

Before The God of Heaven

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Dedication

This tool is dedicated to my brothers and sisters in Christ. It is my desire to give us a template, a GPS, a navigational guide to assist our *pilgrimage* here on earth as *navigators of God's universe*. “...*they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*” (*Hebrews 11:13*)

Acknowledgements

“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.” (II Cor. 9:15)

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” (II Cor. 8:9)

Apart from the saving grace of God extended to us through the gift of His Son, we would be totally without hope and bound for hell. Having received eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ, our hearts are filled with gratitude for our standing in His grace. We are rejoicing in His daily provision of sustaining and sanctifying grace, without which, where would we be?

Were it not for the fact that God gave to us the Holy Scriptures, “...given by inspiration of God, ...profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works,” (II Timothy 3:16-17) we would have been without divine revelation by which to navigate God’s universe.

I would like to thank my wife, Debby, for her endurance and support through these fifty years of marriage and ministry.

A Template

(My Position and Identity)

Before the God of Heaven

As one...broken...

As one...redeemed...

As one...commissioned...

(My Mission) In This Life

...walking with God...

...in my place...strengthening family...

...reaching out...as a channel of grace...

...to unbelievers...

...to fellow believers...

Introduction

For most of us, life is not likely going to become less busy any time soon. So, while we are going down the highway of life at 70 to 75 mph, we need to figure a way to still handle the forty issues of life coming at us, and, asking God to help us do two things with more intentionality...1) to enlarge our scope of God consciousness, and 2) to be proactively pursuing our God given mission (three areas). Let's ask God for his enabling grace to 1) walk more closely with Him, 2) strengthen our earthly and forever family, and 3) to be reaching out, being a channel of grace to those around us.

This material is not intended to become a regular type of book. This material will not just pass along information to you that once you have taken it in, you are done with it and then you can just lay it down and keep moving. This is a template. It is a spiritual GPS. No, the twelve gates are not twelve lessons or sermons. They are navigational checkpoints, if you will. Just as a sailor continually checks his compass, charts, and position, or a pilot repeatedly consults his instruments, the believer continually comes back to these gates and asks: 1) What does God desire? 2) Where am I right now? 3) What course correction is needed?

Each of these gates does not just bring us to common terrain, but to very special, consequential, places. You may wonder why we are using the idea of gates. Let me explain. Even in our culture, there are "Gated communities." Farmers and some businesses use fences and gates. Security is one issue. Protection of valuable property is an issue. Fences and Gates communicate a separation between what is public and what is private. A gate may

communicate that you are about to enter a place that is important and that accessibility is a privilege not a right.

Here, each unit is introduced as a Gate that has a designation that characterizes the aspect of life that we are about to bring attention to, and to demonstrate, coming here is not just a common place, but rather a special place to be shown respect, for it has great impact on lives, our own, and on others, as well.

The question is not, what chapter am I reading today? The question is, before the God of heaven, which consequential aspect of the Christian life am I tuning into today, as I navigate God's universe? *Gate One – Heart, Life, Legacy, Gate Two – Integrity – Before the God of Heaven, Gate Three – Brokenness on Display, Gate Four – The God of Grace – Redemption, Gate Five – Commissioned by God, Gate Six – Integrity # 2 – His purposes or mine? Gate Seven – Integrity #3 – My mission on Earth, Gate Eight – Walking with God, Gate Nine – In My Place...Strengthening Family (Earthly), Gate Ten – In My Place...Strengthening Family (Forever), Gate Eleven – Reaching Out...as a channel of Grace to Believers, Gate Twelve – Reaching Out...as a channel of Grace to Unbelievers.*

At each of the twelve gates we will ask three questions.

What does God Desire?

Before the God of Heaven, where am I presently?

How, by His grace, do I move toward what God desires?

We are all navigating God's universe. And we do so before the God of Heaven. He is not a casual observer. It makes a difference for now and all eternity how we deal with the important matters within the twelve gates! These are twelve

places we should revisit often so as to remind ourselves of God's navigational "checkpoints," and ask ourselves 1) what does God want from me? 2) where are we right now, and, 3) by God's grace, how can I move toward where He wants me to be?

The template, the GPS, the navigational guide found here uses Nehemiah as someone who was tuned in to God, His purposes, people, truth, taking an honest and open look, not satisfied to just let things go, was willing to get out of his comfort zones to go motivate others to do what they should have been doing on their own. Before the God of Heaven, was exactly where he lived his life.

Gate One – Heart, Life, Legacy

**PLEASE STOP! WAIT A MOMENT!
BEFORE YOU ENTER THIS GATE
A FEW THOUGHTS TO KEEP IN MIND
YOU ARE BEFORE THE GOD OF HEAVEN
HEART, LIFE, LEGACY DETERMINED HERE
KEEP YOUR HEART WITH ALL DILIGENCE**

***“Keep thy heart with all diligence;
for out of it are the issues of life.”
(Proverbs 4:23)***

Ponder for a moment the wisdom of that proverb.

An epic heart battle, pride vs. humility, first within Lucifer, had devastating consequences on us all. Lucifer was not content with the place God had for him. Pride prompted him to want to exalt himself above the throne of God. Also, Adam and Eve fell for Satan’s lie, rather than holding to what God had said to them. Again, note the eternal consequences.

So, as we enter the ***Heart, Life, and Legacy Gate***, think about the importance of what happens here for each of us. We will look at ***brokenness*** as Paul speaks of it in Romans chapter one. Then, we will examine another critical aspect of heart life, our human affections. Understand ***temporal treasures are ok, in their place, until they have the ultimate place, God’s place, in our heart***. Also, we note fourteen ***epic battles of the heart***, one we just mentioned, that can become a huge trouble spot within our heart life. For these ***epic battles of the heart***, you need to ***bring truth*** to the deliberations.

Also, we will look at ***how the heart is won*** over to anyone or anything. It determines who or what you put before God.

We will note there are three undergirding principles to this growth and development initiative. All of them can be activated in our heart life. And they work together. They are about Heart, Life, and Legacy.

***“For where your treasure is,
there will your heart be also.” Matt 6:21***

***“Whoever or whatever has a person’s heart,
is whose ways will be observed.”***

We can, with God’s help determine that we will do what we need to do, to make sure God has our heart. There is a sequence of seven actions that make that possible.

***“If a ruler hearkens to lies, all his servants are wicked”.
Proverbs 29:12***

***“What you honor, dignify, emphasize,
pay attention to, and reward, is what you get.”***

By example/emphasis, when God has our heart, what we honor, dignify, emphasize, pay attention to, and reward, will be God, and the things of God.

“...I have purposed it. I will also do it.” Isa 46:11c

Purpose it in your heart, then do what you purposed.

I have simply noted for you some of the key aspects of heart life that we will focus on in this tour of our heart life. Let’s begin!

Gate One

Heart, Life, Legacy

What God Desires

*Run to Jesus, love Him with all my heart
Honor Him and His Word by my example and emphasis
Purpose in my heart to embrace His purposes as my own*

Three Universal Principles

*“For where your treasure is,
there will your heart be also.” Matt 6:21*

*“Whoever or whatever has a person’s heart,
is whose ways will be observed.”*

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*“If a ruler hearkens to lies, all his servants are wicked”.
Proverbs 29:12*

*“What you honor, dignify, emphasize,
pay attention to, and reward, is what you get.”*

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“...I have purposed it. I will also do it.” Isa 46:11c

Purpose it in your heart, then do what you purposed.

WHO CREATED HEART LIFE

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. (John 1:1-3)

BEFORE THE GOD OF HEAVEN

13 The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. 14 From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. 15 He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works. (Ps 33:13-15)

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Prov. 4:23)

From these passages there are some important things we need to note from the Bible. 1) In the beginning God, through His Son, the Living Word, made the universe. 2) God makes it clear that from His habitation he sees all the sons of men. All of them, and he knows intimately everything going on in an individual's heart, because He fashioned it. 3) Our heart, our Command-and-Control Center, needs to be guarded.

Please understand that this is only a survey tour. As you will see, each aspect of heart life that we see here could have books written about each one. There is a clear connection between what happens here and the flow of human history.

GUARD YOUR HEART

Our heart needs to be guarded from outside, and inside, influences. It needs to be understood that the heart itself is already sin tainted.

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9)

Through Lucifer’s fall, and his influence on Adam and Eve, the whole human race is sin tainted all the way to our DNA. The apostle Paul, in setting forth the doctrine of the depravity of man, in Romans 1 and through to chapter 3, interestingly gives four phrases in chapter one that capture at our core, how sin works in our flesh.

“...who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,” (v. 18)

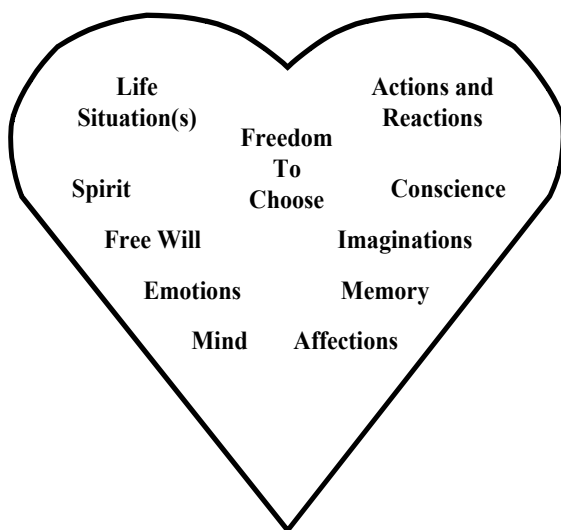
“Although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks” (v. 21)

“They exchanged the truth of God for a lie” (v. 25)

“Worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (v. 25)

So, having just begun our tour, we have great cause to not trust our own heart. It is sinful to the core. This is a devastating reality with which we have to contend. I am addressing believers in this navigational guide, and yes, we have been redeemed, but not yet glorified. We still have to deal with our flesh. When we get to the third gate, ***Brokenness on Display***, we will elaborate more on what this all looks like in this life.

There are eight components of our heart life.



We all have a human spirit, volition (free will), emotions, intellect/mind, conscience, imagination, memory, and human affections. I like to describe our internal heart deliberations this way. It's as if these aspects of our heart life sit at a conference table, and as life situations, both from the outside, and from within, come to us, there is a deliberation that takes place within our heart. And we make choices of how we will act or react in these situations. Books have been, and should yet be, written about the deliberations that take place within the human heart.

HUMAN AFFECTIONS – TREASURES OF THE HEART

There is this ongoing battle within us between focusing on temporal treasures and spiritual treasures. We live in a temporal world. There is part of us that is made to exist and operate in the temporal world. As temporal beings, we are tuned in to the temporal treasures that are needed and wanted in this temporal existence. There is nothing wrong with temporal treasure, if it stays in its proper place. Understand *temporal treasures are ok, in their place, until they have the ultimate place, God's place, in our heart.*



For most of us life is not likely going to become less busy any time soon. So, while we are going down the highway of life at 70 to 75 mph, we need to figure a way to still handle the forty issues of life coming at us, and asking God to help us do two things with more intentionality...1) to enlarge our scope of God consciousness, and 2) to be proactively pursuing our God given mission (three areas).

Let's ask God for his enabling grace to 1) walk more closely with Him, 2) strengthen our earthly and forever family, and 3) to be reaching out, being a channel of grace to those around us.

As children of God, there is now a whole different level to our existence! And now we need to give spiritual/eternal treasure greater priority than temporal things.

So, we are conflicted. Will I be able, while doing the forty necessary temporal things of life, to have a greater level of

GOD'S VALUE SYSTEM	
SALVATION	LOST
OBEDIENCE	DISOBEDIENCE
WISDOM	MAN'S WISDOM
GODLINESS	WORLDLINESS
PLEASING GOD	PLEASING SELF
SERVING OTHERS	SERVING SELF
FEAR OF GOD	FEAR OF MAN
HEAVEN	HELL
DESIRE FOR GAIN	FEAR OF LOSS OR PAIN

God consciousness, so that I do not neglect my walk with the Lord? And, our spiritual obligations to family, church, and individual believers, unbelievers, need their place in our lives as well.

TEMPORAL VS. ETERNAL TREASURE

Where we have been so far addresses the reality that human beings are made with the capacity to tune in to the temporal

world. And yes, we need the capacity to do this. And in this world, we come to ascribe value to what we call temporal values. You saw the list, possessions, position, power, prestige, pleasure, popularity, praise of men, and passion. There is nothing wrong with having temporal treasure, as long as these temporal things do not take first place in our heart. If we treasure them more than we treasure/love our redeemer, Jesus, then that treasure has taken God's place in our life. That is idolatry. That is a big problem.

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. 22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. 23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! 24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. (Matt 6:21-24)

There are three points Jesus makes in this passage. There are two kinds of treasure, temporal and spiritual. As we have ascribed value to these two kinds of treasure, whoever or whatever has been ascribed the higher value will have the heart of that person. Nothing should be treasured/valued more than God. If it is, it has taken God's place. *So, guarding the heart takes discernment, integrity, and determination. Our DNA is strong and it is easier sometimes to suppress the truth rather than embrace it. It is possible to find ourselves honoring ourselves, and being in control, more than honoring God, and letting Him be in control. We can quickly find ourselves buying*

falsehoods that allow us to rationalize doing what we want to do. And, we can find ourselves worshipping and serving self rather than worshipping and serving the Creator.

Some of the most epic of battles on planet earth take place within the human heart. As I note these, take a moment and recall how some of these you know have had great impact in your own life, and the lives of family members, friends, and people that have been in the world around you.

EPIC BATTLES OF THE HEART

Truth vs. Falsehood
Good vs. Evil
Integrity vs. self-deception
Humility vs. Pride
Purpose vs. Nihilism
Meaning vs. Emptiness
Selflessness vs. Self-centeredness
Spirit vs. Flesh
Divine calling vs. Desire
Spiritual/Eternal vs. Temporal
Love vs. Hate
Faith vs. Fear
Hope vs. Despair
Passion vs. Illicit Passion

Intense, draining, numbing, deliberations play out at the conference table of the heart. Guard your heart. Life and Legacy play out from what's in the heart.

HOW THE HEART IS WON

Contact — *The Beginning of Influence*

“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals.’ (1 Corinthians 15:33)

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked...” (Psalm 1:1)

Dwelling With — Repeated Presence Deepens Attachment

“He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm.” (Proverbs 13:20)

“Abide in Me, and I in you.” (John 15:4)

(This is why Scripture places enormous emphasis on fellowship, family, church life, companionship, meditation, and abiding.)

Communication — Exchange Builds Connection

“Faith comes by hearing...” (Romans 10:17)

“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” (Matthew 12:34)

Knowing — Familiarity Produces Internalization

People naturally move toward what becomes familiar, and, repeated familiarity reduces resistance, and, intimate knowledge creates emotional attachment.

Valuing / Treasuring — The Heart Attaches

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:21)

**Influencing — *What Captures the Heart
Begins Directing the Life***

“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” (Proverbs 4:23)

“My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.” (Proverbs 23:26)

Embracing — *Full Identification and Ownership*

At this point there is connection, loyalty, and oneness.

ISRAEL AND THE RECHABITES

The Bible gives contrasting illustrations of how the heart was won over within two groups in totally opposite directions.

Throughout the Old Testament, God wanted the children of Israel to not go dwell among the idolatrous people of the surrounding pagan cultures. They did not obey. As they followed the seven steps given above their hearts were won over to the people, the cultures, the pagan gods within those cultures. And so, God did not have the hearts of His chosen people. God would use pagan nations to bring judgement on his people.

17 Therefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered. Jer. 35:17

In Jeremiah 35 there is an amazing story. God is moving toward judging Judah for their waywardness. But He wants to point out to them, and us, that there is a group that went the completely opposite way.

The word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, 2 Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink. 3 Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziniyah, and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites; 4 And I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door: 5 And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. 6 But they said, we will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons forever: 7 Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. 8 Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; 9 Nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: 10 But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. 11 But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we

dwell at Jerusalem. 12 Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, 13 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the LORD. 14 The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me. 15 I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me. 16 Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me: 17 Therefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered. 18 And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: 19 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me forever. (Jer. 35)

God had the prophet bring the Rechabites to the house of God and had them set wine before them and they were commanded to drink. They did not obey because Jonadab

the son of Rechab had commanded them not to drink wine. They kept their distance from the surrounding cultures. Thus, their hearts were kept loyal to their leaders' directives.

Contact

The descendants continually remained connected to the teachings of Jonadab. The commands were not forgotten.

Dwelling With

Their entire communal structure reinforced those convictions. They lived inside a culture of remembrance. Environment reinforced identity.

Communication

The commands were continually repeated from generation to generation. The family narrative stayed alive. This parallels Deuteronomy 6:

Knowing

The descendants knew who they were and where they came from. They knew why they lived differently.

Valuing / Treasuring

The commands became treasured traditions rather than burdensome restrictions. The family honored Jonadab's vision. Their loyalty became affectionate and voluntary.

Influencing

The inherited convictions governed their lifestyle, habits, priorities, boundaries, and social behavior. Their worldview shaped conduct.

Embracing

Finally, the Rechabites fully embraced this identity as their own. What began as Jonadab's commands became the descendants' convictions. This is one of the most powerful examples in Scripture of multigenerational loyalty.

18 And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: 19 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me forever. (Jer 35:18-19)

THREE UNDERGIRDING PRINCIPLES

This first navigational guide puts at the foundation the importance of knowing that we must guard our heart, and keep it from so many influences that want to be in first place in our lives. Our hearts are broken, sinful, and easily won over to temporal treasure that then takes God's place in our life. Yes, these three heart purposes pursued ***Before the God of Heaven*** with integrity, by God's grace, should be how we navigate God's universe... ***Heart, Life, and Legacy.***

Heart

*“For where your treasure is,
there will your heart be also.” Matt 6:21*

*“Whoever or whatever has a person’s heart,
is whose ways will be observed.”*

Run to Jesus, love Him with all my heart

I want to make you aware again, as we begin to illustrate the battles that rage within our sinful hearts, that this is all happening *Before the God of Heaven*. Psalm 33:13-15 reminds us,

13 The LORD looketh from heaven; he beareth all the sons of men. 14 From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. 15 He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works. (Ps 33:13-15)

1 (To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.) O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. 2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. 3 Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. 4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. (Ps 139:1-4)

Let's take a close look at just how much our flesh, our sinful flesh, suppresses the truth, just beyond our awareness. *"We see what we want to see. And we hear what we want to hear. Because we want to do what we want to do. Because we treasure what we treasure."*

Numerous times a day we, in a moment, realize we have a minute of discretionary "free" time on our hands. There may be a half dozen things we could choose to do. Rather than listing all of them, I will just list two...pick up my phone, or pick up my Bible. Why is it, that most Christians, in that moment will opt for the phone. ***A temporal treasure that influences us more than we realize is comfort, taking it easy, relaxing.*** There are many moments in our lives where treasuring comfort rules the moment over treasuring time communing with our God.

Another illustration of treasuring our pleasure (comfort zones), over treasuring spiritual things would be that moment in our busy day when someone moving in our sphere, who does not know Christ, and in the moment, the Holy Spirit prompts us to start an exchange with them with the intent to make it a moment of a verbal witness to them regarding Jesus, and our need of His redemption, we shrug it off, rationalizing that surely it wasn't a good time after all (when we just wanted to stay in our comfort zone).

Treasuring our pleasure (a big category of temporal treasure...a lot more than just our comfort), has to be one of the predominate categories of temporal treasure that has a higher priority than spiritual treasure much of the time, in the life of believers. Ask God to help you become more aware of this, and ask His help, in the moment, to opt for going after the spiritual treasure rather than the temporal one.

So, I have chosen one of eight categories of temporal treasure to illustrate the battle between focusing on temporal treasure or spiritual treasure. Added into that is the brokenness that is woven into our DNA, just wanting to suppress truth so that we can just do what we want to do.

Please note that we illustrated from our core brokenness, and from temporal treasure. We did not choose to illustrate how any one of the fourteen Epic Battles listed can consume a lot of heart energy and focus.

Jesus desires that above all others, and temporal things, He desires that our hearts treasure Him and things spiritual above all else. Because human hearts, treasuring temporal things, come to worship temporal things. Only Jesus is worthy of our worship, not things temporal.

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. 22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. 23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! 24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

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Life

“If a ruler hearkens to lies, all his servants are wicked”.

Proverbs 29:12

***“What you honor, dignify, emphasize,
pay attention to, and reward, is what you get.”***

Honor Him and His Word by my example and emphasis

If Jesus has our heart, then we will follow His ways. If He has our heart, then our life will show that above all else, we want to honor Him. Someone has said, *“A man’s life will be lived in light of the treasure he is seeking.”* Our life demonstrates what we treasure. The apostle Paul said, ***“For me to live is Christ.” Phil 1:21***

Clearly, as you read the New Testament, including the epistles that Paul wrote, you will see that both in ***example and emphasis*** he honored, dignified, emphasized, paid attention to, and rewarded, lifting up Jesus Christ!

***“What you honor, dignify, emphasize,
pay attention to, and reward, is what you get.”***

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Legacy

“...I have purposed it. I will also do it.” Isa 46:11c

Purpose it in your heart, then do what you purposed.

Purpose in my heart to embrace His purposes as my own

For a long time, I have loved this passage in Isaiah 46.

8 Remember this, and shew yourselves men: bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors. 9 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: 11 Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.

God is making it clear that He alone is God. He declared the end from the beginning. He will use heathen nations to discipline His people. God is the God of history. He is in control. He says, ***“I have purposed it, I will also do it.”*** This is an awesome statement. God has divinely decreed purposes, and he will carry out what He has purposed. He will do it. There is purpose and there is integrity. Before the foundation of the world God purposed creation, redemption, and His eternal reign. He will do it.

God has given to mankind the capacity to purpose in heart what we will go do, and the capacity, to will, to act with integrity to go do what we have purposed to do. Athletes purpose to go to the Olympics, and focus and work to get there. Other’s purpose to become business owners, preachers, etc., and they pursue these ventures with determination to go accomplish it.

We can purpose as a believer to...

***Run to Jesus, love Him with all my heart
Honor Him and His Word by my example and emphasis
Purpose in my heart to embrace His purposes as my own***

May we appropriate the grace, the enablement, He gives to live for Him!

**RUN TO JESUS –
LOVE HIM WITH ALL MY HEART?**

So, we come to these Gates, important navigational guides, these important aspects of Christian life. See what's here. Understand what God wants. Give serious thought to these questions. Where am I presently with regard to heart life? Does my life honor God? If I were to die today, what would be my legacy?

*What does God Desire?
Before the God of Heaven, where am I presently?
How, by His grace, do I move toward what God desires?*

**HONOR HIM AND HIS WORD –
BY MY EXAMPLE AND EMPHASIS?**

*What does God Desire?
Before the God of Heaven, where am I presently?
How, by His grace, do I move toward what God desires?*

**PURPOSE IN MY HEART -
TO EMBRACE HIS PURPOSES AS MY OWN?**

*What does God Desire?
Before the God of Heaven, where am I presently?
How, by His grace, do I move toward what God desires?*

Gate Two – Integrity – Before the God of Heaven

**PLEASE STOP! WAIT A MOMENT!
BEFORE YOU ENTER THIS GATE
A FEW THOUGHTS TO KEEP IN MIND
YOU ARE BEFORE THE GOD OF HEAVEN
GOD SEES WHAT IS REALLY, REALLY REAL
WILL I AGREE WITH WHAT GOD SEES?**

13 The LORD looketh from heaven; he beareth all the sons of men. 14 From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. 15 He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works. (Ps 33:13-15)

In gate one we looked at the tremendous importance of the heart. We saw that the heart is continually deliberating, choosing, treasuring, honoring, and embracing.

Now we must ask another important question:

Will we be truthful about what is really going on within our heart?

Every moment of our lives is lived ***Before the God of Heaven***. There is nothing about us that He does not see. There is no circumstance He misunderstands. There is no motive hidden from Him. Psalm 139 reminds us that He knows our downsitting and our uprising, understands our thoughts afar off, and knows our words before we speak them.

God sees what is really, really real.

Integrity begins when we are willing to agree with what God already sees. In this Gate we will look at integrity in four important ways:

Speak the truth.

Take an honest and open look at what is in front of you.

Purpose to do the right thing.

Do the right thing you have purposed to do.

We will also look at Nehemiah, a man who lived with an extraordinary awareness that his life was unfolding ***Before the God of Heaven***. He prayed, depended upon God, faced reality honestly, and acted with integrity, and embraced God's purposes and blueprint.

So, before entering this Gate, ask yourself:

IF God already knows the truth about my heart, my motives, my circumstances, and my choices, am I willing to agree with Him?

Let's begin!

Gate Two

Integrity – Before the God of Heaven

What God Desires

Navigating - Before the God of Heaven

Integrity - Before the God of Heaven

With Integrity - Embracing His Purposes as my Own

Three Universal Principles

*“For where your treasure is,
there will your heart be also.” Matt 6:21*

*“Whoever or whatever has a person’s heart,
is whose ways will be observed.”*

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*“If a ruler hearkens to lies, all his servants are wicked”.
Proverbs 29:12*

*“What you honor, dignify, emphasize,
pay attention to, and reward, is what you get.”*

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“...I have purposed it. I will also do it.” Isa 46:11c

Purpose it in your heart, then do what you purposed.

NAVIGATING-BEFORE THE GOD OF HEAVEN

13 The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. 14 From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. 15 He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works. (Ps 33:13-15)

For the last five decades, in the American culture, there has been a concerted effort on the part of the godless to suppress the truth that every human being through every period of history has lived their lives ***Before the God of Heaven.***

There are seven arenas of life that all of us navigate, even if we want to pretend some of these don't exist.



Six arenas we cannot deny, the seventh, some will try to deny, but the universe is real. And the universe speaks of an awesome God. In Romans 1:18-20 Paul makes this truth

clear. The magnificent design of the universe, instructs us as to the awesomeness of our Creator God. Where there is intelligent design, there is an intelligent Designer!

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold (suppress) the truth in unrighteousness; 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:...(Romans 1:18-20)

The godless believe that true freedom is possible when they can suppress truth, put it aside, and do what they want to do. So, they want the idea of God and the Bible to be suppressed and held down, so that they do not have to deal with being accountable to God. But, them trying to push aside the reality of God won't work. In the verses cited (Ps 33:13-15) God makes it clear that from his dwelling place He sees all the sons of men. You can't escape the presence of God. Also, this passage makes it clear you can't hide your heart life. He is the one that fashioned heart life. He understands what transpires there. So, truly, our every move is before the God of Heaven. And, in Romans 1:18-20, God makes it clear, the evidence of a Creator God is written in the sky...enough so, Man is without excuse!

God not only sees all of mankind from His dwelling place, the scriptures make it clear that he sees every movement in His universe! Besides Psalm 33:13-15, Psalm 139 in its entirety speaks to the reality that God is aware of every movement in His universe.

1 (To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.) O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. 2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. 3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. 4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. 5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. (Psalm 139:1-5)

So, on any day, to wake up, walk outside and look up into the sky, we are hit with the evidence that God is real, He is present, and He is active in His universe and in the affairs of mankind. The scripture also says in ***Colossians 1:17*** “...by Him all things consist (hold together).”

If you camped out on the equator you would be moving at a thousand mph as the earth rotates. In twenty-four hours, you will have rotated one time. You can set your clocks by the consistency of that rotation. The earth is orbiting the Sun once every year. It goes about 585 million miles in that year. The earth is rocketing at 1.67 million miles a day. That’s about 67,000mph. Jesus, the Creator, by his awesome power keeps things right on time. Our orbit is spaced just right so that we don’t get too close to the Sun and burn, or too far away and freeze. The spacing is just right to sustain human life on planet earth.

NEHEMIAH-BEFORE THE GOD OF HEAVEN

Let’s take a look at a man in scripture who lived daily with the constant awareness of God being active in the affairs of mankind, and more specifically, in his own life.

1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, 2 That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. 3 And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. 4 And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven, 5 And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: 6 Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. 7 We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses. 8 Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: 9 But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. 10 Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. 11 O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper,

I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.

Before the God of Heaven is where Nehemiah's heart is as he has an exchange with his brethren from Judah, ... *"I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. 3 And they said unto me, the remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire."*

Nehemiah walked with God, and he knew his God. When he heard this report, he sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed *before the God of Heaven*. There were some truths about his God, that he spoke in this moment, to his God, because they were applicable in the moment. 1) *God is transcendent and sovereign* (1:5) "...*O LORD God of heaven...*" God is above empires (Persia), He is above kings (Artaxerxes). Artaxerxes looked powerful. But Nehemiah knew who held the higher throne. 2) *God is great and awesome, "The great and awesome God"* (1:5) Nehemiah's God is not small, He is majestic. God is Holy, Fearful in power, Worthy of reverence. 3) *God keeps covenant, "Who keeps covenant..."* (1:5) Judah failed, but God stayed true to His word. 4) *God is merciful and loving, "...and lovingkindness for those who love Him."* (1:5) Although judgement had happened, mercy was still active. God responded to their repentance.

5) *God hears prayer, "Let Your ear now be attentive and Your eyes open..."* (1:6) Nehemiah knows God listens. He is not praying into nothingness. Heaven hears! 6) *God forgives repentant sinners, "We have sinned..."* He brought no excuses, no blame shifting...*God sees me. He*

has missed nothing. Self-deception weakens. Integrity is possible.

Integrity is learning to agree with what God already sees.

Integrity speaks the truth! God sees and knows the truth!

Integrity is willing to take an honest look, because the God of heaven sees it all as it really is...nothing is hidden from Him. He hears it all! He sees it all!

God is present, and He is not a passive observer, He is active in the affairs of mankind!

When you read the first six or seven chapters of the book of Nehemiah, you can't miss that as Nehemiah is facing situations, in the moment, he talks to his very present, active, caring God!

I am going to note a few of these moments...

As soon as Nehemiah heard the report about how things were back in Jerusalem, he prayed ***before the God of Heaven.***

3 And they said unto me, the remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

4 And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,

In chapter 2 when he is before the king, and the king asks what he wants, in the moment, he talks to God...

“So, I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king...” (2:4)

In chapter four, Opposition comes. Sanballat mocks. Nehemiah responds:

“Hear, O our God, for we are despised” (4:4).

When nobles oppressed the poor in chapter five, and Nehemiah is handling it, toward the end of the chapter he says to God...

“Remember me, my God, for good...” (5:19)

May our awareness be elevated to the constant reality that our God is present, active, caring, orchestrating, moving in the hearts of those around us!

INTEGRITY – BEFORE THE GOD OF HEAVEN

Stop and ponder this...at this point in history approximately seven billion people are on planet earth.

Many people just get up and go do what is right in front of them and never give thought to the questions around how did all of this get here? For some, they don't care about the answers to those questions. For others, they don't want to go there, because their life has been filled with an awful lot of pain, and they can't understand, if there is a God, how could He allow such pain in this human existence? This premise is flawed, but that at least keeps them from dealing with the issues.

Then you have others who believe there was, out of nothingness, a big bang, and here it all is...and, others, still

want us to believe that over billions and billions of years everything evolved.

Then there are those who see, by observation, over and over again, that wherever you are seeing wonderfully designed things coming into existence, that you can with a little research find out the identity of that designer! Intelligent design demands an intelligent Designer! So, when the Bible speaks to God being the creator of the universe, it's easy to see, "The existence of God is the most obvious truth in the universe!" What other possible designer could have possibly designed and created this magnificent universe? If you look through the James Webb telescope, or through the strongest microscope, the intelligent design of it all demands an intelligent Designer!

So, as seven billion people navigate the universe, there is an epic battle within the hearts of human beings...will I seek to take an honest and open look at what's in front of me, and ask the questions, What is truth? What is of value? How then, shall we live? Or, will I just leave that alone, and do what I want to do? So, for many, there is this epic battle in the heart, "Integrity vs. Self-deception."

INTEGRITY DEFINED

Integrity is at least four things...1) speaking the truth, 2) taking an open and honest look at what is in front of me, 3) purposing to do the right thing with what is in front of me, and, 4) doing what I purposed to do, with what is in front of me.

Nehemiah was a man of integrity. The king saw it and made him his cup bearer. Nehemiah navigated the universe *before the God of Heaven*. He understood God's eternal purposes, and His purposes with the people of Israel. He

took an honest look at the state of these people's walk with God, after they came back from the captivity, and saw they still were not getting it right. Jerusalem was still in ruins, and they were not functioning in their families the way God intended either. So, Nehemiah, when told how things were going back in Judah, determined to take the honest look at what was happening. He asked God for the stewardship of going back and leading the people to do the right thing God's way. He took the time to scout out the ruins of the wall around Jerusalem. ***Before the God of Heaven***, he came up with a plan and came to the people and communicated the plan. As recorded in Nehemiah chapter three he organized the people by family groups and ended up with 41 work groups. They would build the wall in their own back yard, so to speak. In Nehemiah 4:13, Nehemiah says, ***"I stationed the people in families with their swords, spears, and bows...remember the Lord...fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses."*** Nehemiah knew God's purposes and blueprints. Family is God's basic unit in a community. Nehemiah put them to work in a way that he saw to it that families had to be strong together, or the enemy would attack in their back yard.

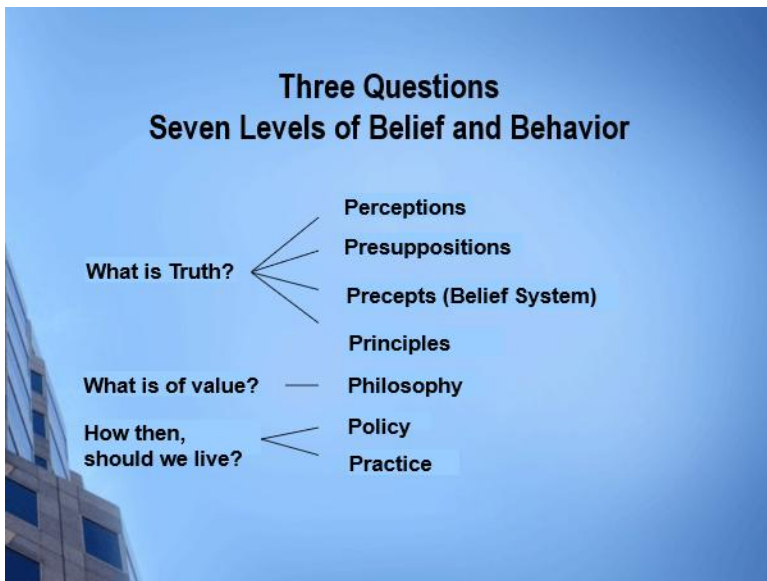
Indeed, today, the church needs to come back to that same default, and strengthen families, to do the work of the ministry.

Nehemiah had answered the basic questions, because he wanted truth, to speak truth, to see what was really real right in front of him, and he purposed in his heart to do the right thing with what was really real right in front of him, and he then did what was right. He navigated with integrity!

It is very important that our generation of believers in the United States know the answers to the questions regarding truth. What is truth? What is of value? How then, shall we live?

When people suppress the truth in their unrighteousness, and throw off truth, there is no limit to where they can go in moving away from truth. My generation can name the list. I will give just a couple of examples...homosexual marriage, transgenderism, and biological males in girls' sports.

***Integrity and Truth fit together like hand in glove...
Navigating God's universe before the God of Heaven
aligns with what is really, really real!***



There is a connection between the three core questions, and the outworking of our answers into the seven levels of our belief and behavior. As in the example of Nehemiah, his view of God, and the scriptures, moved him to purpose to embrace God's purposes for his life.

“People see what they want to see, and they hear what they want to hear, because they want to do what they want to do, because they treasure what they treasure.”

The atheist worldview throughout is permeated with wanting to suppress truth, because they are driven by wanting to just do what they want to do.

WITH INTEGRITY - EMBRACING HIS PURPOSES AS MY OWN

Remember, Integrity is at least four things...1) speaking the truth, 2) taking an open and honest look at what is in front of me, 3) purposing to do the right thing with what is in front of me, and, 4) doing what I purposed to do, with what is in front of me.

The third part of integrity is purposing...it is one thing to see truth, it is another to determine with the human will, that I am going to purpose to act accordingly!

“I have purposed it; I will also do it!” Embracing God’s purposes as my own is integrity in action.

That statement, ***“I have purposed it, I will also do it!”*** by the God of heaven, and recorded in Isa. 46:11c, trumpets the heart of God from the beginning. He purposed, before the foundation of the world, creation, redemption, and human history culminating with the roll out of the end time events given in the book of Revelation. And what he has purposed, He will also do! You can take that to the bank!

Nehemiah had discerned God’s purposes, and blueprint, and determined to embrace God’s purposes as his own. That is godly wisdom in action!

What were some of the purposes he recognized as being what God would have him embrace? He navigated God's universe ***Before the God of Heaven***. He acknowledged his brokenness, was thankful for redemption, and requested being commissioned, to be used by God with his people.

Before the God of Heaven

As one...broken...

As one...redeemed...

As one...commissioned...

My Mission In This Life

...walking with God...

...in my place...strengthening family...

...reaching out...as a channel of grace...

...to unbelievers...

...to fellow believers...

Integrity – Before the God of Heaven

What God Desires

***Navigating - Before the God of Heaven
Integrity - Before the God of Heaven
With Integrity - Embracing His Purposes as my Own***

Three Universal Principles

***“For where your treasure is,
there will your heart be also.” Matt 6:21***

***“Whoever or whatever has a person’s heart,
is whose ways will be observed.”***

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***“If a ruler hearkens to lies, all his servants are wicked”.
Proverbs 29:12***

***“What you honor, dignify, emphasize,
pay attention to, and reward, is what you get.”***

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“...I have purposed it. I will also do it.” Isa 46:11c

Purpose it in your heart, then do what you purposed.

We can purpose as a believer...

Navigating - Before the God of Heaven
Integrity - Before the God of Heaven
With Integrity - Embracing His Purposes as my Own

May we appropriate the grace, the enablement, He gives to live for Him!

NAVIGATING – BEFORE THE GOD OF HEAVEN?

“Thou God seest me.” — Genesis 16:13

Integrity is learning to agree with what God already sees.

We will not grow and develop spiritually, if we refuse to see as God sees us.

Speak the truth in your heart.

Navigate life, more and more, Before the God of Heaven.

What does God Desire?

Before the God of Heaven, where am I presently?

How, by His grace, do I move toward what God desires?

**INTEGRITY –
BEFORE THE GOD OF HEAVEN?**

What does God Desire?

*Speaking the truth in my heart
Taking an honest and open look at what is in front of you
Purposing to do what is right with what is in front of you
Doing the right thing you purposed to do*

*Before the God of Heaven, where am I presently?
How, by His grace, do I move toward what God desires?*

**WITH INTEGRITY -
EMBRACING HIS PURPOSES AS MY OWN?**

What does God Desire?

Before the God of Heaven

As one...broken...

As one...redeemed...

As one...commissioned...

My Mission In This Life

...walking with God...

...in my place...strengthening family...

...reaching out...as a channel of grace...

...to unbelievers...

...to fellow believers...

*Before the God of Heaven, where am I presently?
How, by His grace, do I move toward what God desires?*

So, we come to these Gates, important navigational guides, these important aspects of Christian life. See what's here. Understand what God wants. Give serious thought to these questions. Am I speaking the truth in my heart? Will I take an honest and open look at the realities in my heart life and whether or not I am walking before the God of Heaven with integrity? Have I purposed to do right with regard to integrity and embracing God's purposes for my life? Am I living a purpose driven life...having embraced God's purposes?

Gate Three –Brokenness on Display

**PLEASE STOP! WAIT A MOMENT!
BEFORE YOU ENTER THIS GATE
A FEW THOUGHTS TO KEEP IN MIND
YOU ARE BEFORE THE GOD OF HEAVEN
BROKENNESS IS REAL
WE MUST SEE WHAT SIN HAS DONE**

***“For all have sinned,
and come short of the glory of God.”
(Romans 3:23)***

In Gate One we looked at the battlefield of the heart. In Gate Two we considered the importance of integrity—looking honestly at reality ***Before the God of Heaven.***

Now integrity requires us to look at something we would rather not see:

Human brokenness.

Why is the heart such a battlefield? Why do we struggle with truth and falsehood, humility and pride, Spirit and flesh, and spiritual and temporal treasure? Something has gone terribly wrong.

In this Gate we will go back to Lucifer’s rebellion and then to Adam and Eve in the Garden. We will see what happened when God’s truth was challenged and the creature chose to reject the Creator’s authority.

Then Romans chapter one will put *brokenness on display*. Paul describes mankind:

Suppressing the truth.

Not honoring God or giving Him thanks.

Exchanging the truth of God for a lie.

Worshiping and serving the creature more than the Creator.

We will also look at the ***Seven Inescapable Realities of God's Universe***. Brokenness does not make those realities disappear. Man may reject them, suppress them, or ridicule them, but he still lives every moment ***Before the God of Heaven***.

And remember—we are not entering this Gate merely to examine the brokenness of somebody else.

This is our story.

Seeing more clearly what sin has done should cause us to love our Redeemer more, hate and run from sin, love and run to Christ, and desire to make much of Jesus and make Him known.

We are going to look at the darkness—but so that we might better understand the glory of the Light.

Let's begin!

Gate Three –

Brokenness on Display

What God Desires

*See Brokenness – Increase Gratitude and Love for God
Hate and run from sin – Love and run to Christ
Make much of Jesus, and, Make Him known*

Three Universal Principles

*“For where your treasure is,
there will your heart be also.” Matt 6:21*

*“Whoever or whatever has a person’s heart,
is whose ways will be observed.”*

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*“If a ruler hearkens to lies, all his servants are wicked”.
Proverbs 29:12*

*“What you honor, dignify, emphasize,
pay attention to, and reward, is what you get.”*

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“...I have purposed it. I will also do it.” Isa 46:11c

Purpose it in your heart, then do what you purposed.

WHAT GOD DESIRES

Before we look into the Brokenness on Display Gate, I want to assure you that our purpose is not to discourage you. Some will ask if there can ever be a redemptive benefit of looking into the trash can of brokenness?

Genuine conversion not only changes our standing before God, but also fundamentally changes how we view our former life. I believe there are three responses that can come from looking at the brokenness we have been rescued from, through a biblical lens.

First, when we comprehend the magnitude of what redemption has rescued us from, it should evoke a very deep response of ***overwhelming gratitude and love for God***. Before salvation we were dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1–3), condemned already (John 3:18), an enemy of God (Romans 5:10), and without hope (Ephesians 2:12).

After salvation we cannot help but say, “Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.” This is why Scripture repeatedly connects salvation with thanksgiving. Peter says, ***“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a living hope...”*** (1 Peter 1:3)

Secondly, when we realize the horrible consequences that ultimately people pay in an eternity in hell, because they are so bound by their brokenness and darkness, and they reject salvation through Christ, and, when we realize the consequences that believers deal with because of sin, we should ***hate, and run from, sin – love, and run to, Christ***.

Thirdly, when we think of what we have been rescued from, the amazing redemption provided, and the horrible price that had to be paid, and that Jesus, in love, was willing to pay that price, we owe Him everything. Indeed, we should with all our being *make much of Jesus, and, make Him known!*

16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (I John 3:16)

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:11–14)

Those are the first three responses that come to mind when I think of why it is at times beneficial to ponder that I have been liberated from the penalty and power of my brokenness.

I also want to give you a look at three aspects of our brokenness that we deal with regularly, and to do so in a way as to help all of us to understand how characteristically it works in these areas so that we can be more discerning, and wiser, in dealing with our flesh. I want to look at, 1) four phrases that Paul makes in Romans chapter one while expounding the doctrine of the depravity of mankind, 2) dealing with how our heart is won, our focus regarding temporal and spiritual treasure, and 3) dealing with the fourteen epic battles of the heart mentioned in the first unit.

LUCIFER – BEFORE THE GOD OF HEAVEN

12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. (Isa. 14:12-15)

Lucifer occupied one of the highest ranks among God's created angels. *At some point* after Lucifer's creation, and before humanity's temptation in Eden, *rebellion arose within his heart*. Lucifer coveted God's authority, God's glory, and God's rightful place of supremacy. He wanted to be in God's place and was not satisfied with the place God had placed him in. He decided to "exalt his throne above the stars of God." And, not satisfied with his place, he decided, "I will be like the Most High God."

Lucifer at some level, at some time, had to know that there was only one God, and that he himself was not on the same level with God. But, in pride, and desire, he wanted to be like God, and have what was God's. How did that work out for him, and all of mankind?

This is an extraordinary reality. We have to stop and ponder this...what does it say about brokenness...? Before the God of Heaven stood one of the highest of God's created heavenly beings. Endowed with extraordinary beauty, wisdom, and privilege, he was given a place of

honor by his Creator. Yet, rather than being satisfied with the place God had assigned him, pride arose within his heart. Desiring God's glory, God's authority, and God's throne, he declared five times, "I will." ***The first rebellion in God's universe began, not with outward action, but with the deliberation of a proud heart.***

15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. (Isa. 14:12-15)

What a choice, what a consequence...

SEVEN INESCAPABLE REALITIES- OF GOD'S UNIVERSE BEFORE THE GOD OF HEAVEN

Every person who has ever lived, has lived before the God of Heaven. Because of Lucifer's fall, whether someone chooses to acknowledge it, or not, there are certain realities that cannot be escaped. Men may reject them, suppress them, or ridicule them, but they remain as true today as when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. These realities are woven into the very fabric of God's universe. Every decision, every relationship, every success, every failure, and ultimately every eternal destiny is shaped by them.

***God and Satan
Good and evil
Truth and falsehood (right and wrong)
Universal Laws and Principles (established by God)
Personal Responsibility
Choice and Consequence
Life and Death, Heaven and Hell***

These seven realities are not isolated truths. They form the framework within which every human life is lived. Every person lives before the God of Heaven, in a world where good and evil contend, where truth confronts falsehood, where God has established universal laws and principles, where choices inevitably produce consequences, where life moves toward death, and where every soul is traveling toward an eternal destination. Wisdom begins by recognizing these realities; faith responds by submitting to the God who established them.

GOD AND SATAN

The first reality is that there is a living God, and there is a real personal adversary. Scripture begins not with an argument for God's existence, but with the declaration, ***"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."*** (*Genesis 1:1*) God is eternal, self-existent, holy, sovereign, Creator, Judge, Redeemer, and King.

The Bible also reveals a created being who rebelled against God. Lucifer became Satan, the adversary, deceiver, accuser, and destroyer. Peter warns believers, ***"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."*** (*1 Peter 5:8*) Jesus described Satan as ***"a murderer from the beginning...and the father of it [lies]."*** (*John 8:44*)

Every human being lives within the reality of this great conflict. There is no neutral ground. We either belong to God's kingdom or remain under the dominion of darkness (*Colossians 1:13*).

GOOD AND EVIL

Good and evil are not human inventions or cultural preferences. Good originates in the very character of God. ***“There is none good but one, that is, God.” (Mark 10:18)*** Evil entered creation through rebellion against God. Isaiah pronounces woe upon those who reverse these realities: ***“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil.” (Isaiah 5:20)*** Paul exhorts believers, ***“Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” (Romans 12:9)***

The struggle between good and evil is seen throughout Scripture—from Eden, to Calvary, to the final judgment. Every human heart must decide which kingdom it will embrace.

TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD (RIGHT AND WRONG)

Truth exists because God is true. Jesus declared, ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life.” (John 14:6)*** God's Word is truth. ***“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (John 17:17)***

Satan, however, traffics in deception. Jesus said, ***“When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” (John 8:44)***

Human beings cannot escape truth simply by denying it. Reality remains unchanged. Paul explains fallen humanity's condition: ***“Who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” (Romans 1:18)***

Every life is ultimately built upon either truth or falsehood.

UNIVERSAL LAWS AND PRINCIPLES

(established by God)

God governs His universe through both natural laws and moral principles. The physical universe operates with remarkable order because God faithfully sustains it. Likewise, God's moral universe operates according to fixed principles. Jesus taught, ***“Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” (Galatians 6:7)*** Proverbs repeatedly demonstrates that diligence generally leads to fruitfulness, honesty builds trust, humility precedes honor, and pride precedes destruction. ***“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” (Proverbs 16:18)***

These are not merely observations; they are reflections of how God governs His world.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Paul reminds every believer, ***“So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” (Romans 14:12)*** And again, ***“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body...” (2 Corinthians 5:10)*** Those apart from Christ will likewise stand before God. John writes, ***“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God...and they were judged every man according to their works.” (Revelation 20:12–13)*** No one will ultimately answer for another person.

Every person will stand individually before the God of Heaven. This reality is both sobering and liberating. It is sobering because we cannot shift blame for our sinful choices onto someone else. Ever since Adam said, “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me...” (Genesis 3:12),

fallen humanity has sought to excuse itself. Yet Scripture continually calls us back to personal accountability. It is liberating because, by God's grace, we are not prisoners of our past. Through repentance, faith in Jesus Christ, and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, we may choose obedience, pursue integrity, and walk in God's purposes.

Personal responsibility is therefore the bridge between truth and obedience. God reveals truth; we are responsible to respond. God gives commands; we are responsible to obey. God extends grace; we are responsible to receive His Son by faith.

CHOICE AND CONSEQUENCE

God created mankind with genuine moral responsibility. From Eden onward, people have been confronted with choices. Moses challenged Israel, ***“I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore, choose life.” (Deuteronomy 30:19)*** Joshua declared, ***“Choose you this day whom ye will serve.” (Joshua 24:15)*** Every choice we make produces consequences. Sometimes they come immediately. Sometimes they come years later. Sometimes throughout eternity. No one escapes this principle.

LIFE AND DEATH – HEAVEN AND HELL

Every person experiences both physical life and physical death. Scripture also reveals spiritual life and spiritual death. God warned Adam, ***“In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Genesis 2:17)*** Paul explains, ***“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)*** Jesus came that sinners ***“might have life, and...have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10)***

The great question is not whether we shall die physically, but whether we possess eternal life through Christ.

History is moving toward an eternal conclusion. Jesus spoke often of both Heaven and Hell. He promised His disciples, ***“I go to prepare a place for you.” (John 14:2)*** He also warned, ***“These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” (Matthew 25:46)*** John describes the final judgment before the great white throne (Revelation 20:11–15), followed by the new heaven and the new earth (Revelation 21–22).

Every human being will spend eternity in one of these two destinies. The most important question any person can answer is this: ***Have I been reconciled to the God of Heaven through His Son, Jesus Christ?***

ADAM AND EVE – BEFORE THE GOD OF HEAVEN

Genesis 1 and 2 reveal perfect creation. Everything God made was “very good.” There was no death, no shame, no fear, no guilt, no broken relationships, no disease, no curse. Most importantly, God and man walked together. Adam and Eve walked in fellowship with God.

Then, as recorded in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve sinned.

This is the beginning of ***Brokenness on Display***...every funeral, every war, every broken marriage, every guilty conscience, every tear, every temptation, every hospital, every prison, every cemetery, every idol, every false religion, every rebellion against God, and ultimately why Christ came into the world.

Adam and Eve sinned ***Before the God of Heaven***. Nothing was hidden. Psalm 139 becomes vividly illustrated.

“O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me...”

Psalm 33:13-15 becomes reality.

“The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men...He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works.”

The first sin was committed under the all-seeing gaze of the Creator. The issue was never that God did not know.

Genesis 3 explains **why mankind is broken, why the heart is a battlefield, why the Seven Inescapable Realities exist as they do in human experience, and why redemption through Christ is absolutely necessary.**

It explains why the human heart became desperately corrupt.

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9)

SATAN’S HEART AND STRATEGY

Lucifer/Satan wanted to be in God's place and was not satisfied with the place God had placed him in. He decided to **“exalt his throne above the stars of God.”** And, not satisfied with his place, he decided, **“I will be like the Most High God.”**

The first rebellion in God's universe began, not with outward action, but with the deliberation of a proud heart.

Satan attacks God's word. ***"Yea, hath God said...?" (3:1)***
Truth is no longer treated as absolute. It becomes negotiable. This is exactly where every temptation begins. Every sin starts by entertaining the possibility that God's Word need not be obeyed. Brokenness begins with questioning and suppressing truth.

Then open contradiction. ***"Ye shall not surely die." (3:4)***
Now truth is replaced with falsehood. This is the first lie ever told. Jesus later said,

"When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John 8:44)

Then Satan attacks God's goodness. ***"God knows..." (3:5)***
Satan implies that God is holding out on you. The good stuff is just beyond God's boundaries. God cannot be trusted. God is keeping you from happiness. So, who is telling you the truth...God or Satan?

The fall of mankind is the beginning of what Paul was describing in Romans 1 in the four phrases.

"...who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,..." (v. 18)

Brokenness ... truth suppressed and resisted

God had spoken clearly. Adam and Eve intentionally rejected it. Truth was suppressed.

"Although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks" (v. 21)

Brokenness ... ingratitude toward God and refusal to honor Him as God

God's authority was no longer honored. Instead of honoring God...they elevated themselves.

“They exchanged the truth of God for a lie” (v. 25)

Brokenness ... exchanging truth for lies

The serpent’s lie became more useful to them than God’s Word, because it allowed them to do what they wanted to do.

“Worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (v. 25)

Brokenness ... idolatry ... worshiping and serving self

Ultimately Adam and Eve rejected God’s plan and substituted Satan’s and their own. Self was put in the place that belonged to God. The creature replaced the Creator.

Consider also here how the **Epic Battles of the Heart** were now in play for Adam and Eve.

Truth vs. Falsehood –

will she believe God?

Good vs. Evil –

will she call evil good?

Integrity vs. self-deception –

will she honestly look at God’s command?

Humility vs. Pride -

will she submit?

Purpose vs. Nihilism –

Whose purpose will govern her life?

Spirit vs. Flesh

Will she desire God’s will or immediate gratification?

Divine calling vs. Desire

Will she follow God’s blueprint or her desires?

Spiritual/Eternal vs. Temporal (Treasure)

Will she treasure pleasing God or self?

The point here is that the epic battles within the heart of mankind began here where man chose to suppress truth, not to honor God as God, exchanged the truth for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than God.

**THE APOSTLE PAUL –
DEPRAVITY OF MANKIND DISPLAYED –
BEFORE THE GOD OF HEAVEN**

As one...broken...

“...who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,...” (v. 18)

Brokenness ... truth suppressed and resisted

***“Although they knew God, they did not honor Him as
God or give thanks” (v. 21)***

***Brokenness ... ingratitude toward God and refusal to honor
Him as God***

“They exchanged the truth of God for a lie” (v. 25)

Brokenness ... exchanging truth for lies

***“Worshiped and served the creature rather than the
Creator” (v. 25)***

Brokenness ... idolatry ... worshiping and serving self

Our brokenness hinders and blocks

our awareness of the God of Heaven

Romans chapter one reveals the universal collapse of humanity apart from God. These four phrases speak to the anatomy of fallen man. They speak of man's heart condition ***Before the God of Heaven.***

Mankind's rebellion at the deepest level is a resistance to God while existing entirely within God's universe.

"...who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,..." (v. 18)

Brokenness ... truth suppressed and resisted

The word suppress means to hold down, to restrain, smother, or resist. Mankind is not ignorant as they search helplessly for God. Mankind actively is resisting truth that has already been made plain to him. Man pushes truth down because truth threatens his autonomy. He refuses to hear, and respond, appropriately to God, because he wants to be in God's place within his own heart.

"We see what we want to see,
And we hear what we want to hear,
Because we want to do what we want to do,
Because we treasure what we treasure."

This is an active warfare against God, truth, and reality.

To show just how broken this is, Paul, in making the statement above, illustrates it. He makes it clear in the next two verses that the most obvious truth in the universe is the existence of God. ***The intelligently designed creation itself, which is right in front of you anytime you have your eyes open, speaks of the attributes, divine nature, and power, of the Creator. Therefore, mankind is without excuse.***

God revealed truth. Though man wanted to push truth aside, that was impossible. Man is without excuse. He is accountable in spite of every effort to not see truth. He has decided to embrace self-rule against every evidence of our Creator-God.

“Although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks” (v. 21)

Brokenness ... ingratitude toward God and refusal to honor Him as God

Mankind had enough revealed about God, that they rightly were obligated to honor, reverence, and worship Him. But sinful man does not want to answer to God. So, he refuses to put God in His rightful place in their heart and life.

This refusal to honor God creates a vacuum immediately filled with substitutes.

Brokenness is revealed when man enjoys God’s gifts while excluding God Himself.

Mankind did not misunderstand truth. They traded truth, they exchanged truth, for a lie more useful to them than the truth.

“They exchanged the truth of God for a lie” (v. 25)

Brokenness ... exchanging truth for lies

What was being traded was truth for illusion, revelation for deception, God’s authority for self-rule.

The lie was, God is holding out on you...He is keeping you from all the good stuff...

“You shall be as gods.” (Genesis 3:5)

***“Worshiped and served the creature rather than the
Creator” (v. 25)***

Brokenness ... idolatry ... worshiping and serving self

Human beings were created to worship God. If God is rejected, worship does not disappear—it redirects.

Idols can be good things turned into ultimate things. Self becomes the idol of choice when God is rejected.

Whoever or whatever the heart treasures most, becomes our functioning God of choice.

**WHO OR WHAT WILL WIN OUR HEART?
WHO OR WHAT WILL WE EMBRACE?
WHO OR WHAT WILL WE WORSHIP? –
BEFORE THE GOD OF HEAVEN**

For believers, we understand that all of these temporal things (*possessions, position, power, prestige, praise of men, popularity, pleasure, and passion*) are ok, and not bad in and of themselves. The problem is when the temporal take priority over our walk with God, or treasuring these over spiritual, or eternal things.

Again...

Human beings were created to worship God. If God is rejected, worship does not disappear—it redirects.

Idols can be good things turned into ultimate things. Self becomes the idol of choice when God is rejected.

Whoever or whatever the heart treasures most, becomes our functioning God of choice.

Let me point out one Bible example. The story of Samson's life can be summed up in these statements.

***“A man's life will be lived
in light of the treasure he is seeking.”***

***“For where your treasure is,
there will your heart be also.” Matt 6:21***

***“Whoever or whatever has a person's heart,
is whose ways will be observed.”***

The temporal treasures that tell the story of Samson's life are ***power, pleasure, and passion.***

When people look in to see what drives your life and mine, will they see a life lived more focused on temporal treasures, or spiritual, eternal treasures? And which of the temporal treasures captivate our focus, when we are focused on the temporal?

WHAT GOD DESIRES

Remember, genuine conversion not only changes our standing before God, but also fundamentally changes how we view our former life.

There are at least three major takeaways from taking this look at Brokenness.

See Brokenness – Increase Gratitude and Love for God

First, when we comprehend the magnitude of what redemption has rescued us from, it should evoke a very deep response of ***overwhelming gratitude and love for God.*** Before salvation we were dead in trespasses and sins

(Ephesians 2:1–3), condemned already (John 3:18), an enemy of God (Romans 5:10), and without hope (Ephesians 2:12).

After salvation we cannot help but say, “Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.” This is why Scripture repeatedly connects salvation with thanksgiving. Peter says, ***"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a living hope..."*** (1 Peter 1:3)

Hate, and run from sin – Love, and run to Christ

Secondly, when we realize the horrible consequences that ultimately people pay in an eternity in hell, because they are so bound by their brokenness and darkness, and they reject salvation through Christ, and, when we realize the consequences that believers deal with because of sin, we should ***hate, and run from, sin – love, and run to, Christ.***

Make much of Jesus, and, Make Him known

Thirdly, when we think of what we have been rescued from, the amazing redemption provided, and the horrible price that had to be paid, and that Jesus, in love, was willing to pay that price, we owe Him everything. Indeed, we should with all our being ***make much of Jesus, and, make Him known!***

At each of the twelve gates we will ask three questions.

What does God Desire?

Before the God of Heaven, where am I presently?

How, by His grace, do I move toward what God desires?