

# Eternal Treasures of Wisdom in the New Testament – Part 1

Written on: July 7, 2021

Article by: Paul Birston

Theme Edition Introduction

Jesus' neighbours in Nazareth recognized His great wisdom and wondered where He got it, **“And He came to His hometown and began teaching them in their synagogue, with the result that they were astonished, and said, ‘Where did this man acquire this wisdom and these miraculous powers?’”** (Matthew 13:54).

Jesus' wisdom appeared to His neighbours in the midst of their everyday trials. In Jesus and in His neighbours' astonishment and question we see that wisdom is a fundamental attribute of God, that His eternal wisdom comes to us in Jesus and His teaching, and that His wisdom works in the pressures of everyday life.

We also note that Jesus' neighbours in the first-century world, Jews and Greeks, had some general knowledge of what wisdom is and its importance. From His first sermon onward they were aware enough to recognize that Jesus' wisdom was extraordinary (Matthew 7:28–29). Jesus' wisdom is extraordinary because it is eternal. It works in the practical realities of life because God is the Creator of life and He Himself is the essence of wisdom.

The wisdom trajectory through all Scripture is firmly established in the Old Testament. Even so, the continuity of God's eternal wisdom through both Old and New Testaments is under appreciated and under applied, perhaps because of our stress on the New Covenant emphases of justification

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and living by faith which are certainly of paramount importance.

The goal of this theme edition is to enhance our appreciation and application of the wisdom which God gives us in the New Testament and by which He wants us to live as we walk with Him by faith. Faith and reason are intrinsically related by virtue of the fact that Jesus embodied both logic and reason as the *Logos*. Therefore faith and wisdom are intrinsically related in spiritual practical living. They work together. God wants us to live by both. We need faith to apply His wisdom and He also doesn't want us claiming to do things by faith that we know are unwise and presumptuous in His eyes. Both need to be in harmony with Him.

### **The Eternal Presence of God's Wisdom**

We noted Jesus' first-century neighbours were aware of wisdom in their culture. Jesus' Jewish kinsmen were blessed with the wisdom of the First Covenant Scriptures including what we know as the wisdom books or "Wisdom Literature," Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

God's wisdom for living permeates all of the First Covenant Scriptures. It appears in various forms in the songs/psalms, proverbs and parables found in the historical and prophetic books as well as the "writings" (together the Hebrew Tanakh: *Torah*, *Nabi'im* and *Ketuvim*). Jesus knew this canon of scripture and referred to it in Luke 24:44.

God powerfully affirms in His Word that His wisdom is eternal, existing with Him before His Creation of the universe:

**The Lord created me at the beginning of His way,**

**Before His works of old.**

**From eternity I was established,**

**From the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth.** (Proverbs 8:22–23)

God's eternal wisdom is evident all around us in His Creation:

**Lord, how many are Your works!**

**In wisdom You have made them all;**

**The earth is full of Your possessions.** (Psalm 104:24, see also Psalm 19, Romans 1:20)

God's eternal wisdom is for all His people for all times,

**And He will be the stability of your times,**

**A wealth of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge;**

**The fear of the Lord is his treasure.** (Isaiah 33:6)

God's wisdom is a gift He gives willingly:

**For the LORD gives wisdom,**

**From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.** (Proverbs 2:6)

Throughout history God has given His wisdom and His Spirit for practical and beautiful purposes:

**“See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship.”** (Exodus 31:3)

Wisdom appears with two companions in scripture to form the trio of wisdom, knowledge and understanding.

### **What Is Wisdom?**

The Hebrew word for wisdom is *hokmah* (חִכְמָה). It embodies “skill.” Wisdom gives skills for living. Wisdom guides its possessor in thinking, speaking, acting and making the most godly appropriate decisions for the best outcomes in real-life situations.

While factual information can build knowledge, the combination of knowledge with understanding based on years of experience guided by God's Word leads to wise behaviour with the most positive long-term results. The wisdom proverb, which parallels the New Testament parables, is “a short saying based on long experience.” In five verses, Proverbs 1:2–6 articulates at least 15 functions of this wisdom book, including “to know wisdom” (1:2).

In the New Covenant Scriptures, *sophia*, Greek for wisdom, is 1) for Christians, “the wisdom which God imparts to those who are close to Him,” God's wisdom in Christ, vs. 2) “the natural wisdom that belongs to this world” (see 1 Corinthians 1 and 2 for Paul's penetrating distinction between the two).

Scripture often personifies wisdom to teach and emphasize its importance. Jesus makes the strong connection between wisdom personified and wise action and results,

**“...wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”** (Matthew 11:19b)

**“And yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children.”** (Luke 7:35)

### **The Continuous Trajectory of Wisdom through both Testaments**

As we have seen, wisdom is a fundamental eternal attribute of God. His wisdom is manifest in His creation of the universe. His wisdom is also evident in His people from ancient times, in the magnanimity of Abraham and in His words to and through Job, Moses and the wisdom of Torah, instructions on worship and living, through the early days of Solomon and finally the Prophets. God's wisdom shows up in all three sections of the Hebrew Scriptures: Torah, Prophets and Writings.

This eternal trajectory of God's wisdom blossoms further in the New Covenant notably in Jesus **"in whom are hidden all the *treasures of wisdom and knowledge*"** (Colossians 2:3). The proverbial forms of wisdom are fully evident in Jesus' parables and His clear delineation of the two ways of wisdom vs. folly in, for example, his teaching of the wise and foolish builders (Matthew 7:24–27).

The writings of Paul, James and Peter contain many classic features of wisdom. Finally, John's Revelation ascribes wisdom in praise to God and its application by wise readers. John's apocalypse draws our attention to the eternal horizon of God's glory and how God means it to guide us in wise and holy living today in preparation to be with Him eternally.

### **God's Wisdom in Jesus' Cross and Gospel**

God's love and justice meet at the cross. In 1 Corinthians 1 and 2 Paul gives us a brilliant understanding of how the cross is also the ultimate manifestation of God's wisdom and power: **"we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God"** (1 Corinthians 1:23–24).

### **Getting Wisdom**

Wisdom is a gift from God. It is more valuable and precious than silver and gold (Proverbs 16:16). God gives wisdom to those who have a reverent fear of Him and who walk in His ways (Psalm 128:1),

**"And to mankind He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;**

**And to turn away from evil is understanding.'"** (Job 28:28)

**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;**

**All those who follow His commandments have a good understanding;**

**His praise endures forever.** (Psalm 111:10, see also Isaiah 11:2).

**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,**

**And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.**

(Proverbs 1:7, see also Proverbs 9:10; 15:33).

In one of the best examples of wisdom writing in the New Testament, James also says God gives wisdom generously to those who ask Him in faith:

**But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5)**

### **The Importance of Living by Faith *and* Wisdom**

We've all "learned things the hard way." We try something and it doesn't work. We keep trying until we find something that works well. We don't have time to make all the mistakes and some of them are deadly.

God knows more than anyone what works in life. He invented it. So God gives us wisdom from His eternal perspective and the long experience of His inspired writers in His Word. He wants us to learn wisdom from Him and His Word to equip us to make the most of our limited time on earth as we prepare to live with Him. forever.

From the beginning of time God has always wanted us to live believing what He says and doing it, that is by faith, and by the wisdom through which He created us. God's ultimate manifestation of wisdom comes to us through Jesus and the eternal treasures of His New Covenant.

We are very grateful to our authors who have contributed articles on God's wisdom in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' parables, Luke, 7:31–35, 1 Corinthians and Ephesians, James and Revelation. We pray you will be encouraged, edified and equipped by these reflections on God's eternal treasures of wisdom in the New Testament. The articles from James and Revelation will appear in your August edition of the Gospel Herald.

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# Blessings Amid Adversity

Written on: July 7, 2021

**Article by: Dave Knutson**

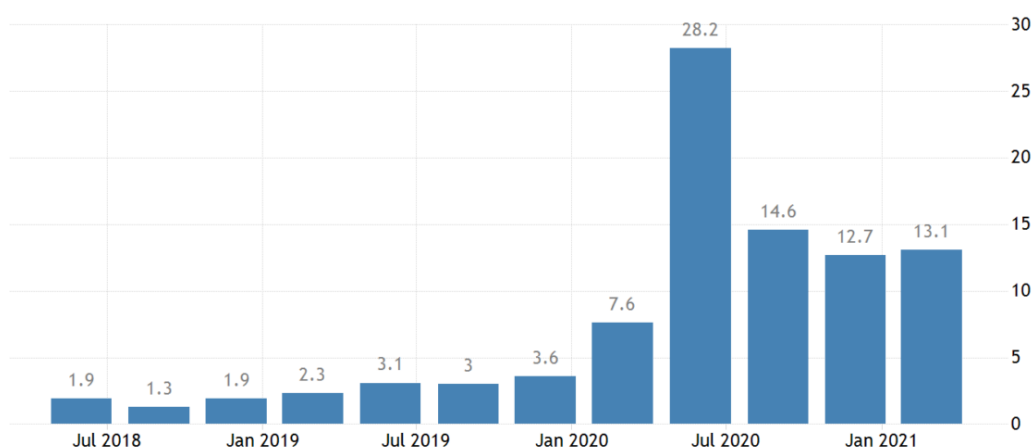
In the 3 years leading up to the pandemic, household savings rates in Canada bounced between 1.3% and 3.6%. As the Canadian economy began to close and families had to stay at home, those rates surged to a high of 28.2% in July of 2020 before settling more recently in the 13% range. Canadian households 'normally' have a collective savings reserve of around 40 Billion, but that amount has risen to around 200 billion over the past 18 months. During that time the debt to income ratio for Canadian households has fallen with most managing to reduce indebtedness while living within their means.

What remains to be seen is to what degree these new savings habits will persist. To the degree that they have not been self-imposed, the reopening of our economy may see a return to former spending habits. Economists are counting on it as are many investors.

But what would happen if Christians take a different approach? What if our pandemic 'time-out' has taught us to distinguish between those things that we simply want and those which we actually need. Living beneath one's means is a Biblical principle. It allows us to give more generously to those in need. It creates a surplus which contributes to peace of mind and in many cases marital harmony. It frees up money that we didn't know we had, to be put to work in evangelism and benevolence.

There is a pent up demand all around us for more and more of this world's goods. The felt needs of our world rarely turn in the direction of heaven. But the real needs of a world lost in sin have never been anything else. Let us determine to use our new found resources for the advance of the gospel and the saving of lost souls.

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# The Sermon on the Mount: A Treasure Chest of Wisdom

Written on: July 7, 2021

**Article by: George Mansfield**

## Introduction

In his lead article for this tremendous series on WISDOM, the author takes us rather quickly to a verse of definition. It reads, *“(Jesus) came to His hometown and began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, ‘Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?’”* – Matthew 13:54.

*This article attempts to grasp, from the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, some of the high, holy and helpful words that we need on a daily basis*

Our Bibles, containing the Word of God, become our text for drinking in the beautiful phrases and promises of Jesus. The task at hand in this writing is to see the wisdom found in Matthew 5 through 7 and then become stronger in our faith in the Father through His Son!

It was Augustine who gave the name *“Sermon on the Mount”* to this section. This title has stuck. John Stott reckons that *“this sermon is the best-known part of the teaching of Jesus, but arguably, the least understood – and certainly, the least obeyed. It is the nearest thing to a manifesto that he ever uttered, for it is his own description of what he wanted his followers to be and to do.”*

What Jesus taught in *His* day, we are expected to keep and obey in *our* day!

Please do yourself a favour and read Matthew chapters 5 through 7 as we will have to leave some parts untouched for this article.

## THE BEATITUDES – Matthew 5:1-12

***“Seeing the multitudes, Jesus went up on the mountain and sat down; then His disciples came to Him. He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying....”***

There very well may be an unknown factor here in this: *“Jesus saw the crowds,”* then *“he went up on the mountain... and his disciples came to Him.”* If we are thinking of those initial twelve men chosen by Jesus, then this could get confusing. A disciple is simply *“a follower”* as were those first called to follow Jesus and later were told to *“go into all the world....”* making them apostles or *“those sent.”*

Perhaps the answer is simply that the crowd watched while the twelve went to hear Jesus and gradually were drawn by his magnetism and became “*the crowd*.”

There is a profound connection between Matthew noting that Jesus “opened His mouth and began to teach them” with Jesus’ first answer from Deuteronomy 8:3 to Satan’s temptation in Matthew 4:4, “Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God.” Jesus, the incarnate Word, opens His mouth to speak the very word’s of God’s wisdom eternal (recall Proverbs 2:6 in our introductory article).

Since this section of Scripture takes in all of chapters 5 through 7, we can read in chapter seven, “*When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching*”– Matt.7:28. At least by the time that Jesus finished, *many* people were there, to drink in these life changing words.

“Beatitude” comes from a word that can mean “*blessing*.” Jesus taught people not only that there was a way that they could be blessed by their Heavenly Father, but he also set out the details of ‘that way’. It was contingent upon their response to His Son Jesus! Things formerly seen as burdens become privileges in Christ and result in blessings!

Nine different topics are given one after the other, all of which are designed to make his original hearers and now us, much better people. Please read these from your Bible in Matthew 5:1–11.

Jesus then adds “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (5:12).

Isn’t this why we live like we do? Don’t we “count our blessings, naming them one by one,” and live faithfully in the presence of both Deity and dust, looking for the time when each one will be in the presence of our Good God?

These sayings of Jesus are a “*one-time for all-time for all-people foundation*.” The beauty is observed in the second part of each addition. He promises that the material in the second part of each sentence is better than the first. For example: “*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy*.”

This brief glance at each of these “beatitudes” allows us to read the text and observe two parts: the first is



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material in mind, the second is the blessing to receive. These are not written in the same way we might frame them, but from the lips of our Lord, blessings are promised for the faithful. Let's be *"faithful unto death" in order to "receive a crown of life"* (Revelation 2:10).



This Bible material is broken down into sections. Matthew 5:13 opens a new emphasis. The question for all of us is *"How should we live on planet earth?"* The answers comes swift and true. We should think of ourselves as "salt of the earth." This phrase is defined as *"good and honest people trying to make the earth a better place."* Christians should be first in line!

Likewise Jesus teaches us to be *"lights that shine before men,"* and for which God receives the glory!" (5:14–16). Does this describe your daily endeavours?

As knowledgeable and active as the Jewish Pharisees were, our mandate is not to imitate them but to surpass them both in actions and emphasis (5:20). Please read this carefully as our eternal destination hangs in the balance. We must go beyond their legalistic attitude

and actions, or *"we will not enter the kingdom of heaven"* (5:20). God has spoken!

## 12 WISDOM PRINCIPLES FROM MATTHEW 5:21–7:23

**1. Try to always be at peace with people.** Never hold a grudge against anyone. If someone has something against you try to be reconciled with that person (5: 21–26).

**2. Be pure in your thoughts as well as in your actions.** A man who looks lustfully at a woman is no less a sinner that a man who physically commits adultery (5: 27–32).

**3. In your speech, be careful what you say and always speak the truth in love.** Never think that you have to make someone believe you by swearing by the temple or "cross my heart and hope to die" (5:33–37).

**4. Do not fight back or take revenge against one who hurts you or uses you.** Let God be the avenger (5:38–42).

**5. Love everyone, even your enemies, as God does.** You are a child of God and should act that way (5:43–48).

**6. Don't broadcast your deeds or your prayers to the world.** Do your good deeds and pray in secret before the Father only. And pray as Jesus taught us: first for His will, and then for our own needs (6:1–18).

**7. Seek God's will first before your own desires.** Don't worry about what you need in this life. If we are doing His will He will take care of us (6:19–34).

**8. Don't be critical of others and judge them unfairly.** Always evaluate the situation and get your own house in order before you instruct someone else. And instruct only those who are worthy—willing to learn (7:1–6).

**9. Be dependent on God for everything, and be assured that for any good thing you ask for He will give it to you according to His will** (7:7–11).

**10. Do for others in love what you want them to do for you.** This is the golden rule. Don't look to others to do something for you. Instead do for them the very thing you want them to do for you (7:12).

**11. As for the decisions you make in life, always do the right thing, not the popular thing.** Don't follow the crowd (traveling on the wide road), but follow God instead along with all other true believers (who are traveling on a very narrow path). If you go the wrong way (the popular way, on the wide road) there is danger ahead and you will fall into certain destruction (Galatians 6:7–8; Matthew 7:13–14).

**12. Be on your guard against false teachers who will take you down the wrong path.** Know that not everyone who says that they are a Christian is a Christian (7:15–23).

The wisdom of this “Sermon on the Mount” is driven by the statements Jesus made in His Beatitudes.

In the next issue of the Gospel Herald we will see application to the “Jesus Way” in more depth and in statements that will challenge the best of us to see and live our lives like that of the Galilean Carpenter.

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# “No One Ever Spoke Like This Man”

Written on: July 7, 2021

**Article by: Ed Broadus**

## **The Wisdom of Jesus As Displayed in His Parables**

Jesus Christ is universally recognized as a master teacher. A conspicuous part of his methodology was his use of stories, which we, like the gospel writers, often call parables, from the Greek *parabolē*, “placed alongside.” Usually the parables of Jesus are stories from everyday life that ordinarily illustrate a single moral or spiritual truth, as in the Persistent Widow, which Luke tells us was “to the effect that they should always pray and not lose heart” (Luke 18:1–8). However, the parable of the Prodigal Son illustrates three truths: (1) God’s great love, (2) genuine repentance, and (3) heaven’s joy when sinners repent (Luke 15:11–32).

Many speakers and writers use stories to hold attention and to get their point across, so Jesus was not an unusual teacher for that reason. What, then, made his stories extraordinary?

1. Some of his stories, such as the Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), and the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21–35), are outstanding literature, both because of their eloquent relevance to the subject matter and the arresting way they tell their story.
2. Many have broad appeal across generational, cultural and educational lines. The story of the Good Samaritan, for example, can be usefully grasped by preschoolers, and yet there are far deeper truths that challenge mature adults.
3. Jesus drove home his point in varying ways, depending on his listeners. In the brief story of the Two Builders (Matthew 7:24–27) at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, he trusted his hearers to make the right application. In the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus ended with a question and left it to his hearer to make the point. At the end of the story of the Prodigal Son Jesus did not tell whether the older brother went to the party, leaving it to his hearers to make the appropriate application.
4. Jesus’ stories, even today, are not easily forgotten and challenge us to revise our thinking, as in the parable of the Rich Farmer (Luke 12:13–21) who left God out of his plans and died unable to enjoy what he had saved for his retirement.
5. While his stories are entertaining when we read or hear them, far more importantly they contain significant spiritual and ethical teachings. Consider, for example, the parable of the Shrewd Manager about the use of money (Luke 16:1–13) or that of the Seed and the Sower (Matthew 13:1–9) about the varying responses of those who hear God’s word.

Jesus' wisdom is evidenced in these stories by what he chose to tell, his skill in telling it, and the story's relevance to the occasion. Anyone who writes a teaching article, or preaches a sermon, or talks to another person about spiritual change not only should want to speak the truth appropriate to the occasion but should also want to say it in a way that helps hearers accept it, even when it is not what they want to hear. An important part of wisdom is speech that is "gracious, seasoned with salt," knowing *how* to answer each person (Colossians 4:5–6).

But Jesus' wisdom is evidenced even more by *what* he taught with parables, whether in response to someone's question or problem, or when training the Twelve for their work after he left, or when confronting his adversaries. His skill in using stories to answer questions is especially well-illustrated by his response to a lawyer who wanted to know what he needed to do to inherit eternal life (Luke 10:30–37). Rather than telling him what to do, Jesus asked him what the law said. The lawyer rightly quoted the two greatest commandments, and Jesus told him that if he kept them he would live. The lawyer recognized that to really do this is not easy, so he tried to justify his own failure by asking, "Who is my neighbour?" Although Jesus was fully able to answer this in a few words, he instead told about a Samaritan who helped a half-dead man left at the side of the road by robbers. Jesus turned the question from who is my neighbour to who proved to *be* a neighbour. At the end of the story the lawyer answered his own question.

Jesus used parables to train his own disciples. At least three times Peter asked questions that Jesus answered this way. One time, after his story about Watchful Servants (Luke 12:35–40), Peter asked, "Is this parable for us or for all?" Jesus asked another question implying that the parable was for anyone faithful and wise enough that his master will set him over his household. "Blessed is that servant" (Luke 12:41–48).

Another time Peter asked, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus' short answer was not seven times but seventy times seven. His full answer was the story of the Unforgiving Servant, reminding Peter of how much he had been forgiven and his continuing need to forgive others "*from your heart*" (Matthew 18:23–35).



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On a third occasion, after a rich young ruler left in sorrow when Jesus told him he should sell his possessions and follow him, Peter said, “We have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?” Jesus’ immediate reply was that “everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life” (Matthew 19:27–30). His fuller answer, addressing Peter’s attitude, is found in the story of the Labourers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1–16), where those who worked as little as an hour, trusting the owner’s word that “whatever is right I will pay you,” received as much as those who worked a full twelve hours after bargaining for their wages.

It is likely that the Twelve were all present when Jesus responded to Peter’s questions. Training them was not merely a matter of teaching them some facts; to be Jesus’ apostles they had to undergo a paradigm change, for their understanding of the Messiah’s kingship and kingdom was utterly different from what Jesus came to be and to do. One of the ways that Jesus changed their understanding was with parables. Seven of these kingdom parables are found in Matthew 13, with an additional one in the parallel passage in Mark 4:26–29. These parables he spoke, not for the benefit of the masses, but, as he told the Twelve, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to those outside it has not been given (Mark 4:10–12). Two of these parables – that of the Sower and that of the Weeds and the Wheat – he explained in detail so that his disciples would know how to interpret the others (Matthew 13:1–9; 18–23; 24–30; 36–43).

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Jesus also used parables to tell his apostles that he would be going away but would return later. During the interim they needed to be faithful and wise (Matthew 24:43–47). He illustrates wisdom with the story of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1–13) and faithfulness with that of the Talents (Matthew 25:14–30). Luke records a parable similar to that of the Talents (Luke 19:11–27), but apparently to a wider audience, to disabuse those who thought the kingdom was coming immediately and to warn those who rejected his kingship.

The latter reminds us that Jesus sometimes used parables to interact with his opponents. Early in his ministry, his Pharisee dinner host thought Jesus should not

have allowed a woman who was a “sinner” wash his feet with her tears and dry them with her hair. Jesus told about Two Debtors, one of whom was forgiven a large debt and the other a small one. Jesus then asked who loved the most. When the Pharisee answered that it was the one forgiven the most, Jesus made a telling comparison between the way in which Simon and the woman had each shown their love for him and then told the woman that her sins were forgiven (Luke 7:36–50).

Later his interactions with the Pharisees and other opponents became more confrontational, as when they openly criticized him for receiving “sinners” and eating with them. Jesus responded with stories of a Lost Sheep, a Lost Coin, and a Prodigal Son to tell about the joy in heaven when even one sinner repents (Luke 15).

During the final week of his ministry, when he knew his opponents were determined to kill him, he issued a final warning with his story of the Wicked Tenants (Matthew 21:33–46; Mark 12:1–12; Luke 20:9–18.) There was no need for Jesus to explain the parable, for as both Matthew and Luke tell us, they perceived that the parable was against them.

Parables, then, were a very important part of Jesus’ teaching style. Sometimes they were used to help his hearers understand better, other times they were designed to keep at least some of his listeners from grasping what he was saying. Either way, they demonstrated his wisdom, not only in the truths being taught but also in knowing who were prepared to receive them and be benefited by them and who were unreceptive and needed to be warned. They have worn well, and 2000 years later we still marvel at them and at the Great Teacher who told them.

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**Lesson 3: Saturday, May 1, 1:30 PM**  
*Nuts and Bolts of Disciple-making*

**Lesson 4: Sunday, May 2, 10 AM**  
*Blood, Fire, and Billows of Smoke*

David is the Senior Minister at North Boulevard Church of Christ in Murfreesboro, TN. He is the author of several books, including *A New Day* (2016), *A Grand Illusion* (2019), and his latest work, *King Jesus and the Beauty of Obedience-Based Discipleship* (2020).

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# Without Christ

Written on: July 12, 2021

**Article by: Harold Bruggen**

Often in a sermon or in your personal study, you come across scripture that catches your eye. John 15: 5 is one of those verses, for in it Jesus shares the following analogy:

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5 NKJV)

What *would* life be like without Jesus?

Life without Jesus retains no hope of Heaven. It would be life without peace with God or guidance for living. Life without Jesus would be life without purpose and life without forgiveness. Without Jesus, God would have no family on earth, no company of the redeemed – purchased by his blood and led by his example.

But Jesus *did* come from heaven and he *has* died for our sins. The vine is here – what about the branches?

Will we join ourselves *to* Him and abide *in* Him? Jesus said that ‘apart from Him, we can do nothing’. It seems to me that we should struggle to understand what Jesus did do in his life of service and then apply His example to our own lives. Instead of looking into the sky, as the disciples did when Jesus ascended into heaven, we, too, have things to do in the kingdom of God.

Without Christ, we are powerless, defenceless, and helpless. God has adopted us and has become our Father through Jesus Christ. This is our incentive for serving Him as he grants us the ability and strength to do so. But to fully serve, we must first fully submit to God’s will in our lives, as revealed through Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul said that “for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.” (1 Corinthians 8:6 NKJV) And, “For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 3:8 NKJV)

It is then only through Jesus that we are able to address God as our heavenly Father and that he is empowered to adopt us as His own. May we express our dependence upon the Lord in our faithful obedience to his will, drawing inner strength from the high privilege of life ‘*in Christ*’.

“Without Christ” is not where I want to be – come eternity.

Port Colborne, ON

# The Trip of Your Life

Written on: July 19, 2021

**Article by: Harold Bruggen**

## The Trip of Your Life

When we leave for a vacation, we always pack our bags a few days before we leave, especially if it is an early morning departure. We almost always have everything ready to go because we want to leave at a certain time, usually very early in the morning. We wish to leave early, so we prepare beforehand. *Getting* ready is necessary in order to *be* ready.

Jesus said “You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected.” (Luke 12:40 NLT)

That is the concept Jesus was communicating when He said, “Be dressed for service and keep your lamps burning, as though you were waiting for your master to return from the wedding feast. Then you will be ready to open the door and let him in the moment he arrives and knocks.” (Luke 12:35-36 NLT)

In other words, have your walking shoes on and be prepared to leave.

In order to be ready for the return of Jesus we ought to be engaged in activities that we would not be ashamed of if He were to return. It is an honest thing to ask yourself periodically, “This place where I am going, this thing that I am getting ready to do, would I be embarrassed or ashamed to be doing this if Jesus were to return?” If the answer is affirmative, then don’t do it. If you can’t pray for God’s blessings upon what you are doing, having arrived at them through a study of his word... then those activities should be out-of-bounds for you.

First John 3:2-3 says, “Dear friends, we are already God’s children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure.” (NLT)

If we believe that Jesus is coming, it should cause us to live godly lives. “[God’s Word] teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.” (Titus 2:12 NIV) And, “Since everything will be destroyed ..., what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives.” (2 Peter 3:11 NIV)

Are you ready for the trip of your life? If not, why not?

Fenwick, Ontario

# Your Father Called

Written on: July 26, 2021

**Article by: Harold Bruggen**

Several years ago I saw a TV ad by a church which said: “Your Father called, and He wants you to come home.”

That is very true of our Heavenly Father who has called us as the apostle Paul explains, through the gospel, “. . . He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 2:14 NKJV).

The parable of the lost son teaches us that God, the Father, wants His contrary and disobedient children to come back home (Luke 15). The lost son in Luke 15 represents the child of God who has fallen away. There is a general sense in which everyone is a child of God, having been made in His image (Acts 17:28, 29). At some point, we all sin and God desires that sinners repent in order to come home.

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9 NKJV)

So, why have not all of God’s wayward children – come home?

It was rebellion that prompted the young son in Jesus’ parable to move out of the Father’s house. It kept him away until he came to appreciate what he had left behind. Only when he decided that he was willing to be accountable to his father did he return.

As our heavenly Father, God has clear and definite rules for His family. They are contained in the New Testament. There are those who make up their minds to leave, because they don’t like the rules. Many who leave stay away, unless or until they make a decision to submit once again to the Father’s authority.

The young son in the parable thought he would be much happier on his own, doing as he desired, and spending his inheritance on whatever he wished. For a time, it appeared that he was right. Sometimes children won’t return home because they don’t take into account the full extent of the blessings of their

father's house. Why should he come home when he was having the 'time of his life', living in decadence?

It soon occurred to him that the blessings of his father's money were no substitute for his father, especially when that money ran out. Trouble and hardship forced the boy to realize just how foolish he had been. He was impoverished while his father's servants had plenty. He finally understood how blessed he had been as a son in his father's house; and only then was he willing to return.

Few people grasp the blessings in being a faithful child of God. The world tugs at us, tempting us with the deceitful pleasures of sin that are short lived. Those who choose the works of the flesh instead of the fruit of the Spirit soon discover that Satan makes big promises, but does not deliver. Having so chosen, they find themselves starving in the wilderness of sin.

Which raises the question: where am I and where are you? Have we walked away from God? If we have, do we now see the tragic nature of our mistake?

Your Father has called, and He wants you to come back home. And while it is not yet too late, it will be if we delay.

Fenwick, ON