

Ordinary People Rising

[Book Two]

“Rebekah Watering the Camels”



Artwork of *T. Sean Sullivan*, April of 2021

God created every person out of the same dirt (so to speak) and therefore we are all equally able to be used by Him in His service. We will see after laying groundwork that God takes some of the most unlikely individuals and with them is able to do marvelous things. He has work for each of us, maybe you have discovered your role in His service or maybe your day is still ahead. Let's study together.

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Dedication of this Study: *This study is dedicated to the ordinary people that God made into extra-ordinary servants in His Kingdom. God knew their full potential (as their Maker) and also knew what they were capable of much more than they thought they were. Many of the Bible characters were ordinary people who loved God and did His will in their lives--- who rose even above their own expectations. Brian*

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MARY—Earthly Mother of Jesus

1

Introduction:

TWENTY-FIVE WORDS OR LESS: MARY IS THE SPECIAL PURE YOUNG WOMAN THAT GOD CHOSE TO BE THE ONE TO CARRY THE CHRIST CHILD IN HIS ENTRANCE HERE (HEBREWS 10:5-10)

- A. Whatever we discover in these studies will be based on what is actually made known in the Scriptures.
- B. We are not interested in what certain religious groups have said or those doctrines they have attached or ascribed to Mary.
- C. On one occasion within His ministry people in the crowd tried to exalt Mary above her station in God's plan by saying: "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!" (Luke 11:27, NKJV)
1. Jesus put all things in proper perspective: "But He said, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke 11:28, NKJV).
- D. Let's consider an individual that played an important role in the life of Christ but yet for the greater part remained in the background.
1. God took what could only be described as an ordinary young woman and gave her a role that was almost hard for her to fathom.
- I. Mary was the dirt God chose (Luke 1:26-28)**
- A. Gabriel (that same angel that in all likelihood appeared to Joseph in the Matthew One account) is the same angel that appears to Mary here and is called by name (Luke 1:26; Matthew 1:18-25)
- B. Matthew 1:18 gives us details about Mary and Joseph
1. Mary was betrothed to Joseph (could be up to a year before the actual wedding and it was an agreement that saw them as husband and wife bound to one another and supposed to be reserved for that marriage relationship that would eventually come). They were considered husband and wife, but they did not engage in any physical relationships (1:18; notice in 1:19 Joseph is referred to as "her husband"; and the angel that appears to him speaks of her as "Mary your wife" [1:20]).

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- C. One essential is found in Matthew 1:23: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child,” (Luke 1:27 and Luke 1:34-35).
- D. No physical relationship was involved in this conception. It is declared in Luke 1:30: “you will conceive in your womb” and the manner in which that will unfold is set before us in Luke 1:35: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will over shadow you; therefore also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”
 - 1. Joseph has It explained in this fashion: “she was found with child of the Holy Spirit”; or “do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 1:20).
- E. Joseph and Mary did not come together physically until after Jesus was born (Matthew 1:25; Matthew 13:55-56)
- F. She knew from the first meeting with the angel that she would play a special role in God’s plan (see Luke 1:26-33).
- G. Mary made herself available for God’s purpose (Luke 1:38).
- H. Elizabeth’s inspired declaration regarding Mary (Luke 1:41-45)
- I. Mary’s response shows how God can exalt the humble (Luke 1:46-55)
- J. Additional Mary mentions: Luke 2:1-35; 2:41-52; John 2:1-12; 19:25-27.
- K. Mary discovers many things as they unfold: Luke 2:19; 34-35; 48-50.

Some Simple Questions for Consideration:

True or False

#	Statement	True	False
1.	Betrothal had restrictions		
2.	Joseph didn’t want to embarrass Mary		
3.	Mary was specially born for this role		
4.	Mary and Joseph never did “know” one another		
5.	Mary yielded to God’s will regarding the child		

Thought Questions

1.	Explain how Mary and Elizabeth were cousins.
2.	What do we learn about Mary from her words of Luke 1:34? How does that harmonize with Isaiah 7:14?
3.	Gather all the information about how this conception would unfold by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18, 20; Luke 1:31, 34-35)
4.	How do John 1:1, 14; and Hebrews 10:5-10 fit this account?
5.	Explain from obscurity into obscurity (John 19:25-27)

(See Addendum Pages at end of this study book.)

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Simeon—waiting for the Lord's Christ

2

Introduction:

TWENTY-FIVE WORDS OR LESS: SIMEON APPEARS IN A FLASH AND IS GONE FROM US, BUT HE LIVED LONG ENOUGH TO SEE AND AFFIRMED THAT JESUS WAS/IS THE PROMISED CHRIST.

- A. Let's turn in our Bible to a very short account from which our study will come from.
- B. Luke 2:25-35 is all we have to work with.
- C. This man as we will see was just an ordinary person who was given a special role for God, and when it was done, disappears from any further mentions in the Scripture.
- I. What is revealed about Simeon:**
- A. Luke 2:25-26: *"25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ."*
1. "There was a man in Jerusalem who name was Simeon."
 - a. This man was just and devout
 - b. *This man was* "waiting for the Consolation of Israel"
 - c. "And the Holy Spirit was upon him" (he would speak by inspiration)
 2. "It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ (the Messiah, bvs)"
- B. The Spirit brought him and the child together in Luke 2:27-28.
1. "He came by the Spirit into the temple" (no accidental meeting).
 2. They (the parents and the child were there) "to do for Him according to the custom of the law" (see explanation by Luke in Luke 2:22-24).
 3. Simeon "took Him up in his arms and blessed God" (v. 28)
- C. Simeon's words by inspiration (Luke 2:29-32)
1. V. 29: "You are letting Your servant depart in peace" (expectation met "according to Your word")
 2. V. 30: "For my eyes have seen Your salvation" (I have seen the Christ; Luke 2:26)

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3. V. 31: "Which You have prepared before the face of all people" (cf. Hebrews 10:5-10; and observe "all people": Jew, Gentiles alike).
 4. Twofold mission: "A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel" (v. 32)
 - a. Acts 2:6-8 shows the Gentiles included, Acts 2:39-42; Acts 10 and 11. (Also consider John 12:46; Luke 1:79 and Matthew 4:12-17.)
 - b. John 4:22: "salvation is of the Jews"; Galatians 4:4-5.
- D. Simeon had some additional words when he blessed Joseph and Mary (see vv. 33-35)
1. "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel"
 - a. Some would find salvation through Him (John 6:68-69)
 - b. Some would continue in sin (John 8:31-36; Acts 13:44-49.)
 2. He will be "for a sign which will be spoken against" (John 1:10-13)
 3. "Yes, a sword will pierce your own soul also" (much hurt to see and experience related to the treatment of this Son). (v. 35)
 4. By Him God will reveal "the thoughts of many hearts" (true motives in men and their doings). (v. 35)

Some Simple Questions for Consideration:

True or False

#	Statement	True	False
1.	Simeon was from the tribe of Issachar		
2.	Simeon having the Holy Spirit could work miracles		
3.	Mary wasn't happy when Simeon held Jesus		
4.	Simeon knew a lot about Jesus' coming		
5.	Simeon probably died shortly after this		

Thought Questions

1.	What do inspiration and the Holy Spirit have in common?
2.	Explain how Simeon knew so much about the Christ
3.	Why would Simeon wait at or near the temple?
4.	Summarize what he said about the Christ child.
5.	What does he mean by "a sword shall pierce" to Mary?

(See Addendum Pages at end of this study book.)

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3

Samaritan Woman—More than water

Introduction:

TWENTY-FIVE WORDS OR LESS: A HUMBLE SAMARITAN WOMAN WHO CAME TO DRAW WATER MEETS HIM WHO CAN PROVIDE THIRST QUENCHING LIVING WATER AND SHE WANTS OTHERS TO COME TOO.

A. John 4:3-6 shows how several circumstances brought Jesus to this place at this time.

1. Jesus was heading north to Galilee from Judea.
2. To get there you either had to go through Samaria; or head eastward to avoid it. [Samaria stood between Judea and Galilee.]
3. The exact location is near the base of Mount Gerizim at a place John refers to as “Jacob’s well”, near Sychar (see vv. 5-6 for more details).

B. Jesus was wearied from His day’s activity and sat down near the well to rest (v. 6). It was about the sixth hour (around noon, if the day count begins at 6 in the morning).

I. The Quiet Scene is soon to change (John 4:7-9)

- A. Jesus was there quietly resting and “sat thus by the well” (v. 6)
- B. “A woman of Samaria came to draw water” (v. 7)
- C. Jesus made a request of her: “Give Me a drink.” (v. 7)
1. His disciples had gone into the city to “buy food” (v. 8)
- D. The Samaritan woman questioned why He as a Jew was asking “a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” (“for Jews have no dealings with Samaritans” (v. 9).

II. This was no ordinary Jew (John 4:10-15)

- A. The woman had come to the well for her household water needs and Jesus saw it as an opportunity to speak of “living water” (John 4:7, 10)
1. What she could have received (read v. 10).
 2. Discussion follows about the “living water” (**John 4:11-15**)
 - a. The “living water” (spiritual water) can remove “thirst” (v. 14)
 - b. It will become “a fountain of water springing up into eternal life”
 - c. She wants that (even though she does not get it) to quench her thirst and to stop her arduous work of drawing water (v. 15).

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- B. Jesus moves the discussion to her marriage situation (John 4:16-18)
- C. His knowledge about her evokes: “You are a prophet” (v. 19)

II. A Serious Question Rises About Worship (John 4:20-24)

- A. Her question puts Samaritans and Jews at odds (v. 20) over where to worship (Mount Gerizim or Jerusalem).
- B. Jesus didn’t declare either as right, but spoke of a time when the place is not as important as the attitude of heart when we worship (vv. 22-24)
- C. Two essentials: worship in Spirit and truth. (from the heart and with the heart, in accord with what God has authorized, Colossians 3:17)

III. She is Convicted regarding Christ (John 4:25-30; 39-42)

- A. She speaks of the Messiah and Jesus introduces Himself (vv. 25-26)
- B. When the disciples return the woman leaves “without her water pot” (v. 28).
 - 1. She speaks to others and asks “Could this be the Christ?” (v. 29)
 - 2. She was persuasive enough they went to see (v. 30).
- C. Consider vv. 39-42: notice she is back with them
 - 1. Notice Jesus shares truth with them as well (vv. 40-42; 2 day visit)

Some Simple Questions for Consideration:

True or False

#	Statement	True	False
1.	Jesus often spoke with ordinary people.		
2.	This woman came to the well for social action.		
3.	A physical relationship is not a marriage.		
4.	Where we worship is not important any longer.		
5.	The woman wasn’t moved by Jesus.		

Thought Questions

1.	Why do you believe friction existed between Jews and Samaritans in that day and time?
2.	What more can we learn about this “living water”?
3.	What are the two elements that must be in our worship?
4.	Did Jesus identify with the Messiah or Christ? Proof.
5.	Tell the class about her approach to Personal Evangelism.

(See Addendum Pages at end of this study book.)

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Zacharias—A Father to a Special Son

4

Introduction:

TWENTY-FIVE WORDS OR LESS: ZACHARIAS WAS ONE OF MANY PRIESTS DOING SERVICE TO GOD, BUT GOD CHOSE HIM TO BE THE FATHER OF JOHN THE BAPTIZER, THE FORERUNNER.

- A. The background behind Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth is found in Luke 1:5-7.
- B. He was told in the temple that his prayer for a child would be answered (Luke 1:8-13) and that he would have a son who was to be called “John”.
- C. Zacharias is told several things about this son:
1. Luke 1:14: “And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.”
 2. Luke 1:15: helps us understand more about this unique son.
 - a. “For he will be great in the sight of the Lord” (cf. Mark 1:1-4)
 - b. He will be raised as a Nazarite (v. 15; cf. Numbers 6:1-8).
 - c. “He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb”
 - i. John 10:40-41: John performed no sign.
 - ii. Gift of inspiration to speak forth God’s will (see Matthew 21:24-25).
 - d. “He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God” (Luke 1:16).
 - e. “He will also go before Him” (precede the Messiah).
 - f. “In the spirit and power of Elijah” (See v. 17; cf. Malachi 4:5-6)
- D. It is indicated that Zacharias didn’t seem to believe what he has been told about his wife having a son and so he was smitten with inability to speak (he would be mute) until the son arrived (v. 18-19).
- E. His inability to speak caused them to believe he “had seen a vision in the temple” (vv. 22-23).
- F. Shortly after his return home Elizabeth was with child (v. 25). We might mention in passing that Elizabeth looked upon this as a blessing of God: Thus the Lord had dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to

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take away my reproach among people” (her inability to have children, bvs)

- G. Elizabeth has a visit from Mary (but that is outside of this study, Luke 1).
- H. The time comes for delivery and she has a son (Luke 1:57-58)
- I. When the baby was circumcised at 8 days (v. 59) he would have normally been called by his father’s name “Zacharias”, but his mother intervened and wanted him called “John” (vv. 60-61). Zacharias (still not able to speak was summoned and asked about this,) he wrote on a tablet, “His name is John” (v. 63). “Immediately, his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God” (v. 64).
 - 1. This created a stir among the crowd about what kind of child this was or would be (see vv. 65-66).
- J. Zacharias “was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied” (vv. 67-79).
 - 1. Vv. 67-74 are a praise to God for His bountiful gifts and doings.
 - 2. Vv. 75-76 address the role of the forerunner and who he was announcing to the world (the Christ).
- K. The child’s growth is summarized in one verse (Luke 1:80)
- L. Luke 3:1-6 records the beginning of John’s work (see also Mark 1:1-4).

Some Simple Questions for Consideration:

True or False

#	Statement	True	False
1.	Zacharias was old and had no child as this time.		
2.	An angel told him he would have a son		
3.	Zacharias may have thought it impossible at first		
4.	Zacharias was smitten with leprosy for not believing the angel		
5.	The son was to be named Jacob		

Thought Questions

1.	Using Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6 and Luke show the role of John.
2.	Having a child late in life was a blessing/cursing on Elizabeth? Why?
3.	What role did Zacharias being without speech play in this?
4.	Pick one of the things this unique son would do and describe it.
5.	Tell the class about what Zacharias prophesied (Luke 1:67-69)

(See Addendum Pages at end of this study book.)

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Hannah—A Woman of Prayer

5

Introduction:

TWENTY-FIVE WORDS OR LESS: HANNAH WAS A WOMAN IN ANGUISH OVER NOT HAVING CHILDREN AND OFFERED SUPPLICATIONS EARNESTLY FOR A CHILD TO GIVE TO THE LORD (GOD GAVE SAMUEL)

A. God established marriage with one man and one woman (a husband and his wife) (Genesis 2; Matthew

19:4).

B. In places where plural marriage unfolds the conflicts are not far removed reinforcing the fact that God’s arrangement is best (see 1 Samuel 1:1-7).

C. Two factors prevail: jealousy among the wives, and preference on the part of the husband (see vv. 4-7)

I. Hannah Knew Love but lived in a Vacuum (vv. 2, 6, 7-8)

A. Elkanah always gave a “double portion to Hannah because “he loved Hannah” (v. 5).

B. He stated his concern and love in the words of v. 6 (“Am I not better to you than ten sons?”) (cf. Ruth 4:15: Ruth is “better to you than 7 sons”)

II. Hannah is falsely accused by Eli the priest at Shiloh (1:9-16)

A. Eli is sitting at the doorpost of the “tabernacle of the Lord” (v. 9)

B. What we are told about Hannah?

1. “And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish” (v. 10).

a. There was no rest or peace in her soul. Whether the unfairness of her situation (not having a child) or the seeming hopelessness of it, she was in unrest.

b. She had come to the right place: “Prayed to the Lord” (Hebrews 4:14-16 is our place of refuge as well).

c. She was blending hurt and anguish and request from deep within herself.

C. In sincerity of heart, Hannah “made a vow” (commitment) to God (v. 11).

1. When we vow to God (or anyone) we ought to keep that vow.

2. Matthew 5:33: keep your vows or just don’t make them.

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3. Her vow: “give your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head” (v. 11).
- D. Eli criticizes and rebukes this poor soul (see 1:12-18)
 1. Eli is watching her mouth while she prays (1:12)
 - a. Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard” (v. 13)
 2. Eli thought she was drunk (v. 13b). He implores her to put away her drink! (v. 14) [Too bad he didn’t correct his own sons to the same extent, 1 Samuel 2:12-17. bvs]
 - a. Hannah explains the earnestness of her supplication (1:15-16)
 - i. I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit.
 - ii. I “have poured out my soul before the Lord”
 - iii. “Out of the abundance of my complaint and grief I have spoken until now.” (v. 16)
 - b. God revealed she would have that son through Eli (vv. 17-18)
- E. Hannah gives her son to God (1 Samuel 1:19-28; 2:1-11; 2:18-26; 20-21)

Some Simple Questions for Consideration:

True or False

#	Statement	True	False
1.	Hannah and Peninnah were best of friends		
2.	To have a child was Hannah’s greatest desire		
3.	Hannah promised to give her son to the Lord		
4.	Elkanah supported Hannah in this decision		
5.	Hannah had other children later beyond Samuel		

Thought Questions

1.	Why is one man/one woman marriage the best arrangement?
2.	What was Hannah doing when Eli accused her of being drunk?
3.	Describe why Hannah’s prayer was not just some ordinary prayer.
4.	Did Hannah know that her prayer would be answered that day?
5.	What did Hannah do each year when they visited?

(See Addendum Pages at end of this study book.)

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Joseph of Arimathea—on the quiet

6

Introduction:

TWENTY-FIVE WORDS OR LESS: JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA MAKES VERY FEW APPEARANCES BUT THEY ARE ALWAYS MEANINGFUL AND DEMONSTRATING HIS QUIET FAITH AND CONFIDENCE IN JESUS AND WILLINGNESS TO SHARE HIS GOODS.

- A. There are four main passages in the New Testament that gives us insight into this man of Arimathea.
- B. Where is Arimathea? Dictionaries confess that there is much confusion about the location and some cite four or five potential sites.
1. We do know it “was a city of the Jews” (Luke 23:51).
- I. Joseph was a member of the council of the Jews (Sanhedrin)**
- A. A prominent council member (Mark 15:43).
- B. A man of substance (Matthew 27:57: “a rich man”)
- C. According to Luke 23:51 Joseph did not consent to their decision and deed (viz. crucifying Christ).
- D. He is described as “a council member, a good and just man” (Luke 23:50).
- E. As a disciple of Jesus (Matthew 27:57; John 19:38)
- F. Pilate (must have known him?) for he released the body to him (John 19:38)
- II. Joseph was a disciple of Jesus**
- A. It is stated of him in Matthew 27:57 and John 19:38.
- B. He was secretive about it because of the danger of being ousted by the leaders (see John 9:18-22; 9:33-38; 12:42-43)
- C. What do we know about Joseph’s faith?
1. Matthew 27:57: “who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus”
 - a. He asked for the body of Jesus, covered it and laid it in his new tomb (Matthew 27:58-60; Mark 15:42-47)
 - b. “Who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God” (Mark 15:43, NKJV).
 - c. “He had not consented to their decision and deed” He “himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God” (Luke 23:51).

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- i. "Waiting for the kingdom of God" is expressed by at least two of the inspired writers.
- ii. John and Jesus both spoke of the coming of the kingdom: (Matthew 3:2: John preached "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand!" Jesus preached: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand", Matthew 4:17)
- iii. Jesus declared it was coming within a generation (Mark 9:1).

III. The Ordinary becomes what God Desires

- A. John 19:38 tells us "Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews" (so his connection had been shielded.)
 - 1. He was not very secret when he asked the governor Pilate for the body of Jesus. (John 19:38)
- B. Mark 15:43 reveals of Joseph "coming and taking courage" approached Pilate.
- C. Joseph treated the body of Jesus with great respect and care, and provided a resting place in his own "new" tomb hewn in the rock (Matthew 27:59-60; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53; John 19:38-42).

Some Simple Questions for Consideration:

True or False

#	Statement	True	False
1.	Arimathea was right next to Subtractum		
2.	Joseph was both a council member and a disciple		
3.	Refusing to agree was his first public indication of his faith.		
4.	Joseph put the body of Jesus in his own tomb		
5.	Joseph asked Herod for the body of Jesus.		

Thought Questions

1.	Can one be a council member and a disciple? Explain
2.	What kind of things did this man believe?
3.	What can someone in a power position do on some votes?
4.	Demonstrate how Joseph respected the dead.
5.	Christ's crucifixion emboldened Joseph's faith (explain)

(See Addendum Pages at end of this study book.)

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NICODEMUS—Under the Cover of Darkness



Introduction:

TWENTY-FIVE WORDS OR LESS: ‘NICODEMUS WAS A PROMINENT PHARISEE, A RULER OF THE JEWS, BUT HIS INQUIRING MIND WANTED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT JESUS BECAUSE OF HIS SIGNS.’

A. Aside from John 3, there are only two other passages that supply any mention of Nicodemus in the Scriptures

(John 7:45-53, and in John 19:38-42)

1. In John 7:45-53 we have words attributed to Nicodemus (read v. 50). What makes these words so significant is what is found in verses 45-49 (especially v. 48). Nicodemus shows a good grasp of the logical way of doing something: “Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?”

2. In John 19:38-42 we find that Joseph (of our previous study) and Nicodemus are both there to prepare the body of Jesus for burial after His crucifixion. Once more the gospel writer refers to Nicodemus (“who at first came to Jesus by night,”) who also came. Nicodemus brought “a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds” (some commentators suggest that this was way too much in amount, others suggest it shows the love of Nicodemus, that he wanted to bury the Lord properly. One was a preservative and the other was a fragrant substance often used in the days before embalming).

I. Returning to Nicodemus *and his meeting under the cover of darkness* (John 3:1-2)

A. Nicodemus is a Pharisee (a prominent group among the Jews in the first century: they were strict in their application of the law and more so in their application of traditions (ritual washings, etc.; Matthew 15).

1. Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and Paul were all Pharisees by upbringing and status among the Jews (Nicodemus: John 3:1; Joseph: reference to him being a council member rather than an elder; Paul: Philippians 3:5).

B. Nicodemus was “a ruler of the Jews” (a member of the Sanhedrin or council; John 3:1), he is with them in John 7:45-53 (his words of reasoning are recorded in the Scriptures).

C. “This man came to Jesus by night” (not told why, but it is evident that he got the undivided attention of Jesus at that time). Any other explanation is pure speculation, bvs)

D. He had already formed such thoughts about Jesus:

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1. He greeted Jesus: “Rabbi” or teacher.
2. He stated: “We know that You are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”

a. He is aware of the “signs” (one of three words used to describe the miraculous happenings in Jesus’ ministry: Signs: signified His power and who He was; Miracles: suggested the contravening of the natural order to bring about a result; Wonders: suggests the reaction to those things: fear, love, respect, hatred. The three terms are found in Acts 2:22 and Hebrews 2:4.)

3. He had reached a conclusion regarding Jesus: “for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him” (that was what the signs were to confirm: Hebrews 2:1-4 and John 20:30-31).

II. The Conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus (John 3:3-8)

A. Jesus immediately advances to “unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (born again is best explained by 1 Peter 1:22-25)

1. The expression “born again” is found only in John 3:3; 3:5; and 1 Peter 1:23).

2. A similar concept is found in John 1:12-13 “born of God”.

B. See John 3:4-8 for further insight on what this means.

C. John 3:9-21 as Jesus speaks to clarify Nicodemus’ understanding, relate His work and purpose in coming, and speaks of receptions of His message.

Some Simple Questions for Consideration:

True or False

#	Statement	True	False
1.	Nicodemus was a member of the Sadducees		
2.	Nicodemus came at night because the sunlight hurt his eyes		
3.	Nicodemus was drawn by the signs of Jesus		
4.	Nicodemus misunderstood Jesus’ words		
5.	Nicodemus showed courage in John 7 & 19		

Thought Questions

1.	What does 1 Peter 1:22-23 teach about the new birth?
2.	What two elements are essential in being born again?
3.	Why did Nicodemus ask about entering his mother’s womb?
4.	Can you enter the kingdom of God without being born again?
5.	What does “obeying the truth through the Spirit” mean?

(See Addendum Pages at end of this study book.)

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EUNICE and LOIS— Women at their best

8

Introduction:

TWENTY-FIVE WORDS OR LESS: ‘EUNICE AND LOIS DON’T OCCUPY MUCH OF A PRESENCE IN THE SCRIPTURE RECORD BUT THEIR INFLUENCE LOOMS BIG (SEE 2 TIMOTHY 1:5) THROUGH TIMOTHY’S CHARACTER ’

A. In this day of ‘feminism’ which does little to allow the true beauty of women to shine forth our study tonight looks two women who are the classic illustration of that old saying of years past: “The woman who rocks the cradle rules the world”. By dedication to the challenges of raising a son in a world of conflicting world views these two women (a mother and her daughter) raised a young man that was recognized for his character and his genuine concern for others (see Philippians 2:19-24).

I. Everything we know about Eunice and Lois from the Scriptures.

- A. Who they are: 2 Timothy 1:3-5: “your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice”
- B. What they were/are: 2 Timothy 1:5: They were women “of genuine faith”. Faith that shone forth in Timothy and “which was first in your grandmother Lois” and in “your mother Eunice”.
1. If someone were to ask them what they worked at they would not answer “I am just a homemaker”. By being devoted to the role that God assigns they were able to produce a son whom Paul the apostle would state: “For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. But you know his proven character, that as a son with *his* father he served with me in the gospel” (Philippians 2:20-22; NKJV).
- C. Their pathway was not strewn with roses: When we first meet Timothy and his family we learn several things about his home-life (consider Acts 16:1-3)
1. When Paul met Timothy he was “a disciple” (learner of Christ) (v. 1).
 2. He came from a marriage between a Jewess who became a Christian, and a Greek (whether Eunice’s mother was converted first or at the same time we are not told, but when Paul speaks of them in 2 Timothy they are both followers of Christ it appears and examples for Timothy to be reminded of.)
 3. All we are told of Timothy’s father was “but his father was a Greek” (no comment regarding his character or disposition, but we do know that

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Timothy had not been circumcised on the eighth day when his mother may still have been a Jewess. Did his father interfere with that decision? We are not told and we would do well to leave that as something God's knows rather than speculate too wildly (see Deuteronomy 29:29).

- a. The reason we are aware of that is found in verse 3. Paul was not teaching the necessity of circumcision for every Christian (see 1 Corinthians 7:17-20; Galatians 6:15). Paul in the case of Timothy called for circumcision because of the general awareness of others regarding his parentage (see Acts 16:3).
- b. Later when confronted with criticism about Titus not being circumcised (on a visit to Jerusalem) Paul had a different response and refused to yield to the demands of others (see Galatians 2:3). Titus was a "Greek" (Galatians 2:3-5)

D. The secret of their success with Timothy: Consider 2 Timothy 3:12-15:
 "13 But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (NKJV; 2 Tim 3:13-15).

Some Simple Questions for Consideration:

True or False

#	Statement	True	False
1.	Eunice and Lois were the first real feminists		
2.	Lois and Eunice had been Jews early in their lives		
3.	Eunice and her mother taught Timothy when young		
4.	Eunice and her husband had different worldviews		
5.	Timothy was encouraged to be like his father by Paul		

Thought Questions

1.	Can a mother and grandmother influence a child? Explain
2.	If circumcision didn't matter, why was Timothy circumcised?
3.	What do we know about Timothy from Acts 16:2?
4.	What is the greatest measure of success a mother can have?
5.	Explain what a "home-maker" is

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Apollos--in need of some fine-tuning

9

Introduction:

TWENTY-FIVE WORDS OR LESS: APOLLOS APPEARS TO BE A CAPABLE PREACHER WHO LACKED TRUTH REGARDING THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST AND HIS TEACHING, BUT WHEN INSTRUCTED WAS READY TO SERVE.

- I. **Let's begin our study proper by reading everything we can find out about Apollos from Acts 18:24-28.**
 - A. He was a Jew, not a Gentile.
 - B. His name is Apollos (some suggest it is a variable of (Apollonius, or Apollodorus).(from Fausset's Bible Dictionary, Electronic Database Copyright © 1998, 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)
 - C. His birthplace was Alexandria:
 1. ALEXANDRIA: (Al-ex-andri-a) The capital of Egypt from 330 B.C., founded by Alexander the Great as an outstanding Greek cultural and academic center. Alexandria was designed to act as the principal port of Egypt located on the western edge of the Nile delta. Built on a peninsula, it separated the Mediterranean Sea and Lake Mareotis. A causeway (Heptastadion, or "seven stadia") connected the peninsula with Pharos Island and divided the harbor. The Pharos lighthouse was visible for miles at a height of over 400 feet and is remembered today as one of the seven wonders of the world.(from Holman Bible Dictionary. Copyright © 1991 by Holman Bible Publishers. All rights reserved.)
 - D. Unlike many of those we have considered this man has a reputation that accompanies him: Luke writes: "an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures" (Acts 18:24).
 1. He came to Ephesus after Paul had left Priscilla and Aquila behind with the intention to travel elsewhere and then return (see Acts 18:18-23)
 - E. We learn something of his background and knowledge in Acts 18:25.
 1. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord (he was a disciple).
 2. "And being fervent in the spirit" (anxious to get involved and to be active)
 3. "He spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John" (v. 25).
 - F. "So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue (Acts 18:26)

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II. Apollos was helped by others (Acts 18:26-28)

A. Aquila and Priscilla (see a further identification in Acts 18:1-4)

B. “When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

1. They didn’t seek to destroy him, but to save him.
2. They weren’t going to stand by and see him continue to teach a partial truth regarding the Christ.
3. They “explained to him the way of God more accurately”
 - a. Apollos was willing to heed their teaching.
 - b. However they did it, they were able to help him.
 - c. The brethren endorsed him by letter (Acts 18:27)

C. He went on to Achaia (In New Testament a Roman province, including the whole Peloponnese, and most of Hellas proper, with the islands. This province, with Macedonia, comprehended all Greece (Acts 18:12; 19:21). (from Fausset's Bible Dictionary, Electronic Database Copyright © 1998, 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

D. His work there is described in Acts 18:28.

III. Other Mentions of Apollos

A. Acts 19:1-7 has Paul in Ephesus and Apollos in Corinth.

B. 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:4-6; 3:22; 4:6; 16:12; Titus 3:13.

Some Simple Questions for Consideration:

True or False

#	Statement	True	False
1.	Apollos was a tent-maker like Paul		
2.	Being eloquent is essential for preaching		
3.	Aquila and Priscilla purposely embarrassed Apollos		
4.	Apollos lacked a full understanding of the gospel		
5.	The twelve men (Acts 19) might have heard Apollos		

Thought Questions

1.	What should we do when we listen? (Acts 17:11; 18:26; 1 John 4:1)
2.	What reaction did Apollos have to being instructed further?
3.	How might the 12 men of Acts 19:1-7 been connected with Apollos?
4.	Where did Apollos do an effective work and was he appreciated?
5.	Did Paul have any thoughts about Apollos?

(See Addendum pages at end of this study book on Apollos)

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DORCAS-- A BEACON OF GOOD WORKS

10

Introduction:

TWENTY-FIVE WORDS OR LESS: TABITHA (DORCAS) WAS A DISCIPLE WHO USED HER TALENTS AND ABILITIES TO HELP OTHERS WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE CHURCH WHOM PETER RAISED FROM THE DEAD.

- A. Though the conversion of Saul is a goodly part of Acts 9, the inspired writer has not forgotten about Peter (see Acts 9:32-35).
1. LYDDA: 18 km. (11 mi.) SE of Joppa, known in the OT as Lod.
(from Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible, © 2000 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. All rights reserved.)
 2. SHARON (saron) seems to refer to the Plains of Sharon which extends along the Mediterranean from Joppa to just below Mount Carmel.
 3. Acts 9:33-35 speaks of the healing of Aeneas and the impact of it on others. Soon after, it seems Peter took up residence at Joppa with a man named Simon (a tanner) (Acts 9:38; 10:5-6; 10:17-20)
- B. Let's return to the story of Dorcas in Acts 9.
1. Dorcas (would be her Greek name and Tabitha would be her Hebrew name according to Matthew Henry Commentary) lives at Joppa (9:38). Her name means "a doe, or a hind, or a deer, a pleasant person" (same commentary).
 2. We know she was a "certain disciple" (she is a follower of Christ; v. 36)
 3. Here is the inspired comment on her character: "This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did" (v. 36).
 - a. Christians are to be "zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14 and 3:14)
 - b. Christians are taught by the Savior to just quietly go about doing their good works without seeking applause or recognition (Matthew 6:1-4).
 - c. Dorcas was not here seeking credit, Luke by inspiration revealed what God had made known about this precious disciple, and it is typical of what happens with a lot of folks (it is only when they die that people find out exactly what kind of person they were; Ecclesiastes 7:1; 1 Timothy 5:24-25)
 - d. Our good works (as an individual) are to include both 'saints' and 'sinners' or those within and without the body of Christ (Galatians 6:10).
- C. What happened to Dorcas? (read Acts 9:37)

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- D. The disciples apparently knew of Peter’s healing of Aeneas by God’s power (9:33-35) and sent for him (9:38).
 - 1. Two men were “sent to him” “imploring him not to delay in coming to them” (9:38). Peter obliged them and went with them (9:39a)
- E. Funeral homes were not the order of the day. According to 9:37 when Dorcas died “they had washed her” and “they laid her in an upper room”.
 - 1. Upon arrival Peter was guided to the “upper room” (v. 39).
- F. The first throng of people that met him is described in this fashion: “And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them” (9:39b)
 - 1. We learn here the nature of her good works and charitable deeds.
 - 2. She used her talents: both head and hands to make tunics and garments for widows.
- G. Peter puts them all out and “knelt down and prayed. “Turning to the body he said, Tabitha, arise” (9:40). Here is what followed: “And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up”.
- H. Watch carefully the language here: “And when he had called the saints and the widows, he presented her alive” (9:41).
 - 1. It doesn’t take much to see that she was helping widows (her identified separate from “the saints” [or Christians].
 - 2. This raising of Dorcas soon traveled as did the influence of Christ (v. 42)

Some Simple Questions for Consideration:

True or False

#	Statement	True	False
1.	Dorcas was just an ordinary person		
2.	God had blessed her with abilities she used readily		
3.	Unless a skill is really unique it is of little value		
4.	Dorcas was able to help one other person in life		
5.	Peter (an apostle) could heal the sick/raise Dorcas		

Thought Questions

1.	Show Peter is very active even during the days of Saul/Paul
2.	What can we learn from the life of Dorcas?
3.	What does Matthew 10:42 teach us (think of Dorcas)
4.	Tell us everything Dorcas told us about being dead for a time
5.	What did raising Dorcas do for the gospel in that area?

(See Addendum pages at end of this study book on Dorcas)

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THE MACEDONIANS--true givers

11

Introduction:

TWENTY-FIVE WORDS OR LESS: OUR LESSON TODAY CENTERS ON A GROUP OF BRETHREN KNOWN AS THE MACEDONIANS WHO TOGETHER PARTICIPATED IN GATHERING FUNDS TO HELP THE NEEDY SAINTS IN JERUSALEM.

- A. Our lesson tonight is based on 2 Corinthians 8:1-5.
- B. Background information: An appeal had apparently circulated among the brethren in various places about a need in Jerusalem area among the needy saints.
1. This appeal was to call upon Gentile Christians to help the Christians from among the Jews at this time (see Romans 15:25-33)
 2. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 mentions raising funds for “the collection for the saints”.
 3. 1 Corinthians 16:3-7 “whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem” (perhaps that accounts for some of those mentioned in Acts 20:4). 2 Corinthians 8:8-24; 2 Corinthians 9:1-15)
- I. **Returning to the Macedonians** (it appears that Paul was using the great qualities manifested by these folks to encourage the Corinthians to prepare what they apparently had committed (see 2 Corinthians 9:1-5)
- A. Though writing to those at Corinth, Paul wants them to know of the great response that the Macedonians had given to this effort (2 Corinthians 8:1)
- B. Whether it was their ability to give that he is referring to as “the grace of God bestowed upon the churches of Macedonia” or simply what they were able to give because God supplied them (and us) with all that we have; you will have to determined.
- C. Paul realized when he approached them that they had a crisis on their own hands and land. Yet, he writes of them “that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality”
1. It has been said of old, ‘when the going gets tough, the tough get going’
 2. Some of the most generous at times are those who can least afford it, but like the “widow” and her “two mites” they give of their substance not of their abundance.
 3. Since we went that far we might as well bring in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. Without love, nothing we do is of much value in blessing us (Acts 20:35)

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D. 2 Corinthians 8:3-4 sets before us the scope of their generosity.

1. Before we look at it, think of these words of Jesus that were linked with forgiving others in the context but fit with any giving that we do: “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” (Luke 6:38, NKJV)

2. “3 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, 4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints (2 Corinthians 8:3-4; NKJV)

a. “For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability” “they were freely willing”. No coercion or forced giving, but ‘free will’ giving. It has always been the better way before God, consider in the Days of building the tabernacle, the free will offerings had to be restrained because far more than was needed was given (see Exodus 36:3-7).

E. What allowed them to give so freely?

1. 2 Corinthians 8:5: “5 And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.

a. Matthew 16:24; 6:33.

Some Simple Questions for Consideration:

True or False

#	Statement	True	False
1.	As a Christian my only concern is fellow Christians		
2.	It is important to know whether help is for those who had been Jews or those who had been Gentiles		
3.	In fund raising it is better to avoid the poorer folks		
4.	Everything we have is a blessing from God		
5.	Our stewardship involves caring and sharing		

Thought Questions

1.	Who does the Scripture identify as the recipients of this help?
2.	Why did Paul speak this way about the Macedonians?
3.	What does the expression “according to their ability” mean?
4.	Does God expect you to do beyond what you are able? Passage?
5.	What motivated the churches of Macedonia?

(See Addendum pages at end of this study book on the Macedonians)

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DEMETRIUS--a blessing to a church

12

Introduction:

TWENTY-FIVE WORDS OR LESS: DEMETRIUS IS ONE OF THE GOOD NAMES (A GOOD NAME IS NOTHING UNLESS THE PERSON WHO BEARS IT IS ALSO GOOD; ECCLESIASTES 7:1) IN THIRD JOHN.

A. **Third John** is our only text for today. In all of the New Testament there are only two men named Demetrius.

One is mentioned in Acts 19:24 was a “silversmith” whose craft involved making shrines of Diana and he stirred up a near-riot in Ephesus against Paul and Christianity because of the danger of losing their business that was associated with Diana (Acts 19:24-41).

B. **Third John, verses 11-12:** “11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. 12 Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.” (NKJV)

C. Establishing the context:

Vv. 1-4 speaks of Gaius (our next subject for study)

Vv. 5-8 encouragement to all the Christians John writes to.

Vv. 9-10 Displeasure over Diotrefes and his conduct.

Vv. 11: Discerning “evil” and “good” and why that is important.

Vv. 12: Demetrius, an example of goodness.

Vv. 13-14: John’s desire to say more but in a face-to-face setting.

D. “Evil” and “Good” are put in contrast in this context.

E. When you think of “evil” think of “Devil”

G. When you think of “good” think of GOD.

I. Two Vastly Different Walks

A. John is writing to brethren who are very dear to him [“My little children, (1 John 2:1, 3:18; 5:21) “children of God”, (1 John 3:2-3); “beloved” (1 John 3:2); “the elect lady and her children”, (2 John 1); “my beloved Gaius”, (3 John 1); “my children” (3 John 4)].

B. A call for the correct action on the part of the brethren: “Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good” (3 John 11).

1. To do this we must identify what is “good” and what is “evil”

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2. Hebrews 5:12-14 associates the ability to clearly see the difference between “good and evil”
 - a. V. 12b: “you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food”
 - b. V. 13: “For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.”
 - c. V. 14: “But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”
3. John (by inspiration) gives us something to think about:

“Do not imitate what is evil ,”	“but what is good ”
	“He who does good is of God”
“But he who does evil has not seen God”	

II. Demetrius (3 John 12)

- A. “Has a good testimony from all” (in and out of the church; 1 Timothy 3:2, 7)
- B. “And from the truth itself” (compare his life with what is being taught and they are coordinates; similar to Paul’s desire for Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:15-16)
- C. “And we also bear witness” (John and any with him could testify as to the faithfulness of Demetrius.)
- D. “And you know our testimony is true” (These people knew John and knew his testimony was true and steadfast).

Some Simple Questions for Consideration:

True or False

#	Statement	True	False
1.	There is no difference between “good” and “evil”		
2.	3 John shows all men/women are the same		
3.	Demetrius had to rely on his mother’s claim for him		
4.	Demetrius tried to run the church		
5.	Demetrius told everyone that he was “good”		

Thought Questions

1.	What makes “good” difficult to define (explain)
2.	What did Jesus mean in Matthew 19:16-17?
3.	Would Demetrius and his type be good for the church? Why?
4.	In light of verse 11, what is his relationship like with God?
5.	Using this man as your example, explain ‘ordinary men rising’.

(See Addendum pages at end of this study book on Demetrius)

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Gaius: With a Soul that Prospers

13

Introduction:

TWENTY-FIVE WORDS OR LESS: “GAIUS IS ANOTHER ORDINARY MAN WHO RECEIVES MENTION ON THE PAGES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT FOR SIMPLE DEEDS OF FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS WHICH HE DOES.”

I. Third John 1-8 (read the text for his account)

II. John introduces himself in this epistle with the

words: “The Elder” (since Elders (Bishops, Pastors) were always in a plurality in the New Testament churches, we would see this more as a term of endearment in reference to age and experience.) [See 1 Peter 5:1.]

III. One of those to whom John was writing: “To the beloved Gaius” (v. 1)

A. “Beloved” or “much loved” is not a term that one tosses about or drops on people without just reason.

1. John explains why Gaius is beloved to him, “whom I love in truth”

a. John loved Gaius because of his connection in truth (whether it was his appreciation of it, love of it, or simply the keeping of it).

b. We know it does not represent “whom I love in truth” as if somehow there were some whom John loved in pretence especially when he himself had penned earlier in His Epistles: “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18, NKJV).

B. “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers” (3 John 2, NKJV)

1. John (like Paul in many places) speaks of praying for someone.

2. John’s prayer is an interesting and vital prayer that we ought to pray for one another.

a. “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health”

i. “That you may prosper in all things” is appropriate when people are sound in faith and know the role and function of prosperity (cf. 1 Timothy 6:17-19) [Many who inherit vast amounts of assets are soon looking for something else, because they did not know how to manage what they had, and went through it quickly and foolishly.]

ii. “And be in health” We all desire a measure of health, especially if we are battling disease or consequences of actions or accidents.

Those with good health often are quick to point out to others how much more effective others could be if we ‘lost their excess weight’; ate a different food regimen, or exercised more. [“For bodily exercise

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profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come” (1 Timothy 4:8, NKJV). Cf. also the words of Colossians 2:20-23.]

b. “Just as your soul prospers” (3 John 2) The “soul” of Gaius was prospering according to John’s evaluation. His desire in his prayer was that Gaius might “prosper in all things and be in health” “just as your soul prospers.” [In our case, would that mean better health and prosperity or less?]

IV. Others knew of Gaius and his influence (3 John 3-7)

- A. Gaius was a tribute to those who taught him: see 3 John 3.
1. “For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in truth”
 - a. Others knew of his faithfulness to the truth.
 - b. Truth was not just accumulated knowledge but applied knowledge.
 2. “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth:”
 - a. Consider Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 3:2-3.
- B. “Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well.” (3 John 5-7).
- C. 3 John 8 “fellow workers for the truth”

Some Simple Questions for Consideration

True or False

#	Statement	True	False
1.	John the apostle did not really know Gaius		
2.	Anyone can handle prosperity if given enough of it		
3.	We should focus more on our physical bodies		
4.	Walking in the truth involves living the truth		
5.	A Christian should help “brethren” and “strangers”		

Thought Questions

1.	Explain how truth can bind people together.
2.	Spiritual health is vital to success before God
3.	Explain what it means to “walk in truth”
4.	What does “in a manner worthy of God” mean?
5.	What brings the greatest joy to a spiritual teacher?

(See Addendum pages at the end of this book on GAIUS.)

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ADDENDUM: [Further Thoughts on the Midweek Bible Study: *Ordinary People Rising*]

(1) MARY (Earthly Mother of Jesus)

A Character Study

This Addendum is to include some character traits of Mary that we can appreciate and learn from:

- A. Mary's first entrance into the New Testament is found in Matthew 1:16 where she linked with Joseph in this way: "the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ" (Matthew 1:16).
- B. Mary and her husband to be (they were officially betrothed) were both connected to the family of David (see Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38)
- C. Mary was startled and amazed at the greetings and message of the angel in Luke 1:26-30.
 1. "Highly favored one" (you are the vessel God has chosen, bvs)
 2. "The Lord is with you" (an essential relationship which she had, bvs)
 3. "Blessed are you among women!" (no one else was given such a role)
 4. "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God" (v. 30)
- D. Mary willingly agreed to yield to God's will (Luke 1:38)
- E. Mary's child would be special from the get-go:
 1. "A Son, and shall call His name Jesus (Luke 1:31; Matthew 1:21)
 2. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest (Luke 1:32; cf. Matthew 1:23: Immanuel, God with us)
 3. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David (Luke 1:31-32; 2:11 to the Shepherds; "the Lord's Christ, Luke 2:26)
 4. Micah 5:2: "Ruler" "whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting" (NKJV)
 5. Even Elizabeth's child (John the Baptizer) jumped in her womb when Mary entered pregnant to visit Elizabeth (Luke 1:41-45)
- F. There is no mention of Mary before she enters the account here regarding the special birth of Jesus (she was an ordinary person before God) and even after a few more mentions she is turned over to John (John 19:25-27).

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ADDENDUM: [Further Thoughts on the Midweek Bible Study: *Ordinary People Rising*]

(2) SIMEON (Waiting for the Christ)

A Character Study

This Addendum is to include some character traits of Simeon that we can appreciate and learn from:

- A. No pomp or ceremony is associated with Simeon, he was just an ordinary person whom God gave an assignment (Luke 2:25-26)
 - 1. He was to “see the Lord’s Christ” before he died.
 - 2. He did that and then disappears from the Scriptures.
- B. Simeon was a spiritual man who was “just” and “devout” (Luke 2:25)
- C. God brought Simeon to the temple at the time Joseph and Mary arrived to tend to the necessary things for their young child Jesus (Luke 2:27-28).
- D. Simeon has the Holy Spirit upon him (Luke 2:25-26) which means what he says is by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Luke uses a similar thing in regards to John the Baptist in Elizabeth’s womb: Luke 1:15; Elizabeth: Luke 1:41; and Zacharias 1:67).
- E. The whole account of Simeon stands as a record of God’s confirmation of who Jesus was (see Luke 2:25-30).
- G. Simeon was a man of Israel who was confident that God would send the Messiah or Christ (see Luke 2:26).
- H. Simeon (though an Israelite) saw by the Spirit of God that this Messiah or Christ was for the Gentiles as well (Luke 2:32), something which not all of his fellow Israelites were quick to adjust to (Acts 10-11; Acts 15).
- I. Simeon had a special message to Mary, for her road as His earthly mother was not going to be an easy road (see Luke 2:34-35).
- J. Simeon was aware that the joy of that time would be replaced with sorrow at a later time (2:34-35). God’s Son came to die for mankind (John 3:16-17).

Ordinary People Rising

ADDENDUM: [Further Thoughts on the Midweek Bible Study: *Ordinary People Rising*]

(3) SAMARITAN WOMAN: MORE THAN WATER

A Character Study

This Addendum is to include some character traits of the Samaritan woman that we can appreciate and learn from:

- A. If something seemed strange she was not afraid to address it. A Jew was asking her a Samaritan about a drink of water. She wasn't trying to incite a riot or an argument, just asking an honest question. Why would a Jew (who usually don't have anything to do with Samaritans, ask for a drink from her? (John 4:7-9)
- B. She had her mind on physical water and Jesus would have to make His comment on "living water" clearer for her to follow what He was suggesting (John 4:7a; 4:10-11; 13-15). [Sometimes in our own minds the physical keeps shoving aside the spiritual and we fail to see the spiritual connection.]
- C. She was honest in answering Jesus. Before we can correct something we need to be aware of it (2 Timothy 4:2: reproof, bring to proof, challenge your situation). Jesus asked her to "go, call your husband, and come here" to which she replied: "I have no husband" (v. 17) and Jesus commended her for answering correctly. He goes on to point out something He was aware of: "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." (vv. 17b-18)
- D. She was astute enough to realize He was more than an ordinary man. In verse 19, she states: "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet". After discussing religious practice she identifies Him with the Messiah or Christ who is coming (v. 25) and in verse 26 Jesus states: "I who speak to you am He" (the Messiah).
- E. She was aware of distinctions between the Jews religious practice and that of the Samaritans. Jesus introduces her to what is ahead (John 4:24-25).
- F. She shared what she knew and wanted more (see John 4:28-30; 39-42).

Ordinary People Rising

ADDENDUM: [Further Thoughts on the Midweek Bible Study: *Ordinary People Rising*]

(4) ZACHARIAS: FATHER FOR A SPECIAL SON

A Character Study

This Addendum is to include some character traits of ZACHARIAS that we can appreciate and learn from:

- A. Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth were just ordinary people before God.
Zacharias was a priest of the “division of Abijah” and his wife was also out of Levi (Luke 1:5).
 1. Luke the gospel writer writing to a Grecian audience explains what and how Zacharias was serving in the priesthood: “So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord” (Luke 1:8-9; NKJV).
 2. While he was inside the temple doing his assigned task we learn “And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense” (v. 10)
- B. God’s call to service is not always for the young among us. These two folks are summarized by the Holy Spirit in this fashion: “And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (Luke 1:6, NKJV).
 1. “They had no child, because Elizabeth was barren” (Luke 1:7) and “they were both well advanced in years” (v. 7).
- C. The appearance of an angel was not something with which he was familiar (vv. 11-12). The angel appeared to reveal in answer to “your prayer” Elizabeth will bear him a son and his name shall be John (v. 13).
- D. This son would require special treatment in his upbringing and would play a special role in regards to the coming Messiah (see Luke 1:14-17).
- E. Zacharias would be mute until the promised son arrived and did what God had for him to do (that son would be John the Baptizer (Luke 1:20-23)
- F. Zacharias regained his voice (1:59-80). He prophesied about John and the One he would announce to the world (vv. 67-79; see also v. 80).

Ordinary People Rising

ADDENDUM: [Further Thoughts on the Midweek Bible Study: *Ordinary People Rising*]

(5) HANNAH: A WOMAN OF PRAYER

A Character Study

This Addendum is to include some character traits of HANNAH that we can appreciate and learn from (1 Samuel):

- A. Here is a woman that is loved by her husband but finds herself incapable of having children (v. 5). God would take this woman and grant her the privilege of bearing a son that would go down in Bible History as an important prophet.
- B. Hannah demonstrates that the wisdom of God in one man/one woman marriages is far better than multiplied wives and the jealousy and envy that accompanies bigamy (1 Samuel 1:2; 4-6)
- C. Hannah in the anguish of sorrow and the antagonism of her rival (vv. 6-7) shows that when humans around you can't help (v. 9) God will be there for you (vv. 10-12)
- D. Hannah illustrates that supplication is far more intense than the general concept of prayer. The Holy Spirit reveals, "she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish" (v. 10). When Eli accused her of being drunk, she replied: "No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit, I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord" (vv. 12-13).
- E. Hannah teaches us that you don't vow something to God and do other than what you have vowed (vv. 11-18). God rewarded her with the promise of a son. When the time came she did indeed give him to the Lord's service (vv. 19-28). Samuel was given to the Lord.
- F. Hannah's prayer is recorded for us in 1 Samuel 2:1-10.
- G. Hannah visited her son once a year and never forgot him (2:18-21)
- H. God blessed Hannah with additional children (three sons and two daughters)(2: 21) while Samuel continued to serve the Lord in Shiloh.
- I. Hannah demonstrates that serving and honoring God does not remove every obstacle in our pathway. When we realize our limits we call upon God in supplication and prayer and God will strengthen us (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Ordinary People Rising

ADDENDUM: [Further Thoughts on the Midweek Bible Study: *Ordinary People Rising*]

(6) JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA: ON THE QUIET

A Character Study

This Addendum is to include some character traits of JOSEPH of Arimathea that we can appreciate and learn from:

- A. Joseph of Arimathea did not get a place in the Scriptures because of his fame or power as a member of the Sanhedrin, but because he chose to be a “disciple” of the Lord Jesus (Matthew 27:57; John 19:38)
- B. Though he may have kept his relationship with Jesus on the quiet side, the day would arrive when it would be far more apparent. One day was in the matter of calling for Christ’s crucifixion (see Luke 23:51).
- C. At the death of Jesus he did not hesitate to go and ask Pilate for the body of Jesus (Matthew 27:58-60; Mark 15:42-47).
- D. We are not told about how he connected with Jesus but his knowledge of the kingdom (“waiting for the kingdom of God”; Mark 15:43) would suggest that he had to have come under the teaching of either John the Baptizer (Matthew 3:2) or Jesus (Matthew 4:17; Mark 9:1 (for they were the main teachers of anything to do with the coming Kingdom.) or one of their disciples.
- E. The quiet for a time might have been more to keep him in the inner circle of what was unfolding, rather than being cast out by the Pharisees (John 19:38).
- F. In general evaluation Joseph was described as “a council member, a good and just man” (Luke 23:50). He illustrates that condemning the whole counsel or painting them all being the same with the stroke of a wide paint brush. Each individual must be evaluated on the basis of his own conduct.
- G. Joseph may have been “wealthy” in the wealth of the world, but that did not stop him from offering his own “new” tomb for the Savior’s burying place (Matthew 27:59-60; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53; John 19:38-42).
- H. Joseph had great respect and care for the body of Jesus (see passages on previous point).

Ordinary People Rising

ADDENDUM: [Further Thoughts on the
Midweek Bible Study: *Ordinary People Rising*]

(7) NICODEMUS: UNDER THE COVER OF DARKNESS A Character Study

This Addendum is to include some character traits of NICODEMUS that we can appreciate and learn from:

- A. The Pharisees were known for their strict adherence to the commands and traditions of men (Matthew 15:8-9) and yet there was the occasional one that could only be described as an honest follower of God who sought to please God (think of Joseph of Armathea; Nicodemus and Saul/Paul; to name a few) (John 3:1)
- B. Though he was a ruler of the Jews (John 3:1) he was also one who cautioned the Jews to give a fair hearing to a man before condemning Him, as regards Jesus (John 7:45-53).
- C. Nicodemus had concluded rightly that Jesus was from on high (come from God) by observing the signs Jesus did (John 3:2). Signs which according to Nicodemus “no one can do” “unless God is with Him”
- D. Nicodemus had difficulties understanding the concept of being ‘born again’ (see John 3:3-8). Jesus would help him in his understanding and we ourselves can perhaps better understand it by viewing 1 Peter 1:22-25).
- E. Whether it was the concept of a spiritual “rebirth” that tripped him up or the idea of the “kingdom of God” (a spiritual kingdom) Nicodemus was having some challenges grasping it (John 3:9-12)
- F. Nicodemus knew who to come and see. He came under the cover of darkness (John 3:2) and it may have been more because of the prevailing opposition of the Jews in authority than anything else (John 9:22; 9:34)
- G. Nicodemus was not backward when he spoke up about fairness in a trial (John 7:45-53) nor when he worked with Joseph to bury the body of Jesus (John 19:38-42)
- H. Nicodemus when he spoke with Jesus referred to Him as “Rabbi” or teacher. He spoke with Him honestly and rationally (John 3:2)
- I. Nicodemus helps us separate physical birth and spiritual birth (John 3:3-13).

Ordinary People Rising

ADDENDUM: [Further Thoughts on the
Midweek Bible Study: *Ordinary People Rising*]

(8) EUNICE and LOIS: WOMEN at their BEST

A Character Study

This Addendum is to include some character traits of Eunice and Lois that we can appreciate and learn from:

A. Never underestimate the importance of a woman who is dedicated to serving God in and through the roles that God has assigned women. Eunice and Lois were both recognized for their character forming work in Timothy (2 Timothy 1:5).

B. Brother Sewell Hall once remarked in a class that to be “Queen of the home” by conducting oneself in the ways of God (Titus 2:3-5) was the greatest and most meaningful role for a woman, in contrast to much of what ‘the modern feminist movement’ might suggest.

C. 1 Peter 3:1-6 instructs women to demonstrate the influence of Christ in their lives through the ‘inner beauty’ (“the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God” (vv. 3-4). The gospel lived faithfully can open the door for a further examination of the gospel as this text affirms.

D. Eunice shows that you can still have influence on your child (children) even in a home where she had been a Jewish who was converted to Christianity and her husband was a Greek. Both Eunice and her mother Lois influenced Timothy when he was young (see 2 Timothy 3:15).

E. Eunice and Lois teach us that the time to implant the truth in your children begins in their earliest days. The post-modern world of today wants to deny parents that right and circumvent it with their own ideas of social-engineering and training in the things they permit and have approved of. God desires us to “raise our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:1-4). We need to encourage that.

F. Eunice and Lois teach us that faithfulness in their own lives will often be mimicked or demonstrated in the lives of their offspring. Paul used that as an encouragement to Timothy at a time when he seemed to be shying away from what he needed to do (2 Timothy 1:3-12). When Paul arrived at Derbe, Lystra and Iconium in Acts 16:2, Timothy was already recognized by his brethren.

Ordinary People Rising

ADDENDUM: [Further Thoughts on the Midweek Bible Study: *Ordinary People Rising*]

(9) Apollos--in need of some fine-tuning

A Character Study

This Addendum is to include some character traits of Apollos that we can appreciate and learn from:

- A. When we first meet Apollos, we find him described as an accomplished speaker (which is not always the case in our studies of “Ordinary People”). Luke states of him, “an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures” (Acts 18:24b)
1. His ability did not interfere with his willingness to serve God.
 2. When Aquila and Priscilla took him aside and helped him understand “the way of God more accurately” he listened and received the instruction.
 3. The brethren could send letters of recommendation with him (18:27).
- B. He used his abilities to honor and glorify God (see 18:27-28)
1. “He greatly helped those who had believed through grace” (v. 27b)
 2. “For he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ” (v. 28)
- C. Luke mentions Apollos and his teaching and then opens Acts 19 with the twelve men (that were very likely individuals Apollos had taught previous to learning “the way of God more accurately”).
1. Apollos “spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John” (Acts 18:25).
 2. Afterward, he knew that John’s baptism was superseded by the gospel of Christ (see Paul’s words in Acts 19:3-5).
 3. Paul’s question to the 12 was regarding whether they had received any special gifts of the Spirit (through the apostles laying on their hands)? He taught them Christ. Afterward, he laid his hands on them and imparted some spiritual gifts in a day and time when the spiritual gifts were still needed because the revelation of God was not complete (1 Corinthians 13:8-13)
- D. Paul had confidence in Apollos and showed that he was not desirous of any glory but sought to share the gospel: 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:4-6; 3:22; 4:6; 16:12 and Titus 3:13.

Ordinary People Rising

ADDENDUM: [Further Thoughts on the
Midweek Bible Study: *Ordinary People Rising*]

(10) DORCAS-- A BEACON OF GOOD WORKS

A Character Study

Some character traits of Dorcas that we can appreciate and learn from:

- A. Dorcas is first and foremost “a certain disciple” (Acts 9:36)
1. God can use the talents, personality and abilities of any person who chooses first to serve and honor Him by following His Son.
- B. Dorcas is not known for her cooking skills, her well-kept home or for her outgoing personality. None of those things are wrong when properly harnessed and used to glorify God.
- C. Dorcas is described in this fashion by the Holy Spirit (through Luke’s pen): “This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did” (Acts 9:36)
1. Good works can include many deeds done to help or assist others.
 2. She used her sewing ability to make “tunics and garments” (Acts 9:39b)
 3. When she died a number of them assembled in the upper room (Acts 9:39)
- D. Peter moved the others out of the room “and knelt down and prayed” (9:40).
1. “And turning to the body he said, “Tabitha, arise”
 2. “And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up”
- E. He gave her his hand and lifted her up, and then called for “the saints and the widows”. He “presented her alive” (9:41)
- F. We are not told about the immediate reaction of the people (elation?)
1. No record is given of what she experienced in death (she had died and was dead when Peter came to her)
 2. That doesn’t surprise us for no one who died came back to tell us what they saw (not Lazarus of John 11-12; not Paul of 2 Corinthians 12; not Dorcas of this passage; nor the widow of Nain’s son in Luke 7:11-17)
- G. See v. 42: “And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.”
- H. Dorcas would die again and await the final resurrection (John 5:28-29; Revelation 1:18)

Ordinary People Rising

ADDENDUM: [Further Thoughts on the
Midweek Bible Study: *Ordinary People Rising*]

(11) The MACEDONIANS-- true givers

A Character Study

Some character traits of the Macedonians that we can appreciate and learn from:

- A. The wider context for the Macedonians is about a massive effort to raise funds to help the 'needy saints' in Jerusalem. Many congregations would participate in this benevolent effort. The need was not artificially created (by some scheme of men) but was the result of famine or distress in the area. Paul is trying to encourage Gentile Christians to share their physical wealth with the folks who enabled them to share in spiritual wealth (the gospel). 2 Corinthians 8; 2 Corinthians 9; Acts 20:4 lists some of the messengers of the churches and shows the scope of the effort; Romans 15:25-33 shows Paul's hope to get the funds there in the company of others. The local churches can share in genuine benevolent efforts. 1 Timothy 5 shows that we are to differentiate between the work of individuals and the work of the churches. No similar pattern is shown in the matter of evangelism, though a church might help support a preacher or send forth a preacher to another area. Individual Christians can help neighbors within and without the church at their own will (James 1:27; Galatians 6:10 and examples like the Good Samaritan in Luke 10).
- B. Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 to get the account fresh in your mind.
- C. The churches of Macedonia were ready to supply what they had determined whenever it was needed. It appears that Corinth was being encouraged by their example to complete their promise.
- D. The Macedonians are proof that it is not what you have that determines how much you can afford to give but rather your disposition of heart.
- E. Paul declares they first gave themselves to us (to the apostles and the teaching of the Lord) and then answered the need here
- F. They gave out of their poverty (their own hard-pressed times and situation).
- G. Their giving exceeded any expectations that Paul had for them.
- H. The church determined what they could send, and chose who would safeguard it for them on the way. It was delivered from them to the need.

Ordinary People Rising

ADDENDUM: [Further Thoughts on the
Midweek Bible Study: *Ordinary People Rising*]

(12) DEMETRIUS-- A Blessing to a Church

A Character Study

Some character traits of Demetrius that we can appreciate and learn from:

- A. In the context of 3 John we find that there are three specific individuals mentioned in this short book: Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius. Two of them will grace our “ordinary people rising” study platform (viz. Gaius and Demetrius). The other man is someone you study toward the end of avoiding becoming like him.
- B. In the immediate context we learn that Christians should be in a position to discern between that which is “good” and that which is “evil”.
1. Those who do “good” (like Demetrius) are “of God” (they belong to Him, they reverence Him, they believe in Him, and they honor Him by obeying His Son; John 5:23; 1 John 2:3-6; 1 John 3:22-24; 1 John 5:2-3)
 2. Those who do “evil” “has not seen God” (not physically but spiritually; they refuse to see John 9:39-41, considered in the light of the entire chapter; and John 3:16-21 showing that sin and light do not readily blend.)
- C. Demetrius “has a good testimony from all” (whether in the church or in the wider community, they are seeing the same thing in Demetrius.)
1. What others see in us may be a beacon call for the gospel, or a warning signal of perishing.
 2. Our goal is to be like that which Paul desired in Timothy: “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” (1 Timothy 4:16; NKJV)
- D. The best evaluator of a man’s worthiness is not just what others say (although that is great witness) but it is how he compares with the example spelled out in God’s word and will.
1. Paul warned about measuring ourselves by ourselves and comparing ourselves with ourselves (2 Corinthians 10:12, 18).
- E. To have the “apostles” vouch for you would also verify your trustworthiness and goodness.
- F. Demetrius shows good can prevail over evil if we want it to.

Ordinary People Rising

ADDENDUM: [Further Thoughts on the Midweek Bible Study: *Ordinary People Rising*]

(13) GAIUS-- with a Soul that prospers

A Character Study

Some character traits of Gaius that we can appreciate and learn from:

- A. Gaius was considered “beloved” or “much loved” by John because of his stance in the truth (Gaius knew it, walked in it, and held to it in practice).
- B. John’s prayer for Gaius indicates that he had confidence in his soul’s standing before God (spiritually he was excelling in John’s view) but he desired that he might have some prosperity in other things and in his physical health to that same level or degree.
 - 1. When we pray for others do we include mention of their spiritual condition with the hopes of bettering that, or using that as a measure of how much of other blessings they need or require?
- C. A teacher’s success is measured through his students. In this case John declared: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 4).
- D. Gaius didn’t do what he did for the applause of men but others were aware of the good things that he did and reported them to John. They spoke of Gaius as one who had the “truth” in him and who “walked in truth”.
 - 1. One could memorize a lot of Scripture but a Scripture lived is a greater testimony in one’s life than a Scripture memorized.
- E. Gaius is an apt illustration of the fact that our concerns as a Christian are not just limited to brethren or fellow-Christians. We read that what Gaius did was “for the brethren and for strangers” (those outside of Christ, we would imagine). Compare Galatians 6:10: “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (NKJV).
 - 1. The church may be limited to who they can help (1 Timothy 5:16) but we as individuals can do as much as we are able, to as many as we can.
- F. Gaius was in a position to receive and perhaps send others on their way in Christ’s service. John wants him to continue in that and see them as fellow workers for the truth (see 3 John 5-8).