Creator of all else, He is the fountain of all truth.

If you don't believe that, try defining truth without reference to God, and see how quickly all such definitions fail. The moment you begin to ponder the essence of truth, you are brought face to face with the requirement of a universal absolute—the eternal reality of God. Conversely, the whole concept of truth instantly becomes nonsense (and every imagination of the human heart therefore turns to sheer foolishness) as soon as people attempt to remove the thought of God from their minds.

That, of course, is precisely how the apostle Paul traced the relentless decline of human ideas in Romans 1:21-22: “Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools.”

There are serious *moral* implications too, whenever someone tries to dissociate truth from the knowledge of God. Paul went on to write, “Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting” (Romans 1:28). Abandon a biblical definition of truth, and unrighteousness is the inescapable result. We see it happening before our eyes in every corner of contemporary society. In fact, the widespread acceptance of homosexuality, rebellion, and all forms of iniquity that we see in our society today is a verbatim fulfillment of what Romans 1 says always happens when a society denies and suppresses the essential connection between God and truth.

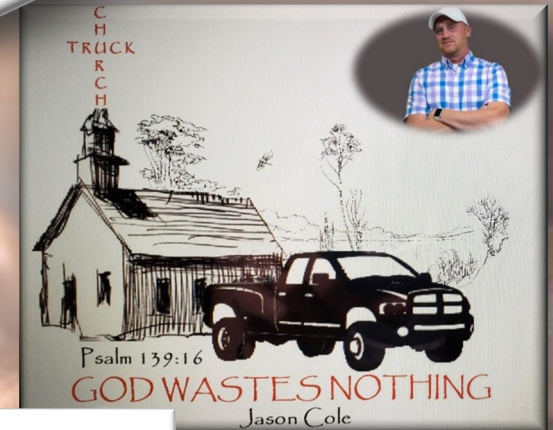
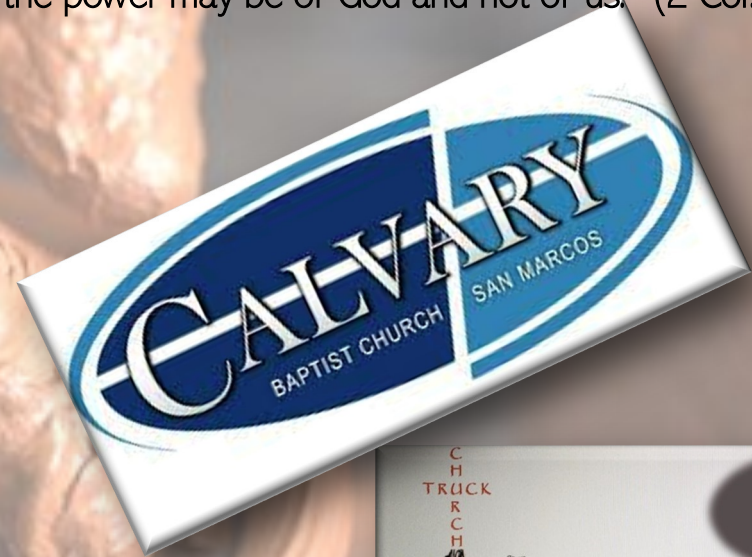
If you reflect on the subject with any degree of sobriety, you will soon see that even the most fundamental moral distinctions—good and evil, right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, or honor and dishonor—cannot possibly have any true or constant meaning apart from God. That is because truth and knowledge themselves simply have no coherent significance apart from a fixed source, namely, God. How could they? God embodies the very definition of truth. Every truth claim apart from Him is preposterous.

Elaborate epistemologies have been proposed and methodically debunked one after another—like a long chain in which every previous link is broken. After thousands of years, the very best of human philosophers



Vessels

...ce of the power may be of God and not of us.” (2 Cor. 4:7).



Earthen

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency

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A faithful SAPD donor named Janie, whose heart goes out to the less fortunate. (Is. 61:1).

A faithful donor
named Adrian
whose passion is
rightly dividing the
Word of Truth.

A faithful family in San Antonio, the Silva

(Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Locke, Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Marx, James, and others) have all utterly failed to account for truth and the origin of human knowledge apart from God.

In fact, the one most valuable lesson humanity ought to have learned from philosophy is that it is impossible to make sense of truth without acknowledging God as the necessary starting point.

Truth is not subjective, it is not a consensual cultural construct, and it is not an invalid, outdated, irrelevant concept. Truth is the self-expression of God. Truth is thus theological; it is the reality God has created and defined, and over which He rules. Truth is therefore a moral issue for every human being.

How each person responds to the truth God has revealed is an issue of eternal significance. To reject and rebel against the truth of God results in darkness, folly, sin, judgment, and the never-ending wrath of God. To accept and submit to the truth of God is to see clearly, to know with certainty, and to find life everlasting.

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Nine Signs You've Been Born Again

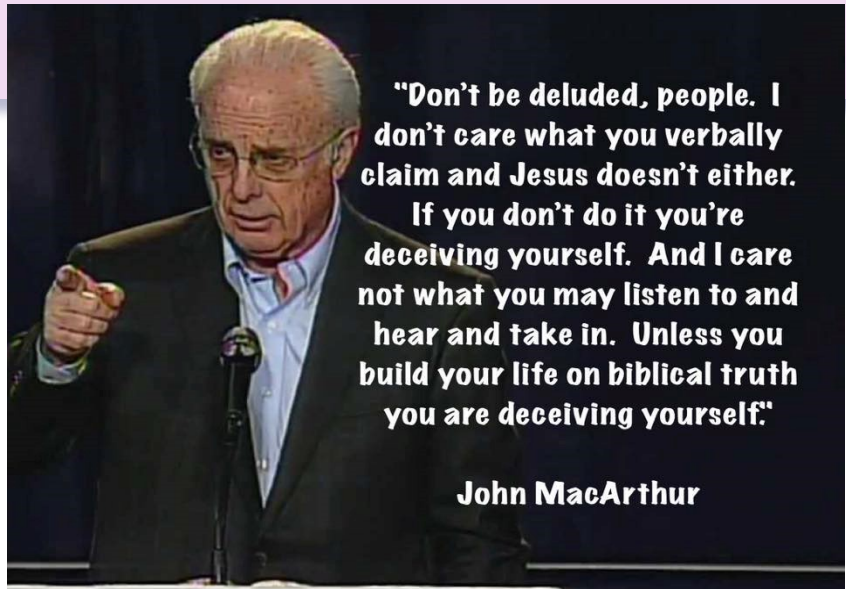
1. Your **DESIRES** change.
2. Your **VISION** changes.
3. Your **MIND** changes.
4. Your **HEART** changes.
5. Your **WORDS** change.
6. Your **HEARING** changes.
7. Your **FRIENDSHIPS** change.
8. Your **ACTIONS** change.



reformeddevotionals

If you give them a God made in
their own image, I guarantee
they'll accept Him. But He won't
be the God who saves.

PAUL WASHER



"Don't be deluded, people. I
don't care what you verbally
claim and Jesus doesn't either.
If you don't do it you're
deceiving yourself. And I care
not what you may listen to and
hear and take in. Unless you
build your life on biblical truth
you are deceiving yourself."

John MacArthur