

Go Eat Popcorn

A personal journey through Paul's letters

by

David Stiles

Draft - through Chapter 5

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Dedication

For Malcolm and Mary McLellan, our mentors.

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Week One – Getting Started

Getting Started

Day One - Saturday ***(February 10, 2007 - 9:38am)***

Today is Saturday, February 10th, 2007 and I am sitting alone at our kitchen table.

The house is unusually quiet. I hear only a faint whirr of the laptop computer that sits on the table in front of me and the occasional noises of the children playing the basement.

Looking out the kitchen window I can see that a thin layer of snow still blankets the yard, and I remember that even more snow and ice are predicted for the days ahead.

I face a blank white screen on my laptop computer...but before I continue, let me first introduce myself. My name is David Stiles, and at the age of thirty-eight, I think of myself as a fairly average guy. I live in the suburbs of Cincinnati with my wife and three boys. My life, I think, is unusually uneventful: I've been at the same job for ten years, had the same car for the last six years and lived in the same suburban community for the past twelve years.

But, today, Saturday, February 10th, 2007 I have the feeling that things are going to be different.

The reason?

I'm getting ready to start an adventure. Not just any adventure, I've actually been thinking of it as a "great adventure."

The adventure involves a writing project that I've decided to start called "*Go Eat Popcorn.*" It will have nothing to do with actual popcorn, nor will it be about Orville Redenbacher, the famous marketer of microwave popcorn, but rather, I hope it will be a helpful resource for Christians, maybe taking the form of a small book or a wire bound workbook.

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The idea came to me two nights ago as I was watching a men's college basketball game on ESPN (the cable television network devoted to sports programming). The game was between the University of Washington and the University of California. (Final Score: Washington 79, California 71).

The night had started no differently than many other winter evenings. After the kids had gone to bed, I sat down in an overstuffed chair in our living room, opened up a magazine and turned the TV to the late night basketball game.

I've always been one to stay up late, and watching a late night basketball game is something I've done since High School. I remember a number of evenings when I was in college, twenty years ago, watching games, long after my roommates had gone to bed, between the west coast teams of the University of Washington, Washington State, Oregon, Pepperdine, U.N.L.V., Santa Clara or Long Beach State.

Two nights ago, as my gaze shifted between my magazine and the basketball game on the television across the room, I started thinking about my next writing project. At the beginning of the week I had finished a booklet called, "*Seven Steps to Growth and Healing*" and for several days had been thinking about what I would do afterwards.

I am a person who can get restless and bored easily without a new project, or challenge. So, I had been praying, "Okay God, what's next?"

Then, just after midnight, it hit me, like Moses and the voice coming from the burning bush:

“GO EAT POPCORN.”

Okay, so it wasn't an audible voice, I have to admit, it was just a thought.

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“*GO EAT POPCORN*,” I thought again.

“That would be perfect for where I’m at right now.” I thought to myself, as I rose from my chair and walked quickly to a wooden bookshelf in the family room.

I walked quietly as well, as it was late and the rest of the family was sleeping warmly in their bedrooms overhead.

Soon I was looking over the titles of the various resources on the bookshelf and thinking about the books that could help.

“There are a few things here that could really be beneficial for the *Go Eat Popcorn* project.” I thought.

Go Eat Popcorn was a phrase that I had heard for the first time shortly after I turned eighteen. It was used by Jane Armstrong, a ministry leader on the campus of my school.

Tall and friendly, Jane was a veteran of campus ministry, and smiled widely when she spoke. On Thursday nights she regularly taught a “Teaching and Training” session to college students.

“Sometimes it’s hard to remember where the books of the Bible are located.” Jane told us with her southern accent.

“Just remember *Go Eat Popcorn* if you need to remember the order of four of the letters by the Apostle Paul in the New Testament.” she continued.

“G*o* E*at* P*opcorn*,” Jane told us, “is a great way to remember: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians.”

I realize now, twenty years later, that the *Go Eat Popcorn* phrase is not perfect. “Popcorn” technically is *one* word, but is used to identify *two* of Paul’s letters.

But regardless of the perfection or the imperfection of the words, I still find the phrase helpful in remembering the order of these four letters in the New Testament.

“Those letters by Paul,” I thought, while standing in front of the wooden bookshelf, “will be perfect for me to study.

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They should really speak to where I have found myself in life lately.”

Paul’s letters, I remembered, were about *discovering new life in Christ*.

As I mentioned earlier, I had recently finished a booklet called “*Seven Steps to Growth and Healing*” that listed seven steps for spiritual growth and seven corresponding “lies” that hinder our growth.

Step One in the booklet, was called, “*Look for God’s presence in your life*” which referred to seeing that God is working and involved in our lives. Step Two was called, “*Respond to God’s offer of salvation with faith,*” which described putting one’s faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

I found I was able to write those first two steps fairly quickly.

Step Three, however, took longer to write, and as I was writing about it I kept thinking, “Sometime, I would love to spend more time on this topic.”

Step Three in the booklet was called,

“Discover new life in Christ”

The step was based on the Bible’s description of Christians being changed by God.

In receiving “new life” from God, I explained that Christians can:

- know God as a friend
- have “the fruit” of being connected with God
- experience forgiveness from sin
- be incorporated into the Body of Christ
- be filled with the Holy Spirit who will give us insight and wisdom

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It was exciting to think and write about this “new life” in Christ. And as I wrote about the many blessings of receiving “new life” I had several thoughts.

On a positive note I thought, “I’ve experienced most of these things at some level, but I’d love to grow deeper in them.” On a more negative note, I thought, “I wish I had more of these attributes in my life. What the heck is wrong with me?”

And so, I had hoped to learn more about a *new life in Christ*.

Many of the references that I used in writing Step Three for the booklet were from the Apostle Paul’s letters to the Early Church. That’s why focusing in-depth on four of those letters now with the *Go Eat Popcorn* project made so much sense to me.

“I’d love to learn more about what Paul told the early Church about *discovering new life in Christ*.” I thought. “It could really help in discovering what God has for me.”

After looking over the titles on the bookshelf, I opened up a Bible to remind myself of the letters that Paul had written in the New Testament. In the Table of Contents I saw thirteen letters attributed to Paul:

- Romans
- First and Second Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- First and Second Thesalonians
- First and Second Timothy
- Titus
- Philemon

Week One

Several of Paul's letters in the New Testament were quite substantial in length. I noticed that *Romans* and *First and Second Corinthians* covered many pages in my Bible.

Focusing on only four of Paul's shorter letters (*Galatians*, *Ephesians*, *Philippians* and *Colossians*) and not his longer works seemed more manageable.

"I'll study those longer letters another time," I thought. "For this project, I'll just focus on the smaller, *Go Eat Popcorn* letters first."

Even though it was late at night, I felt invigorated thinking about the writing project and the many possibilities that lay in store for me.

"It's like an adventure," I thought. "I'm not sure what I'll learn from those four letters, but it should be a pretty fun journey."

My mind soon turned to other explorers that I had learned about in school or had seen on television. I thought of:

- Christopher Columbus and his quest to discover the "New World"
- Captain James Cook, who charted the Pacific Ocean
- Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, who discovered the American West for Thomas Jefferson
- Admiral Byrd, who explored Antarctica
- and Jacques Cousteau, who explored the undersea world of our oceans

I thought also of pioneers that I had heard about in my family too, like my great-grandfather W.H.H. Stiles who left

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northern Maine in the 1890s with his wife and two small children for promises of work in Wyoming and Montana.

And then my thoughts turned to fictional adventurers, like Indiana Jones, whose adventures took him into many unexpected places. I even thought about the television character named MacGyver, who could miraculously get out of any problem with duct tape, his Swiss army knife, and a toothpick.

“This will be an interesting journey.” I thought.

Now this morning, two days after deciding to start my journey, I sit in a wooden chair, hunched over the kitchen table. I am ready to start the adventure.

But just as I sit down to start the *Go Eat Popcorn* booklet I hear the loud and fast beeping of the timer on our microwave.

The weather for the past several days has been frightfully cold; recently the temperatures have been at twenty degrees Fahrenheit with the “wind chill” temperature well below zero. Because of the freezing temperatures, after I had taken our dog outside in our snow covered back yard, I had set the timer on our microwave to limit his exposure to the cold and to remind me not to forget that he was outside.

And so, I must stop writing now to bring our dog back inside.

Day One – Saturday
(February 10, 2007 - 10:42am)

Our dog is a short black terrier named Scruffy. After I had hurried to let him inside, I quickly discovered that he was covered in mud. Before I had noticed it, though, he had already sped through the kitchen and living room leaving a trail of muddy paw prints behind him.

After taking him to our back porch, I cleaned up the mud that he had tracked onto the floor and carpet. Eventually I returned to Scruffy on the back porch, covered him in a towel and brought him back inside and gave him a bath.

The time that I had wanted to spend this morning focused on writing about Paul's letters for the *Go Eat Popcorn* project was spent instead bathing the dog and cleaning up the mud on our living room floor.

“That’s how life is sometimes,” I thought to myself.

Day One – Saturday
(February 10, 2007 - 11:32pm)

The time is now approaching midnight, all of the children are in bed, my wife is reading, and I am ready to start on the *Go Eat Popcorn* project.

My day has been full.

At seven thirty this morning, I drove our youngest son to his basketball game. He is on a team with other seven year olds in a church sponsored league called "*Upward Basketball*." He and his team, called "The Eagles", have done well this season, although to his frustration, the score is never kept for teams in his age division

"Did we win?" he always asks at the end of each game.

"I think so," I usually reply. "But right now the important thing is to learn how to play the game."

"I know how to play basketball, Dad." He usually replies in an exasperated tone. "I just want to know if we won."

Our middle son, an eight year old, came with me and shot baskets before the game started and between the game's six periods. To his frustration, his basketball team (which consists of other eight year olds from our school district) did not have a game scheduled today.

After our youngest son's game, we returned home and I attempted to start the "*Go Eat Popcorn*" project, but was thwarted by the muddy dog and the cleaning up that followed.

A few minutes before noon, I loaded the younger boys into our van and we drove to a nearby High School to pick up our oldest son, who is eleven. He was at a program called "*Merit Badge Challenge*" which was sponsored by the local Boy Scout council.

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As soon as I walked into the High School cafeteria, I was astonished by the scores of adult Boy Scout leaders who were reviewing books and paperwork at the cafeteria tables. I soon found a leader to help me, and he gave me directions to my son's classroom.

I was amazed at the many classrooms that were filled with Boy Scouts taking classes to earn merit badges for: government, reading, writing, science, and many other subjects.

I soon found my son and we hurried back to the school cafeteria to get his backpack and papers. We walked quickly because he was double-booked for the afternoon. (It's amazing what the schedule of an eleven year old can be sometimes). In addition to the Boy Scout class that had started at eight-thirty this morning and was scheduled to end at one o'clock, our oldest son also had a basketball game scheduled for noon. Realizing the scheduling conflict earlier in the week, our son had regretfully told his basketball coach that he would only be available for the second half of his basketball game, and told his Boy Scout leader that he would have to leave early from his class.

As we were leaving the High School, we stopped in the cafeteria as my son grabbed his backpack and began walking to the door.

"Where's your coat?" I asked him.

"What?" he asked.

"Your coat? Where'd you leave it?"

"Um, I didn't bring it." He replied.

"What!" I said, as anger rose from within me. I felt like cursing at the top of my lungs in front of the Boy Scout leaders and the kids in the cafeteria as my mind filled with the reality of the cold temperatures outside.

"I forgot it, Dad," he said quickly. "I was in a hurry this morning when A.J.'s mom came to pick me up for Scouts."

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“Did you do this on purpose?” I asked heatedly as I quickly spat the words at him. “Are you willfully trying to be disobedient to your Mom and I? This is like the tenth time you’ve gone outside without a coat in this freezing weather in the past few weeks.”

“I was in a hurry Dad.” he said looking into my eyes. “I didn’t do it on purpose.”

“Man, I am so angry right now. Part of me doesn’t even want to take you to your basketball game.” I said testily. “This really ticks me off.”

“I’m sorry Dad,” he replied.

“There’s the van.” I said pointing to the vehicle with his brothers waiting inside. “Let’s go.”

I paused.

“We’ll talk about this later.” I said as we walked out of the school.

My son changed clothes quickly in the back of the van as we sped to a nearby Junior High School gym. Soon, he was wearing his black and white basketball uniform.

When we arrived at the school he ran to the gym and was relieved to see that he had only missed the first quarter of the game. A few minutes after we arrived, the coach put him in.

He played for much of the game and did well (“six points, ten rebounds, three assists and a few steals” he told me afterwards) and his team played well too. (Final Score: His team 41, Visitors 24).

Afterwards, I took the three boys to lunch with my mother-in-law, who had driven forty minutes to watch the basketball game.

At lunch the boys spent most of the time explaining to their Grandma (who they call “Mimi D.”) how wonderful it would be if she would take them to an indoor water park that had recently opened near our house. When one of them asked

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where their grandfather (“Papa Phil”) was, she told them that he was at his college alma mater watching a men’s basketball game with some old friends from school. (Final Score: Papa Phil’s alma mater: 82, Visitors: 70).

While we were at lunch I talked to my oldest son.

“I’ve had a chance to do some thinking.” I told him. “When we get home I need you to write a one page paper about the benefits of wearing a coat in the winter.”

“Okay,” he said.

“The next time you go out without a coat, it will be two pages, and after that three pages. You got it?” I added sternly.

“Yeah, I got it,” he said.

When we arrived home, the two younger boys helped me prepare some leadership training materials for a church while our older son worked on his one page essay.

The work we did with the training materials were things that always seem to drain me: punching holes in papers, making copies of the training manuals, making copies of audio CDs, and making labels for the audio CDs. In addition, my computer was not working properly, so it took longer than usual to make the copies of the manuals and the CDs.

After some time, my oldest son showed me his paper entitled, *The Benefits of Wearing a Coat*.

A reviewer might say that it was a “cautionary tale”, as he noted the many perils of not wearing a winter coat, including hypothermia, frostbite and “being made fun of.”

Later in the afternoon, we did some house cleaning and when my wife, Sue, arrived home she told us about a seminar on stewardship that she helped lead at our church.

Sue is a terrific person. She is a tall woman with blonde hair, wide brown eyes and incredible inner strength. We’ve been married for fifteen and a half years, and she’s been a great

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wife to me and a great mother to our boys. I've teased her over the years with her creative use of the English language, and even made a "Sue-ictionary", with a few pages of her nicknames for the kids and funny expressions in a Dictionary format.

In the evening, Sue and I attended the 50th wedding anniversary for some friends from church named Marilyn and Duane.

"Fifty years is a long time." I said to Sue as we drove to the party.

The party, held at a nearby community center, was filled with Duane and Marilyn's friends and their children and grandchildren.

We sat with some old acquaintances who, like us, were named Dave and Susan.

At the end of the evening Duane and Marilyn's children gave a toast to their parents. Their oldest child began his toast by saying, "One of the Ten Commandments says to 'Honor your Father and Mother' and this is what we're trying to do tonight."

As the toasts continued, there was hardly a dry eye in the room.

"Your life together has been an inspiration to me," one of their children said.

"Seeing how you have leaned on each other and on God during times of difficulty gives me hope," said another.

After all of the toasts were made, Duane spoke. "As I've been listening to all of you tonight, I had the most incredible thought."

He paused.

"It's that everyone here loves us."

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He paused again. “And crying seems to be my only response. Thank you. Thank you everyone.”

We all clapped as Marilyn and Duane gave each other a kiss and then hugged each of their children.

It was very touching.

As I listened to the toasts, I thought about my marriage to Sue.

“We know so many people who are divorced.” I thought. “I hope we can last another fifteen years and even fifty years like Duane and Marilyn.”

“God help us.” I prayed silently. “Marriage seems so difficult sometimes.”

When we arrived home, the boys were switching between the NFL Pro-Bowl Game on television (Final Score: AFC 31, NFC 28) and a game between the University of Kentucky men’s basketball team and the University of Florida, the returning champions of Division One men’s basketball. (Final Score: Florida 64, Kentucky 61).

After the games were over, we sent the kids to bed and once the kids were asleep, I had my chance to focus on the *Go Eat Popcorn* project.

First, I opened up my Bible (an old, worn, brown leather covered *New International Version*) and turned to Philippians.

In Paul’s letter to the Philippians I read,

“Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

After reading only one verse, I suddenly stopped.

“This isn’t right.” I thought. “I can’t start in Philippians. Clearly, I need to start in Galatians. After all, the resource I’m

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going to write is going to be called *Go Eat Popcorn* and Galatians the first of Paul's four letters."

So, I turned to Paul's letter to the Galatians and read,

"Paul an apostle – sent not from men not by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead – and all the brothers with me, Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

I stopped again.

"This isn't right either." I thought. "I'm starting a great adventure. I just can't jump right in. I need to start this adventure like the *great adventurers* would. Christopher Columbus didn't just show up one evening in the New World, he spent months in preparation for his adventure. I need to think about the resources that I have on hand to help me. Every journey starts with packing up the necessary supplies, right?"

"Right." I said to myself in response while suppressing a yawn.

"Even *Survivor Man* (a television show that films a man being left alone in desolate places) starts with him packing up some provisions. That way, when he's stuck on a deserted island, or on the frozen tundra, or in the middle of the ocean, he can pull out the duct tape and return home safely."

I paused for a few moments to think about it more.

"That's exactly what I need to do." I finally concluded. "I need to look at the available resources."

And then, as it was getting late, I felt my eyes slowly closing. I decided to get some rest tonight and "gather up my supplies" tomorrow.

Day Two - Sunday
(February 11, 2007 - 11:45pm)

This morning my wife and I drove separately to church. I left the house first, in order to play my guitar and lead worship for a small prayer group at ten o'clock. Later, Sue joined me for the church service at eleven-thirty.

Our pastor taught this morning on Luke 4, referring frequently to the passage where Jesus declared that,

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18-19)

He also shared about a new capital campaign that the church was launching to help the poor in our community with a new building called "*The Healing Center*". In addition to housing an area for the church's youth ministry, "*The Healing Center*" would offer food and clothing, prayer and counseling to those in need.

After the service I picked up the younger boys from their classrooms and joined Sue and our oldest son in the Church's atrium.

We were hungry, so we decided to stay at the church for lunch (we attend a "mega-church" that has a restaurant on the campus).

Later, for a Valentine's Day present, we bought the kids audio CDs from the church's bookstore. Our oldest son chose a new release by a band called "*Switchfoot*." Our middle son

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selected a CD by “*Relient K*” and our youngest son ordered a CD series called, “*Adventures in Odyssey*.”

On our way out of church I offered to drive the boys home so they could listen to their CDs. As I drove them home, I let them control the volume on the car stereo. We all agreed that the song by *Relient K* called “*Come right out and say it*” was one of the best, so we played it several times loudly, hearing the words:

“I'd better rest my eyes because
I've grown weary
of this point we've been trying to make.
So rather than imply,
why don't you just verbalize
all the things that you're trying to say.
Why don't you just come right out and say it.”¹

Instead of going straight home (like the boys and I did), Sue, instead, went to the grocery store to buy enough food to last for the next few days, just in case we are snowbound – as the television weathermen have been forecasting a foot of snow starting tomorrow evening.

After the boys and I arrived home, they soon asked to have some friends over. I agreed, and they made a few phone calls. Unfortunately, their friends were not available until later, so instead of playing, to their chagrin, I had them do some cleaning. It wasn't as much fun as having their friends over, but we cleaned the downstairs of the house and then helped put the food away once Sue arrived home.

Afterwards, the boys played basketball on a small plastic hoop in the basement. While they were playing, two of their friends, who they had called earlier, arrived at the door. But

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before I sent the neighborhood kids downstairs, I asked them to be quiet for a moment.

“Hey boys!” I yelled downstairs to our boys. “I need you to stop playing basketball and do another two hours of cleaning.”

“What? We just did a bunch of work.” I heard one of them say.

Then I sent the kids from the neighborhood downstairs.

“Awe Dad.” one of my sons said when he saw his friends running down the stairs. “You tricked us!”

While the boys played basketball in the basement I looked through my bookshelves and boxes in our storage room for resources that I thought could help in writing the *Go Eat Popcorn* booklet.

I thought again of the famous adventurers, who would “take stock” of their provisions, listing out how much fresh water, meat, fruit or vegetables they had before starting their journey.

As I looked at my bookshelves, I found that I had a lot of good resources for the writing project.

I found several commentaries, including:

- *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, with commentaries on each of Paul’s letters that I’d be studying for the *Go Eat Popcorn* project:
 - o *Galatians* – by R. Alan Cole
 - o *Ephesians* – by Francis Foulkes
 - o *Philippians* – by Ralph Martin
 - o *Colossians* – by N.T. Wright
- *Commentary on Galatians* – by Sir William Ramsay

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I also found some good books about the Apostle Paul, the author of each of the letters:

- *The Writings of St. Paul* – edited by Wayne Meeks
- *Hard Saying of Paul* – by Manfred T. Brauch
- *Paul Among the Jews and Gentiles* – by Krister Stendahl
- *Paul Apostle of the Heart Set Free* – by F.F. Bruce
- *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* – edited by Gerald Hawthorne and Ralph Martin

In addition to the books about Paul, I found that I had some theology books about the New Testament (where Paul's four letters can be found):

- *A Theology of the New Testament* – by George Eldon Ladd
- *New Testament Foundations (Vol. 1 and 2)* – by Ralph Martin
- *Theology of the New Testament* – by Rudolph Bultmann
- *New Testament Criticism and Interpretation* – edited by David Alan Black and David S. Dockery
- *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* – edited by Walter Elwell

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I found some technical books on Greek (the language that Paul's letters were written in):

- *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek*
– by B.F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort

- *Word Studies in New Testament Greek* – by Kenneth Wuest

I also discovered some books on the Early Church:

- *The Library of Early Christianity* (an eight volume set of books) edited by Wayne Meeks
 - o One volume that I saw was called “*Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*” by Stanley Stowers that I thought would be very helpful in understanding Paul's letters.

- *The Early Church* – by W.H.C. Frend

- *The Story of Christianity* – by Justo Gonzalez

My bookshelves also had several books that quoted a number of verses from Paul's letters including:

- *Freedom of Simplicity* – by Richard Foster

- *Knowing God* – by J.I. Packer

I quickly jotted down the names of the resources on a yellow legal pad and made a mental note that I'd have to do a lot of reading in order to start writing the *Go Eat Popcorn* booklet.

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As I was writing down the names of the theology books, and flipping through the book's pages, Sue made a dinner of hot dogs along with macaroni and cheese for the boys.

"This is my favorite dinner," one of the boys said as he gulped down his food with a glass of milk.

After they finished their dinner, Sue and I left to have dinner at the house of some old neighbors who had attended our church.

Our friends had invited several couples, who were all asked to bring some Italian food. Sue brought a pan of lasagna, which I ate a lot of. It tasted great.

Our friends have been hosting a dinner once a month at their house and invited a few couples who had helped them lead the pre-marital counseling ministry at our church.

After dinner they led a brief discussion about some Christian books that they had been reading about how to be "loving but not judging."

It made my head spin trying to figure out what everybody was saying. There were some good points made about unconditionally loving others while also being willing to speak the truth in a loving manner. It was an interesting discussion.

After dinner we came home to find the boys watching basketball; between the Duke University men's basketball team and the team from the University of Maryland. The game was being played at Maryland's campus in College Park.

The game was close, but in the end Maryland won. This turned out to be Duke's fourth straight loss, which took them out of the rankings of the Top 25 teams for the first time in eleven years. (Final Score: Maryland Terrapins 70, Duke Blue Devils 62).

After we tucked the boys into bed and I talked to Sue about the discussion at our friend's house, I picked up the first

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book on my list of resources from my bookshelf: a commentary called *Galatians*, by R. Alan Cole.

I skimmed through the pages and saw that he referred to the letter to the Galatians as the “Epistle to the Galatians” (the word *epistle*, I remembered means the same thing as “letter”). Next, I read the *Author’s Preface* to the commentary:

“The Epistle to the Galatians is *spiritual dynamite*, and it is therefore almost impossible to handle it without explosions. It has often been so in the history of the Church. The great spiritual awakening of Martin Luther came as he expounded and studied this Epistle, while it was a sermon on Galatians that brought peace of heart to John Wesley. Small wonder that both of these men dearly loved the book; it spoke directly from Paul’s experience to their own. But this letter is not one with a message simply for those of centuries earlier than ours, nor is it an Epistle that can be read in comfortable detachment without personal involvement. At every point it challenges our present-day shallow, easy acceptances and provokes our opposition. It was a controversial letter.”²

“Oh, yeah.” I said to myself with a smile, “studying Galatians should be great. Professor Cole said that Galatians is *spiritual dynamite* and it’s *controversial*. That will keep people interested.”

I sat the book down and went to the refrigerator, pulled out a bagel, toasted it and soon covered it with humus.

“With a good start in Galatians,” I thought, “the *Go Eat Popcorn* booklet should practically write itself. This is going to be so great. It’s interesting, it’s controversial. People like controversy.”

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As I was eating my bagel, though, I soon had another thought.

Looking at the bagel, I thought, “If Galatians were like this bagel, reading all of the commentaries first would be just like learning *about* the bagel, not really tasting it for myself.”

I paused.

“Argh.” I said, mindful of the sleeping children. “I can’t start with all of these theological resources, I need to start by reading Paul’s letters – the letters that I’m going to be writing about in the *Go Eat Popcorn* booklet.”

I took another bite.

“I need to read Paul’s actual letters for the *Go Eat Popcorn* project first. Then, if I still have questions, I can look to other places in Scripture for help, then use the resources in my bookshelf for additional assistance.”

I paused again, feeling a bit uneasy.

“I need some sort of plan, though. Every journey starts with some sort of map, right?”

I paused to think about a plan.

“A plan should help me figure out what I’m going to do; what should come first, what should come second and then third.”

Unsure of what that would look like, I paused again.

Just as I was going to write down some initial thoughts about the plan, I heard a tapping noise which seemed to be coming from the ceiling above me.

I went upstairs to see if it was Scruffy, our dog, but he was fast asleep on the floor of our oldest son’s room.

Hearing nothing upstairs I went back downstairs and heard the tapping continue.

I moved closer to the wall from where the sound was coming from. It seemed to be from a small, clawing, animal.

“It’s another squirrel.” I thought to myself.

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Over the years, we have had several encounters with animals trying to get into our house. The squirrels jump from tree to tree in our back yard, then onto our roof, and then try to get into our attic, usually from behind our gutters.

I can't stand squirrels.

This one seemed to be trying to dig his way into our roof through the metal rain gutter on the back porch.

Sockless, I quickly slipped on my shoes and went to our garage for a broom. Then, after acquiring the broom, I pulled on my heavy winter coat and went to our back porch.

Walking outside, I quickly and quite accidentally, put my foot into a snow drift as I lifted the broom up to the gutter.

The snow quickly surrounded my ankle and filled the inside of my shoe as I hit the gutter several times with the broom.

"Swine squirrel!" I said quietly with my best Pink Panther/Inspector Clouseau -like French accent.

After hitting the gutter several times, the noise stopped and I made my way back inside, having scared the squirrel and gotten my feet quite wet and cold. (Final Score: Me 1, Squirrel 1...I figured the squirrel should get a point because of my wet snow covered feet.)

"I need to make a plan," I thought.

But, it was late, and as I felt tired, I decided that it was best to get some rest and do my planning for the *Go Eat Popcorn* book tomorrow.

Day Three - Monday
(February 12, 2007 - 11:45am)

I work as a project manager for a small software consulting firm. Sometimes I am at client sites that are located many hours from my home. This winter and for most of the previous year, however, I've been able to split my time between three places: my small home office, my company's offices in a nearby suburb and my client's tall office tower in downtown Cincinnati (which is about twenty miles away from our house).

After working for a few hours at my home office this morning, I drove to a local deli and ordered a potato pancake (called a latke) and a Rubeen salad (which is like a Ruben sandwich only without the bread and served on a bed of lettuce).

As I waited for my food my thoughts turned to the *Go Eat Popcorn* project.

I needed a plan to help me on this journey, so I pulled out a yellow legal pad from my computer bag.

At the top of the first page I wrote:

Go Eat Popcorn Project - Plan

A few lines below my title I wrote, "**APPROACH**" in large capital letters.

"Okay," I thought, "How should I approach this?"

I paused for a moment.

"I could tackle this from so many angles." I thought.

As I pondered this question, I tried to imagine what the research and writing might look like. Soon I had a mental

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picture: I would try to observe “the big picture” of Paul’s letters first, and then delve into more of the granular details. I wrote on my yellow legal pad:

Start with the big picture and then look at more specific details.

I quickly thought of Dr. Thompson, a seminary professor that I had taken a class from many years before.

“He would probably approve of this approach.” I thought.

Dr. Thompson, I remembered, compared reading scripture to using multiple lenses (like those used in a microscope or a telescope). “Use the *wide-angle* lens to get the big picture” he would say, “then use the close-up lens to look carefully” at the details.³

As I was waiting for my food at the deli, my thoughts turned to my two years of part-time seminary training many years before (which was the reason for my having so many books on theology and ancient Greek on my bookshelves).

I had attended a seminary in central Kentucky two years after graduating from college. Over the years, I’ve regretted not completing my Master’s degree in Biblical Studies at the seminary. I had finished all of my classroom work in order to obtain a master’s degree, but I needed to complete a lengthy thesis. Right after finishing my coursework, however, I moved away, and found it difficult to focus on writing the thesis, and never completed it.

A few months ago, I looked at the seminary’s curriculum online, and saw that their Master’s degree program does not even require a written thesis anymore.

“Perhaps they’ll give me my degree?” I thought. “Or maybe they’ll have me take a few more classes to finally get my degree.”

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After a few emails with the Seminary's Registrar, I was told that I would need to re-take *all* of the courses again because the classes were taken over ten years ago.

"I wonder what has changed about the Bible in ten years?" I thought dejectedly.

As I continued waiting for my food at the deli, my thoughts turned again to the *Go Eat Popcorn* project.

"As I try to see the big picture," I decided, "it would be best to read each of the four letters quickly, just to get a sense of what's there, and then ask some of those general questions that reporters usually ask, like:

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?

I paused to write down the five "reporter's questions" on my yellow legal pad.

"After I answer those questions," I thought, "then I can go through the letters chapter by chapter, then verse by verse, to get to the heart of Paul's ideas and hopefully discover some great insights about living a new life in Christ."

Next, my thoughts turned to even more questions to ask myself for my "big picture" reading of the four letters.

On my yellow legal pad I wrote the words:

BIG PICTURE QUESTIONS

Then under those words I wrote the following questions:

- Who wrote the letters?
- What can I learn about the author?
- What is the overall content of each letter?

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- Where are the places that are described in the letters?
- Why were the letters written?
- What did the author want the first readers to know or do?

I thought next about planning my writing schedule, and I turned to the next page in my yellow legal pad and wrote even more questions:

- How many words are there in Paul's letters?
- How many pages?
- How many chapters?
- How long do I think will it take me to read all four letters?
- How long will it take me to write the *Go Eat Popcorn* booklet?

These questions, I hoped, would spark a good initial understanding of Paul's four letters. Some of these questions, I knew would be easy to find answers for. Others though, would be more difficult.

Just before my food arrived I opened my brown leather *New International Version* Bible.

I decided first to look for an answer to the question about the total number of pages. I knew that Paul's letters were originally written in Greek, and probably on papyrus, so the length of my English translation would be different than the original, but I felt that it would be helpful to know how many pages that I would need to read.

I turned first to the Bible's Table of Contents. I found that the *Letter to the Galatians* started on page 1190, while the *Letter to the Colossians* ended on page 1207.

"That's seventeen pages." I said to myself. "That doesn't seem like a lot of reading."

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Next, I counted up the number of chapters in the letters:

Galatians had six chapters.

Ephesians also had six chapters.

Philippians had four.

Colossians had four chapters.

“That’s only a total of twenty chapters,” I thought. “The Book of Psalms has over one hundred chapters, so this should go pretty quickly.”

Soon my food arrived and while I was eating my salad I spent some time calculating the total number of verses in each of Paul’s letters.

On my legal pad I made the following chart:

Number of Verses				
Ch.	Galatians	Ephesians	Philippians	Colossians
1	24	23	30	29
2	21	22	30	23
3	29	21	21	25
4	31	32	23	18
5	26	33		
6	18	24		
Total:	149	155	104	95

The total number of verses in Galatians, I calculated as 149. The total for Ephesians came to 155. The total for Philippians, I added up as 104. And the total number of verses for Colossians was 95.

In looking over my chart, I was able to see that Ephesians had the most verses with 155, followed closely by Galatians. Philippians and Colossians seemed to be about the same length with four chapters and about one hundred verses each.

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Then I added the total number of verses for all four of the letters together. The number astonished me: *503 verses*.

“Wow.” I thought, as I was finishing up my lunch. “That really seems like a lot to read.”

Eventually, I finished my salad and potato pancake and drove to my office in a nearby suburb, wondering what other surprising things I’d see in Paul’s letters.

Day Three - Monday
(February 12, 2007 - 11:58pm)

I arrived home from work a little after six o'clock this evening, after first stopping to get a haircut and buy some Valentine's Day cards for my extended family at the local grocery store.

I had the boys sign the cards and then went back outside, driving to the local Post Office to get the cards in the mail in time to arrive by Valentine's Day, which is two days from now, on Wednesday.

Shortly after I arrived home, Sue left for church. She is a social worker by training, and for several years has worked as an assistant pastor in our church's "*Growth and Healing*" ministry focusing on the areas of recovery and discipleship. Every Monday night she helps lead a large group gathering which is then followed by a number of small group meetings. It is an amazing ministry, with dozens of volunteers encouraging others to grow spiritually and find healing for past hurts.

When I arrived home from the Post Office, I started dinner for the boys.

On the few occasions I cook, I usually make one meal for everyone. But tonight, even though I was running late, I took requests. Our youngest son asked for a bologna sandwich while our middle son asked for a peanut butter sandwich.

While helping them, I cooked two cheeseburgers; one for my oldest son and one for myself. As a side item, I sautéed some mushrooms for myself while the boys found chips from the pantry.

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After dinner, the boys helped clean up the kitchen table and then asked to go to the basement to play basketball on our four-foot tall plastic basketball hoop.

“Sure.” I said.

“Let’s play ACC,” our youngest son said to his brothers as he ran downstairs. He was referring to the Atlantic Coast Conference, a college athletic league, which has a number of teams that the boys admire.

When the boys play basketball in our basement they’ll sometimes pretend to be players on these different college teams and even have several notebooks in our basement with the names of colleges and the names of their basketball teams: The University of Connecticut (or U Conn) Huskies, the Florida Gators, the Stetson Hatters, and the Vermont Catamounts.

As I was cleaning up the dirty pans in our kitchen, our oldest son ran upstairs to tell me that our middle son had gotten injured while they were playing basketball.

(Final Score when play was halted: 23-22)

He was still crying when I got to him.

I was eventually able to learn that he had collided with his older brother and had fallen face first on the floor. His lip was bleeding and he had a scratch under his nose.

“Sorry,” our oldest son said, “I didn’t want you to get hurt.”

“Let’s go upstairs and take a break.” I said.

The boys and I went upstairs and turned the television to ESPN. We watched a game between the men’s basketball teams from the University of Louisville and the University of Pittsburgh. Surprisingly the unranked Louisville Cardinals, coached by Rick Pitino, were leading in their game against the Pittsburgh Panthers, a team ranked fifth in the nation. Coach Pitino’s use of the full court press had created a number of

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turnovers and the Cardinals led thirty-six to nineteen at the end of the first half.

As I watched the game with the boys, I thought about the work that I had done over the years in Louisville and laughed, thinking about the many ways that I'd heard people say the name of the city:

- Loueeville
- Louey-ville
- Loo-ville
- Loohvull
- Lou-uh-ville

Several years ago when I was on an assignment there, I had told my wife that it sounded like people had rocks in their mouths when they said the name of their city.

Our youngest son had overheard our conversation, and when Sue brought the boys to visit me, he asked, "Where are all those people with the rocks in their mouths?"

Tonight, while watching the Louisville basketball game on television, the boys and I took some time during the commercial breaks to play "sock ball", a game we sometimes play in the family room with a rolled up sock that serves as a "basketball" and an area on the wall that serves as a "basket".

I lost each "sock ball" game that I played. (Final Score against youngest son: 20-19, Final Score against middle son: 21-14).

After Louisville beat Pittsburgh (Final Score: 66-53), the boys worked on their homework and then went to bed.

That's when my thoughts turned to Paul's letters and the *Go Eat Popcorn* project.

Throughout the evening I had been thinking about the initial information that I had gathered for the *Go Eat Popcorn* project at lunchtime, and remembered that the first thing that I

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had calculated was the total number of chapters. I had counted twenty total chapters for the four letters.

This evening, however, I remembered that the chapter numbers in the Bible were not added until much later, long after the Bible had been written, so the number of chapters could not really give me much helpful information to work with.

The same was true with the number of verses. I had counted 503 verses, but like the chapters, the verse numbers were not added until many years after the Bible had been written. So knowing that information really didn't seem to help much either.

But after some thought, I did think of a way that the numbers could be helpful.

"Knowing the total number of verses could help me in planning my writing schedule," I said to myself.

I divided the total number of verses, which were 503, by the number of chapters, which were 20, and came up with 25.15.

"So, that means that the average number of verses per chapter is around 25." I thought.

That gave me an idea.

"If I spend one day on each of the twenty chapters, it would take twenty days to stay on track," I said to myself. "I will need to remember that I have allocated one chapter per day, or at least 25 verses per day."

"On any journey," I thought, "it's good to know how much ground you need to cover."

I thought next about the entire project.

"If I spend fifteen days working on the overview – trying to see the big picture – and then one day on each chapter – to get into the granular details, I should be done in thirty-five days." I said to myself.

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“That could work,” I concluded, thinking of how the writing project could conclude in a little more than a month.

During my evening of watching basketball I had also thought about the fact that there are many different types of Bibles. My bookshelf, I noticed, contained the following Bible translations:

- The New International Version
- King James Version
- New Revised Standard Version
- Good News for Modern Man
- New Century Bible
- Amplified Bible

Earlier, I had found that Paul’s letters covered only seventeen pages in my *New International Version* Bible, but I thought, “What if people have other translations, or a ‘pocket-sized’ version of the Bible or a large-print edition? Knowing the number of pages in my Bible won’t really help them.”

I was stumped for a minute.

“With hundreds of different translations and formats, how can I help people understand the length of these letters in terms that they could relate to?”

It was then that I had the idea of plugging the text into a word processor – to see how the length of Paul’s letters compared to other documents.

Next, I logged into my computer and went to a website called *biblegateway.com*.

Setting the version to the *New International Version*, I proceeded to view all twenty of the chapters and then copy the text into a document on my computer.

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“This should be able to help readers make some comparisons between Paul’s letters and other documents.” I thought as I copied the text.

In my modern word processor, with single-spaced text (set at a twelve point font) and an extra line for chapter headings, I found that Paul’s letters took twenty seven pages.

I was surprised.

“That’s a lot to read.” I thought. “A lot more than I expected.”

Then I looked at the word count. Using my word processor, which counted the text in each verse along with chapter titles and a few brief footnotes, I saw that the four letters of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians consisted of 11,201 words.

“Wow.” I thought. “There really is a lot here.”

I paused next to think of the next step.

“I wonder how long it would take me to read the letters straight through without stopping?”

So, I picked up my Bible (a *New International Version* translation), and went to my bedroom, where it was quiet, and turned to Galatians.

Just before I started reading, I checked the time. My small black digital clock indicated that it was 11:04pm.

“On your mark, get set, go.” I said to myself.

I read the first verse of the Letter to the Galatians:

“Paul an apostle – sent not from men not by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead – and all the brothers with me, Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

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Then, I read the remaining six chapters of Galatians, then the six chapters in Ephesians, then the four chapters of Philippians and Colossians.

I didn't "speed read" but I didn't ponder each word either. I went at a pace that I would read a novel, a newspaper or a magazine.

I checked the time when I was done – it was 11:54pm.

I felt exhilarated once I was finished reading the four letters, but I also felt tired.

"I read through it all." I thought to myself. "That was cool. Everybody ought to try that sometime."

The total time for me to read through all four letters was fifty minutes.

I had wanted to take notes along the way, but knew that in this initial reading taking notes would slow me down.

"I'll have time to take notes when I go through this again." I said to myself.

Soon I lay down to sleep, pleased with my first foray into an uncharted area. "It was almost like a reconnaissance mission," I thought, imagining myself as an explorer. "I was checking out the terrain, seeking to get a 'lay of the land'."

As I was falling asleep, I thought about what I had read, and also the weather. A large amount of snow was scheduled to fall in the middle of the night. Sue had been listening to the weather forecast on our television downstairs while I was reading, and when I had finished reading she told me that our county was already under a winter weather alert.

As I was drifting off to sleep I realized that on this day sixteen years ago I had called Sue's father.

The night I called, he was working as a timekeeper at a High School girl's basketball tournament and so I had called his house several times before he arrived home.

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“Um...” I said when I finally reached him on the telephone. “Ah...well.”

“Yes?” he asked politely.

“Well, you know that I like your daughter a lot...I mean I love your daughter.” I stammered.

He was silent as I continued.

“Well, I just wanted to call you, and...well, and to ask you for Sue’s hand in marriage.”

The pause seemed to last an eternity.

“Well sure,” he finally replied.

(Final Score: Me 10,000,000).

Day Four - Tuesday
(February 13, 2007 - 10:53pm)

I woke up this morning to the news that the boys' school was cancelled due to the bad weather.

An area north of our house, I learned, received fifteen inches of snow. In our community, however, we received about two inches of snow, followed by sleet and freezing rain. The roads, the television news reports told us, were very bad.

As Sue had taken off work the week before to be with the boys when school was cancelled then, I volunteered to take today off of work.

In the morning, while the kids played basketball in the basement, I napped on the living room couch. Then, at noon I made the boys lunch. Afterwards, we worked around the house and shoveled the icy driveway.

For dinner I cooked chicken, green beans, and sautéed more mushrooms. I could not believe that I had actually cooked two nights in a row. It was an uncommon occurrence.

Later in the evening we watched the University of Kentucky men's basketball team (who were ranked eighteenth in the nation) play the unranked University of Tennessee team. The first half ended with Kentucky down by ten points: 20 to 30. In the second half, the Kentucky Wildcats were able to tie the game, but in the end, the Tennessee Volunteers were able to get the win. (Final Score: Tennessee 89, Kentucky 85).

Throughout the day, my thoughts turned to sixteen years ago, when on Wednesday February 13th, 1991, I had asked Sue to marry me.

I laughed when I remembered that I had planned out the proposal several weeks in advance.

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To keep the proposal a secret from Sue, I had gotten an extra key from Karen, her roommate, and let myself into their empty apartment during the afternoon of the 13th while Sue and her roommate were at work. While I was there, I piled some of her old clothes (including a pair of green Army fatigue pants, an old sweatshirt and a pair of tennis shoes) into a duffel bag and called my Grandmother to tell her about my plans.

“It’s going to be a big surprise.” I told her.

“Oh, I’m sure she doesn’t know about it,” my Grandmother said doubtfully with a laugh. “I’ll bet she does.”

After packing up several more items, I drove to the nursing home in the small town where Sue worked.

She was expecting me, as I had told her I wanted to take her to dinner. However, when she got to the car I got out the duffel bag from the back seat.

“What’s this?” Sue asked.

“Just change into the clothes that are in the bag. You’ll see.” I told her.

So, Sue went back into the building where she worked and changed her clothes and eventually got back into my car.

Next, I drove us out of town.

“Where are we going?” she asked.

“You’ll see.” I said with a smile.

Envisioning a romantic hike through a scenic trail, I drove out of town to a nearby nature preserve that we had frequented in the summertime.

After I stopped at the parking lot of the nature preserve, I grabbed another bag from my car.

“What are we doing here?” Sue asked again.

“You’ll see.” I said again with a smile. “Let’s go down the trail.”

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My engagement scheme was starting out perfectly, however, I soon realized that there were a few things that I hadn't calculated into my plan.

The first was nightfall. Early in the evening, in mid-February in the American Midwest, the daylight quickly fades. So, by the time we arrived at the nature preserve outside of town, it was nearly pitch dark.

"This isn't wise." Sue said as I took the bag out of the car and we stumbled through the darkness over the barely-visible trail toward a nearby pond.

"This really doesn't seem wise." She reiterated.

The second thing that I hadn't calculated on was the mud.

It was mid-February, and it had been raining earlier in the day and the previous days before. Each step that we took on the trail brought more and more mud clinging tightly to our shoes and the legs of our pants. The brown muck made us walk slowly, prompting Sue to ask, "Tell me again what we are doing here?"

Slowly, we walked a few hundred yards to a small pond. When we stopped I pulled a small blanket out of the second duffel bag and placed it on the cold, muddy ground near the water.

Then I pulled out a red candy box from the bag.

"This is for you." I said.

Sue pulled open the box and quickly pulled the papers out.

"Wait." I cried as she tossed a pink paper ring that I had made onto the ground, thinking that it was part of the wrapping paper.

After a moment of searching, I found the pink paper ring. (The paper ring was a substitute for a real ring. I wanted her to pick something out to her liking.)

"Will you marry me?" I asked.

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She looked into my eyes.

“Yes,” she said softly as she let me put the paper ring on her finger.

We stayed for only a short time near the pond as the frigid winter air had made us both very cold.

Mud covered, we drove back to the small town where Sue worked. Soon we arrived at a small red house where Sue’s friend named Michelle lived.

Sue had gone to high school and college with Michelle and worked with her at the nursing home.

We were greeted at the door by Michelle and her boyfriend Mark. After letting us in, Mark gave me something warm to drink, while Sue changed back into her clothes from earlier in the day.

“Now what were you guys doing at the nature preserve?” Mark asked, as he looked at my mud covered blue jeans.

“We got engaged.” I said.

“Seriously?” he said amazed at my response. “I thought you two were joking with us earlier when you came to the door and told us that.”

“Hey Michelle,” he yelled to the other room. “Dave and Sue are really engaged!”

“Oh my gosh!” yelled Michelle. “I thought you were kidding!”

That night we drove to Sue’s parent’s house.

On the way to their house, we listened to the radio as the University of Kentucky men’s basketball team, led by their new coach named Rick Pitino, defeated the University of Tennessee Volunteers. (Final Score: Kentucky 85, Tennessee 74).

“It’s amazing all that has happened in the sixteen years since then.” I reflected today. “Sue and I have had our share of ‘ups and downs’ over the years, but I think we’ve grown closer to each other. We’ve been blessed with three great kids

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and good jobs. There's no way we could have predicted sixteen years ago what our life would be like today."

After I put the kids to bed tonight I was able to do more reflection, not on the past sixteen years, but rather on the previous sixteen hours, realizing that I had developed a pretty bad attitude about proceeding with the *Go Eat Popcorn* project.

"Maybe it's because you've been stuck inside all day." I said initially to myself, thinking of the snow and ice that had cancelled the kid's school and their evening activities.

"No, there is more." I concluded after considering it further.

Eventually I pulled out my yellow legal pad and wrote a list of reasons for my discouragement:

1. **Timing**
2. **Interest**
3. **Subject Matter**

I started with the first item on my list: **Timing**.

"I guess my discouragement started when I began thinking about last night's timing test." I thought. "Fifty minutes to read four of Paul's letters? That seems like a long time for someone to read."

I paused.

"Maybe I could rename the booklet, *Fifty Minutes with Paul* instead of *Go Eat Popcorn*."

I paused again, feeling even more discouraged.

"I just don't think people will want to spend fifty minutes reading the Bible," I said dejectedly to myself. "Maybe fifteen or thirty minutes. But not fifty, that's almost an hour. With today's 'MTV Generation', I just don't think they'll have the attention span to keep reading."

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“Maybe I could limit the focus of the *Go Eat Popcorn* booklet?” I wondered. “Maybe I could focus on Galatians *only*, or Ephesians *only*, instead of all four letters.”

“But then it wouldn’t be *Go Eat Popcorn*.” I said to myself. “If I just focused on Galatians and Ephesians, that would just be *Go Eat*.”

“I’ve got to keep going,” I eventually concluded. “I think it’s what God wants me to do. I just can’t have a book called ‘*Go*’ for Galatians, or ‘*Eat*’ for Ephesians, or ‘*Go Eat*’, or ‘*Eat Popcorn*’, or just ‘*Popcorn*’. I should try to cover all four of Paul’s *Go Eat Popcorn* letters.”

I thought next about the second item that I had listed in my feelings of discouragement about the project: “**Interest.**”

Throughout the day, I had become more and more discouraged as I thought about how I’ve been able to sell only a few Christian resources in the past few years.

So I wondered, “Will anybody even be interested in the *Go Eat Popcorn* booklet? They haven’t been interested in the other resources.”

I paused to think.

“There are already a lot of resources about the New Testament and a lot of commentaries on Paul’s letters. I don’t want to make something that looks like all of the other books out there.”

I paused again.

“But, maybe *Go Eat Popcorn* will be different. Maybe it will strike a chord with people who have had some difficulty with Scripture. Maybe it will be different enough for people to take an interest in it.”

I paused yet again.

“I need to think about who the audience will be for *Go Eat Popcorn*.” I concluded.

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After thinking for a moment, I wrote down my description of the ideal reader:

“Christians who want to learn more about new life in Christ”

“That’s pretty generic,” I thought.

“But that’s what Paul’s letters are about; they were written to Christians as an explanation of *their* new life in Christ.”

“Maybe *Go Eat Popcorn* will help people understand what Paul said to the Early Church,” I continued. “And maybe it will help modern readers of Paul discover more about *their* new life in Christ today too.”

“That would be so cool,” I thought. “Whether someone is a new Christian, or if they’ve been a Christian for a long time, *Go Eat Popcorn* could help.”

“Hopefully,” I added.

“But, I need to keep it basic,” I thought. “There are so many Christians who have not had much training on how to study the Bible or have learned much about Christian theology.”

I paused again to think.

“I can keep it simple.” I said to myself, feeling better now about the project. “If I do make it easy for readers to follow, it could really be a helpful resource for new Christians to learn the basics of Paul’s writing, as well as a resource to help encourage people who have been Christians for a long time, like me.”

Next, my thoughts turned to the final words on my list: **“Subject Matter”**.

As I was reading through the four New Testament letters the night before, I found myself feeling excited about the

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content. “This is all about new life in Christ,” I said to myself several times. “This is going to be so helpful,” I thought.

However, as I was reading, I found that the subject matter in some of the places was challenging and I started to become more and more concerned about how I would address it.

It started about halfway into reading Galatians last night, when I had the thought, “Wow, some of this is really confusing. It’s going to take a while for me to sort it out in the *Go Eat Popcorn* booklet. I hope that people don’t get too confused, or quit, as I try to explain this.”

“What should I do about these confusing passages?” I wondered.

I paused for a while to think about it.

“I’ve got to keep it simple, but clear.” I reminded myself.

In addition to the few confusing passages, I had also noticed that in all four of the letters Paul wrote about “circumcision” and “uncircumcision.”

Pondering the idea of circumcision, honestly, made me a little queasy.

“Is this even an issue any more?” I wondered. “I’ve *never* heard anyone argue that once a man becomes a Christian they should be circumcised like they did in Paul’s time. What should I do to address this?”

I paused again.

“I’ve got to address this issue.” I finally concluded. “It’s something that Paul wrote about, even if it might make me and the readers of *Go Eat Popcorn* a little queasy.”

After making that decision, I thought of one additional item that fell under the title of “**Subject Matter**” which was something that I had read in Philipians.

It was Paul’s description of *predestination*.

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I thought about how, for most of my twenty years as a Christian, I have learned much from Christians who are part of what is known as the Reformed Tradition. With these Christians the notion of predestination is regularly spoken about positively and seen as part of God's plan.

"But I have a lot of friends who will reject any mention of predestination." I thought. "They'll probably be ticked off if I address it."

"But it's a subject in Paul's letters." I argued with myself. "I just can't ignore it because people don't believe in it or feel that it's not relevant for their lives today."

Then I said a quick prayer, "Lord, help me with this."

I paused to think about my discouragement today and the many times in the afternoon when I thought that I wouldn't continue with the project.

"I can't stop now." I finally told myself. "I need to press on with the *Go Eat Popcorn* project. This will be good."

Day Five - Wednesday
(February 14, 2007 - 11:39pm)

Last night we received more snow, on top of the snow and ice from the previous day, and because of the treacherous roads, the kids were home again from school.

I didn't want to take another day off work so I worked from my home office. I felt bad, however, because I didn't have a chance to spend any time with the kids as my entire workday was spent on the phone in conference call meetings. After two initial calls in the morning, I was on a call that started at eleven o'clock and lasted for three hours. So the boys had a very late lunch at two o'clock when I was finally available to help them. Then, I was on another conference call that started at 2:30 and lasted until five o'clock.

I am fairly certain that our youngest son played a computer game called *Backyard Baseball* nearly the entire day, while the older boys read and played their Game Cube system.

Sue went into work in the morning and when she returned home she reported that the roads were generally clear.

As today is Valentine's Day, Sue and I decided to celebrate with a dinner at our neighborhood Chinese restaurant. As we lacked a sitter, we brought the boys with us. The restaurant is usually empty, but tonight it was completely full, taking over an hour for us to get our food. As we waited we talked about our day (which was pretty uneventful) and eventually the conversation turned to basketball, as it usually does in the winter and spring.

The boys gave us their initial picks for the "Final Four" (the name for the four teams that will be in final weekend of

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the men's NCAA college basketball tournament that is held in March). The consensus between the boys was that the Final Four teams would be: Ohio State, Wisconsin, Florida and UCLA. Among those making it to the "*Sweet Sixteen*" or the "*Elite Eight*", they thought, might be Air Force, Washington State, Georgetown and Kansas. With several weeks of the regular season remaining, they were all hopeful that their favorite teams would play well and be one of the sixty-five teams selected for the tournament.

As we waited for our food, I told the boys the story of sixteen years ago, on Valentine's Day, in 1991, when their Mom and I drove to a local jeweler and picked out her engagement and wedding rings.

I told them that Sue had looked at a number of rings at the jewelers, and had difficulty deciding on the precise ring to pick on the morning of the fourteenth.

"After spending most of the morning at the store, we went to lunch at a nearby deli, where your Mom said that she wasn't sure about which ring to pick." I told them.

"Maybe that other kind would be better." I recounted her saying.

"After lunch we went back to the store and looked at some more rings. It really took a long time." I told the boys.

"After a while your Mom finally said, 'I'm sure about it now' and decided on the very first ring that she saw at the store in the morning."

Sue has had the wedding ring ever since. For me, however, I've gone through two wedding bands. I lost my original one while swimming in a nearby lake a few years ago, but Sue was able to find another one that looked nearly identical to it.

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As we waited, I thought about another very memorable Valentine's Day, but I didn't tell the boys about it. It occurred seven years after we picked out Sue's wedding ring. Our oldest son was very little at the time and our younger boys were not yet born.

For Valentine's Day, 1998, I decided to plan a romantic evening with Sue, and bought tickets to a play at a new theater in the round, inside a larger, new contemporary theater in downtown Cincinnati.

"How incredibly romantic," I thought as we were seated that evening and I looked over at Sue in her black dress.

There were only a few rows of seats that surrounded the round stage, so we were very close to where the actors would be performing.

"This will be so great," I thought.

"Happy Valentine's Day, honey." I said as I turned and looked into Sue's brown eyes.

Soon I began flipping through the Playbill (the booklet that tells about the play) and I smiled as I read through the actor's biographies and the advertisements.

I read about the actor's schedule and thought about the other plays that would be interesting to take Sue to.

Things were going well until I came across a shocking announcement in uppercase bold print that read,

"NOTICE, A GUN SHOT SIMULATION WILL OCCUR WHEN THE THEATER IS DARK."

"That's strange." I thought.

And then I remembered more about the play that I had purchased tickets for.

"Oh no." I soon thought. "What have I done?"

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When I had purchased the tickets several weeks beforehand, I had given no thought to its content. I had simply been focused on how romantic of an idea seeing a play with Sue on Valentine's Day would be.

I hadn't thought that there would be deception, accusations of unfaithfulness and murder.

The play I took my wife to on Valentine's Day was "*Othello*" by William Shakespeare.

"What have I done?" I thought again to myself as two actors walked on to the stage.

"No!" I said to myself.

Soon the actor playing Roderigo addressed Iago with the opening lines of the play:

"Tush! never tell me; I take it much unkindly
That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse
As if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this"⁴

Let's just say that shortly after the play began, the romantic evening took a sudden turn for the worse.

The dramatic performance was easy to follow. It was about a wealthy man (named Othello) who is tricked by a "friend" (named Iago) into thinking that Desdemona (Othello's wife) is unfaithful.

As the play unfolded, I slunk deeper and deeper into my seat.

Following closely to the words that I had first read during my Senior Year of High School, Iago lied to Othello about how Desdemona had been unfaithful.

And just like I remembered it, Iago planted Desdemona's handkerchief on Cassio, one of Othello's lieutenants.

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Then, in a modern revision of the play, the actor playing Othello pulled out a large silver handgun and shot the actress portraying Desdemona. True to the warning in the Playbill booklet, the shot was very realistic and the noise echoed loudly throughout the small theater. The actress playing Desdemona clutched her chest and pretended to die just a few feet from us.

At the end of the play, Sue told me that she had a headache and we went home right after the play was over.

So much for a romantic Valentine's date.

It was more like the Valentine's Day massacre.

Tonight, after our dinner at the Chinese restaurant and after the kids were asleep, I thought about the *Go Eat Popcorn* project and those "reporter's questions" of:

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?

"I need to look at the **'WHO'** question first." I said to myself.

"Who was the author?" I asked, "And what can I learn about him? I better re-read the letters again."

Sitting at our kitchen table, I opened my Bible and re-read the four letters. As I made notes I decided that I should make use of the standard abbreviations for the letters:

- **Gal.** for Galatians
- **Eph.** for Ephesians
- **Phil.** for Philippians
- **Col.** for Colossians

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As I was re-reading the letters, I noticed that at the beginning of each of the letters, the author's identity is revealed:

- "*Paul*, an apostle—sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ..." (Gal. 1:1)
- "*Paul*, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God..." (Eph. 1:1)
- "*Paul* and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus..." (Phil. 1:1)
- "*Paul*, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God..." (Col. 1:1)

In all four of the letters Paul identified himself as the author.

I also noticed that at the beginning of three of the four letters, Paul also included the term *apostle* to describe himself (in one of those letters, Paul identified himself simply as an "apostle", but in two of the letters, Paul said that he was "an apostle of Christ Jesus").

The letter to the Philippians, I noticed was slightly different. In that letter, Paul did not use the term apostle, but instead described himself as "a *servant* of Christ Jesus."

"Maybe I can explore those words 'apostle' and 'servant' over the next few weeks." I said to myself. "But right now I need to focus on the big-picture."

As I re-read the letters, looking to learn more about Paul, I was impressed by how the letters seemed to be so very personal in nature, with Paul, the writer, referring frequently to himself.

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I noticed that the word “I” was used quite frequently, so I made note of some of the instances where the word was used. There were many:

- “*I* am astonished” (Gal. 1:6)
- “*I* want you to know” (Gal. 1:11)
- “the gospel *I* preached” (Gal. 1:11)
- “*I* persecuted the church” (Gal. 1:13)
- “*I* opposed him” (Gal. 2:11)
- “*I* have been crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20)
- “*I* plead with you” (Gal. 4:12)
- “*I* am confident” (Gal. 5:10)
- “*I* have not stopped giving thanks for you”
(Eph. 1:16)
- “*I* am less than the least of all God's people”
(Eph. 3:7)
- “*I* urge you” (Eph. 4:1)
- “*I* thank my God every time I remember you”
(Phil. 1:3)
- “*I* have you in my heart” (Phil. 1:7)

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- “*I* press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me” (Phil. 3:12)
- “*I* plead with...” (Phil. 4:2)
- “*I* labor...” (Col. 1:29)
- “*I* want you to know” (Col. 2:1)
- “*I* am struggling for you” (Col. 2:1)
- “*I* am present with you” (Col. 2:5)
- “*I* am in chains” (Col. 4:3)
- “*I* vouch for him” (Col. 4:13)
- “*I*, Paul, write this” (Col. 4:18)

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I soon realized that there were even more instances than these, so on my legal pad I made the following chart, to count the number of times that the word “I” appeared:

Paul’s References to Himself (Number of Times “I” appears)				
Ch.	Galatians	Ephesians	Philippians	Colossians
1	20	4	28	5
2	22	0	15	5
3	2	7	14	0
4	14	2	21	5
5	9	1		
6	14	7		
Total:	81	21	78	15

In looking at the chart I saw that I was only partially right in thinking that *all* of the letters made frequent use of the word “I”.

Paul used the pronoun with great frequency in Galatians and Philippians (with eighty-one instances in Galatians and seventy-eight instances in Philippians). But in the long letter to the Ephesians, “I” appeared only twenty-one times in its six chapters. And in Colossians, the word appeared only fifteen times in its four chapters.

“Perhaps Ephesians is less personal?” I wondered to myself.

“I really need to try to understand more about Paul, and what he was trying to say in those letters,” I thought.

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Day Six - Thursday
(February 15, 2007 - 10:57pm)

The kids had another “snow day” today; staying home again from school.

They watched the movie “*Napoleon Dynamite*” in the morning and afterwards spent the day playing in our basement while quoting lines from the movie. One of their favorite scenes, which they loved to recreate, happened at the beginning of the movie, between two characters named Don and Napoleon. In the scene, Napoleon (who is the main character of the movie), provides this improbable explanation of what “he did last summer”:

Don: Hey, Napoleon. What did you do last summer again?

Napoleon Dynamite: I told you! I spent it with my uncle in Alaska hunting wolverines!

Don: Did you shoot any?

Napoleon Dynamite: Yes, like 50 of 'em! They kept trying to attack my cousins, what the heck would you do in a situation like that?

Don: What kind of gun did you use?

Napoleon Dynamite: A freakin' 12-gauge, what do you think? ⁵

The boys continued by reciting other lines from the movie:

- “Gosh Kip, pass the nachos.”
- “Can I have some of your tots?”
- “I bet I can throw this football over them mountains.”

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It was pretty funny hearing our seven, eight and eleven year old do their best impressions from the movie and loudly repeating Napoleon's favorite phrase, "GOSH!!!" to each other.

I worked from home in the morning and then left the boys with Sue and went to a nearby office in the afternoon. I could have worked from my home office in the afternoon as well, but I was feeling claustrophobic after being home all week.

While I was at work I received an email from our oldest son's basketball coach. The email included the weekend's schedule of games, and I saw that we would be busy:

- Friday: 10:00pm
- Saturday: 11:00am
- Saturday: 7:00pm
- Sunday: 12:00pm

"Four games! Wow, that's a lot of basketball." I said to myself as I added these games to my calendar alongside of the other boys' games that were scheduled for the weekend:

- Saturday 8:00am (for our youngest son)
- Saturday 1:00pm (for our middle son)

Normally, we attend a total of three basketball games on a weekend (one for each of the three boys), but because our oldest son's coach had signed the team up to play in a tournament, he had three additional tournament games to play.

After work I drove to our church to meet Sue for a meeting about "*The Healing Center*", the new building to help serve the needy in our community.

As I drove, I enjoyed looking at the snow that was piled up high next to the roadways and the many ice covered stop

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signs and street signs. Long icicles hung off of power lines and telephone wires, as if someone had thrown cold water on them and then instantly had them frozen. I felt thankful that the streets were not slick with ice and snow anymore.

When I arrived at our church, I heard more about “*The Healing Center*” project. In addition to having a new area for the teenagers, the church was also raising money for a water drilling project in Nigeria. The total cost for the capital campaign was \$12.6 million dollars. Our pastor shared a PowerPoint slide that estimated that fifteen percent of the families in the church would provide forty-five percent of the budget for the project. That number was staggering to me.

Later in the evening, after Sue and I had returned home, I turned my thoughts to the *Go Eat Popcorn* project.

Yesterday, I remembered, I had learned a lot by counting the number of times the word “I” was used. I had seen that with the exception of Ephesians, the letters had a number of references to the author.

Tonight I wanted to learn more about *who* had written these four letters, so I read the letters again and made a list of words that Paul used to describe himself.

In Galatians, I saw that Paul described himself as:

- an ***apostle*** (Gal. 1:1)
- a ***servant*** of Christ (Gal. 1:10)
- a ***brother*** to those in the church (Gal. 1:11)
- initially ***zealous*** in the traditions of his fathers (Gal. 1:14)

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- ***set apart*** by God (Gal. 1:15)
- someone who formerly ***persecuted*** the church (Gal. 1:23)
- someone who ***preaches*** the faith (Gal. 1:23)
- a ***Jew*** by birth (Gal. 2:15)
- one who put his ***faith*** in Christ Jesus (Gal. 2:16)
- one that ***Christ lives within*** (Gal. 2:20)
- “a ***prisoner*** to the law” before he came to faith in Christ (Gal. 3:23)
- ***set free*** by Christ (Gal. 5:1)

In Ephesians, Paul described himself as:

- an ***apostle*** (Eph. 1:1)
- ***blessed*** by God (Eph. 1:3)
- ***chosen*** by God (Eph. 1:4)
- ***predestined*** by God (Eph. 1:5)
- ***adopted*** by God (Eph. 1:5)
- ***forgiven*** of his sins (Eph. 1:7)
- one who ***gives thanks*** for the church (Eph. 1:16)

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- one who ***prays*** for the church (Eph. 1:17)
- God's ***workmanship*** (Eph. 2:10)
- "the ***prisoner*** of Christ Jesus for the sake of you" (Eph. 3:1)
- one who has ***received God's grace*** (Eph. 3:2)
- one who has ***received God's revelation*** (Eph. 3:3)
- a ***servant*** of the gospel (Eph. 3:7)
- "***less than the least*** of God's people" (Eph. 3:8)
- one who ***prays*** for the church (Eph. 3:16)
- "a ***prisoner*** for the Lord" (Eph. 4:1)
- "an ***ambassador*** in chains" (Eph. 6:20)

In Philippians, I saw that Paul described himself as:

- a ***servant*** to Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:1)
- one who ***prays*** for the church (Phil.1:4)
- a ***partner*** in the gospel (Phil 1:5)
- having the church "in his heart" (Phil. 1:7)
- ***sharing*** in God's grace (Phil. 1: 7)

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- *in chains* for Christ (Phil. 1:13)
- one who *defended* the gospel (Phil 1:16)
- *rejoicing* because Christ is preached (Phil. 1:18)
- *desiring* to be with Christ (Phil. 1:23)
- *desiring to boast* about the church (Phil. 2:16)
- being *poured out* “like a drink offering” (Phil. 2:17)
- *wanting to hear news* about the church (Phil. 2:19)
- a *fellow brother*, worker and soldier with Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25)

In Colossians, Paul described himself as:

- *an apostle* of Christ Jesus (Col. 1:1)
- *praying for* the church (Col. 1:3)
- a *fellow servant* of Epaphras (Col. 1:7)
- *rescued* from the dominion of darkness (Col. 1: 13)
- *in the kingdom* of the Son (Col. 1:13)
- *forgiven* (Col. 1:14)

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- a ***servant*** of the gospel (Col. 1:23)
- ***commissioned*** by God to share the gospel (Col. 1:25)
- ***proclaiming*** Christ (Col. 1:28)
- one who ***admonishes*** and ***teaches*** (Col. 1:28)
- ***struggling*** for the church (Col. 2:1)
- ***proclaiming*** the mystery of Christ (Col. 4:3)
- a fellow ***servant*** to Tychicus (Col. 4:7)
- a fellow ***prisoner*** to Aristarchus (Col. 4:10)
- ***in chains*** (Col. 4:18)

I saw many similarities between the four letters as I read the words that Paul used to describe himself. After thinking about these for a few moments, I wrote down three descriptors on my yellow legal pad that Paul seemed to frequently use:

-“***in chains***”

-“***servant***”

- ***one who “preaches”***

I thought first about how Paul frequently referred to being “***in chains***”.

This phrase, “***in chains***”, was one that I took to mean as being under guard or in prison. Paul used the phrase seven different times in three of the letters (Ephesians, Philippians,

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and Colossians), saying (among other things) that he was “an ambassador in chains” (Eph. 6:20) and was “in chains for Christ” (Phil. 1:13).

I remembered from seminary long ago how scholars described Paul’s letters from prison as, “*The Prison Epistles*”.

“Are all four of the letters Prison Epistles?” I wondered.

“Galatians probably is not a prison epistle,” I concluded. “since it doesn’t have that reference to being ‘in chains’ or any other references to prison.”

I re-read the three letters that made reference to being “in chains” and I found it interesting that Paul gave clear reasons for his being “in chains.” In Colossians, he said that he was “in chains”, because he was proclaiming “the mystery of Christ” (Col. 4:3). In Ephesians he said that he was “the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles” (Eph. 3:1).

“So, it’s clear that Paul was a prisoner of some sort when he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians,” I concluded. “Because he was telling others about Christ.”

What was astonishing to me as I re-read the letters was that even in the midst of this difficulty of being “in chains”, Paul did not complain about his circumstances. In fact, he saw his difficulty as an opportunity for others (and himself) to share the “good news” about Christ. In Philippians he wrote:

“...what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel...*because of my chains*, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.”
(Phil. 1:12, 14)

It also seemed to me, as I was reading these words that perhaps Paul saw himself as not just suffering because of Christ, but because of the churches that he was writing to. In

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Philippians 2:17, he wrote, “But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service **coming from your faith**, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.” And in Colossians 1:24, Paul wrote, “Now I rejoice in what was suffered **for you**.”

“So, Paul saw himself suffering for God, the gospel *and* for the Early Church,” I concluded.

It was fascinating to read Paul’s conclusion to his letter to the Colossian church. At the end of the letter he encouraged his readers to remember his suffering for Christ and for their sake with the words:

“Remember my chains” (Col. 4:18)

Another similarity that I noticed between the letters was that Paul used the word “**servant**” to describe himself; a self-descriptive term that Paul used in all four of the letters:

- “If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a **servant** of Christ.” (Gal. 1:10)
- “I became a **servant** of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.” (Eph. 3:7)
- “Paul and Timothy, **servants** of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:1)
- “I, Paul, have become a **servant**...(Col. 1:23)

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I noticed that the word “servant” appeared ten times in the four letters, as a description of Paul as well as a description of others. Interestingly, just as Paul had given several reasons for being “in chains”, he also indicated that he was a servant *to* at least two things. In Galatians and Philippians he said that he was a “servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10 and Phil. 1:1) and in Ephesians and Colossians, Paul added that he was also a servant to *the gospel* of Christ:

“This is the *gospel* that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a *servant*. Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. I have become its *servant* by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness...”
(Col. 1:23-25)

Not only did Paul indicate that he was a servant, but so was *Christ*, whom Paul served, explaining that Christ took “the very nature of a servant” (Phil. 2:7).

I found it challenging reading Paul’s description of being a servant. My initial mental image of a servant was of someone who was poor, serving someone who was rich and perhaps even feeling ashamed of their position in life. Yet as I read Paul’s words, however, I saw that he was completely willing to be a servant to Christ and to the gospel. Instead of being ashamed of his lowly position, Paul was seemingly eager to be Christ’s servant.

As the night grew late, I decided that I should focus my attention next on Paul’s actions.

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“It seems like Paul described a lot of his actions around telling others about *the gospel*.” I said to myself.

So I re-read the letters again, looking for instances of Paul telling others about the message of Christ. What I found was that Paul frequently described himself as one who “**preaches**” and “**proclaims**”:

- “we **preached** to you” (Gal. 1:8)
- “the gospel I **preached** is not something that man made up” (Gal. 1:11)
- “But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might **preach** him among the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15-16)
- “They only heard the report: “The man who formerly persecuted us is now **preaching** the faith he once tried to destroy.” (Gal. 1:23)
- “I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I **preach** among the Gentiles.” (Gal. 2:2)
- “they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of **preaching** the gospel to the Gentiles” (Gal. 2:6)
- “As you know, it was because of an illness that I first **preached** the gospel to you.” (Gal. 4:13)

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- “Brothers, if I am still **preaching** circumcision, why am I still being persecuted?” (Gal. 5:11)
- “Although I am less than the least of all God’s people, this grace was given me: to **preach** to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ”(Eph. 3:8)
- “This is the gospel that you heard and that has been **proclaimed** to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.” (Col. 1:24)
- “We **proclaim** him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.” (Col. 1:28)
- “And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may **proclaim** the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may **proclaim** it clearly, as I should.” (Col. 4:3-4)

What I saw in re-reading the letters was that Paul described himself as one who **preaches** and **proclaims** the **gospel** and the **mystery of Christ** to the Gentiles.

“I need to dig into that more,” I said to myself as I finished re-reading the letters.

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As I was wrapping up, I found it interesting that not only did Paul describe himself as one who “preaches” and “proclaims” but he also described Jesus as one who “preached.” In Ephesians, Paul explained that Jesus,

“came and ***preached*** peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.”

(Eph. 2:17-18)

Day Seven - Friday
(February 16, 2007 - 11:32pm)

I worked in downtown Cincinnati today (which is about an hour's drive in traffic from our house). At work I found out that I would need to go to Toronto, Canada soon. For that initial trip, I would probably spend a day or two there, but will likely return often, potentially for several months during the spring and summer.

I took the news with mixed emotions. On one hand, I like doing different things and exploring new places, and so going to Canada, I thought, would be fun. On the other hand, being away from Sue and boys for a number of weeks (and only home on the weekends) would be very tough on our family.

After work I joined Sue and the boys for dinner at a neighborhood restaurant and then returned home to watch the end of *The News Hour with Jim Lehrer*, a television news program. Watching the program is one of my favorite things to do early on a Friday night. I enjoy watching two of the show's commentators, David Brooks and Mark Shields, as they share verbal jabs and analysis on governmental policy and politics.

Just before nine o'clock my oldest son and I headed out into the darkness of the cold winter night and drove to a gym about twenty miles north of our house. Most of our boys' basketball games are on Saturdays, but this Friday night game was the first of several tournament games for his team this weekend.

It was late, ten o'clock, when the game began but I soon saw my father-in-law (who the kids call Papa Phil) walk into the gym to cheer on his oldest grandson.

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Our oldest son's team played a team that was very good and they trailed throughout the game. (Final Score: Son's team 37, Opponents 57).

On the drive home my thoughts turned to an extension of yesterday's question for the *Go Eat Popcorn* project.

Yesterday, I had tried to address the first of the "reporter's questions" when approaching a topic. I had asked "Who?" or more specifically, "Who is it that wrote these letters?" and in answering the question I had learned a lot about Paul, the author of the four letters.

"Tonight," I said to myself, "I need to look at **WHO ELSE** is referred to in the letters."

I paused to clarify my ideas.

"So, besides Paul, *who else* is mentioned in the letters?"

I thought for a few moments.

"I know that Paul wrote a lot about *Jesus*, and *Jews* and *Gentiles*, so I'll plan on studying those subjects separately. But what about the *other* people in his letters? It seems like he mentions his co-workers and others a lot."

After I arrived home, I did another reading of Paul's letters and noted the times that other people were referenced.

In the letter to the Galatians, I read about:

- the Galatians
 - o "the churches in Galatia" (Gal. 1:2)
 - o "foolish Galatians" (Gal. 3:1)

- Peter
 - o in Jerusalem (Gal. 1:18)
 - o sent to the Jews (Gal. 2:7)
 - o in Antioch (Gal. 2:11)
 - o confronted by Paul (Gal. 2:14)

Week One

- James
 - the Lord's brother (Gal. 1:19)
 - in Jerusalem (Gal. 1:19)
 - "men from James" (Gal. 2:12)

- Barnabas and Titus
 - who went with Paul on a second trip to Jerusalem (Gal. 2:2)

- James, Peter and John
 - who gave the "right hand of fellowship" to Paul (Gal.2:9)
 - agreed that Paul would go to the Gentiles and they to the Jews

- Barnabas
 - who was "led astray" (Gal. 2:13)

- Abraham
 - who believed God (Gal. 3:6)
 - had two sons (Gal. 4:22-31)

- Hagar (Gal. 4:24)

- Isaac (Gal. 4:28)

Getting Started

In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul wrote about:

- the Ephesians
 - the saints in Ephesus (Eph. 1:1)
- Tychicus
 - sent by Paul to the church (Eph. 6:21)

In Philippians, I read about the following people:

- Timothy (in Phil. 1:1 and 2:19-20)
- the Philippians
 - all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi (Phil. 1:1)
 - “you Philippians” (Phil. 4:15)
- Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25)
- Euodia (Phil. 4:2)
- Syntyche (Phil. 4:2)
- Clement (Phil. 4:3)
- Epaphroditus (Phil. 4:18)
- Caesar’s household (Phil. 4:22)

Week One

In Colossians, Paul mentioned:

- Timothy (Col. 1:1)
- the Colossians
 - o “brothers in Christ at Colosse” (Col. 1:1)
- Epaphras (Col. 1:7 and Col. 4:12)
- Tychicus (Col. 4:7)
- Onesimus (Col. 4:9)
- Aristarchus (Col. 4:10)
- Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10)
- Justus (Col. 4:10)
- those at Laodicea and Hierapolis (Col. 4:13)
- Luke, the doctor (Col. 4:14)
- Demas (Col. 4:14)
- Nympha (Col. 4:15)
- church of the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16)
- Archippus (Col. 4:17)

Getting Started

“That’s a lot of people,” I thought. “With the exception of Abraham, Isaac and Hagar, who were in the Old Testament, everyone else mentioned in the letters seemed to be contemporaries of Paul.”

Next, I made a chart to track the number of times that other people appeared in the letters.

Paul’s References to “Other People” (Number of Times “others” were referenced)				
Ch.	Galatians	Ephesians	Philippians	Colossians
1	4	1	2	3
2	10	0	2	0
3	2	0	0	0
4	4	0	6	13
5	0	0		
6	0	1		
Total:	20	2	10	16

In looking at the chart I saw that I was only partially right in thinking that *all* of the letters referred to other people.

The longer letter to the Galatians had twenty references to others and the shorter letters to the Philippians and the Colossians had references to ten and sixteen people each.

The longer letter to the Ephesians, however, had only two references to other people in its six chapters. Compared to the other letters, Ephesians was nearly devoid of any references to other people.

“Perhaps the letter to the Ephesians might be seen as less personal?” I wondered again to myself, thinking about how I had also noticed that the word “I” was also missing from the letter.

Day Eight - Saturday
(February 17, 2007 - 11:46pm)

The boys had four basketball games scheduled for today: our youngest son was scheduled for an eight o'clock game, our oldest son had an eleven o'clock game, our middle son had a one o'clock game and then in the evening our oldest son had another game; a tournament game at seven o'clock.

Unfortunately for our youngest son, his eight o'clock game was cancelled due to bad weather (we received freezing rain again last night). So, we stayed at home until the next game, when the roads were cleared.

The next game of the day was at eleven o'clock, with our oldest son's team. Unfortunately he and his team struggled on the court. Sue said that he "played like a kid who had played a game last night at eleven o'clock."

I really felt for him. After his game, he had a two hour try-out for a spring basketball team at a nearby gym. I read a magazine as the coach of the spring basketball team had the players shoot lay-ups on the right side, then the left side, then controlled dribbles with one ball, and then with two. Then he had them do a passing drill to the four corners of the court. Next, he had them feed the ball to a shooter at the foul line and then had them do another passing drill that fed the ball to a shooter at the three point line and then had them scrimmage.

In the evening, from seven to eight o'clock, our oldest son had another tournament game against another tough team. In all, he played over four hours of basketball, two hours of games and two hours of practice. Through it all he didn't complain, he kept hustling up and down the court, setting picks, playing defense, taking shots. I was so proud of him.

Getting Started

Once the kids were asleep after all of their activities, I thought more about the *Go Eat Popcorn* project.

As my thoughts turned to the writing project, I thought about **WHERE** the people lived.

I re-read the letters looking for clues as to the location of Paul's letters. As I read, I found these clues:

- Galatia (Gal. 1:2)
- Ephesus (Eph. 1:1)
- Philippi (Phil. 1:1)
- Colosse (Col. 1:2)

In the back of my Bible I found a number of maps. And after some looking, I was able to find each of the four locations.

All of the places, I discovered, were located near the Mediterranean Sea, in modern Greece and Turkey.

On a piece of paper I made an upside down "U".

Inside the "U", I wrote the word **Aegean Sea**.

On the left side of upside down "U", to the west, I wrote the name of the large Greek city of **Athens**.

At the top of the "U", to the north of the Aegean Sea, I wrote the name **Philippi** which is located about 400 miles from Athens.

To the right side of the "U", to the east, directly across the Aegean Sea from Athens I wrote **Ephesus**.

Next to Ephesus, to the right on my map, I wrote **Colosse**, for the city a little more than a hundred miles east of Ephesus.

Farther to the right on my map, to the east, I wrote the word **Galatia**, for the Roman province (the only recipient location of the four letters that was not a city).

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“I wonder if any *other* locations are mentioned in the letters?” I wondered.

So, I read through the letters again looking for references to locations. In the letter to the Galatians, I read about:

- Galatia (Gal. 1:2)
- Arabia (Gal. 1:17)
- Damascus (Gal. 1:17)
- Jerusalem (in Gal. 1:18, Gal. 2:1, Gal. 4:26)
- Judea (Gal. 1:22)
- Antioch (Gal. 2:11)
- Mount Sinai (Gal. 4:25)

In the letter to the Ephesians , I read about:

- Ephesus (Eph. 1:1)

In the letter to the Philippians, Paul referenced:

- Philippi (Phil. 1:1)
- Macedonia (Phil. 4:15)
- Thessalonica (Phil. 4:16)

In Colossians, I read about the locations:

- Colosse (Col. 1:2)
- Laodicea (Col. 2:1, 4:13, 4:15, 4:16)
- Hierapolis (Col. 4:13)

Getting Started

To get a sense of how many locations were listed, I made another chart.

Paul's References to "Places" (Number of times "places" are referenced)				
Ch.	Galatians	Ephesians	Philippians	Colossians
1	5	1	1	1
2	2	0	0	1
3	0	0	0	0
4	2	0	2	4
5	0	0		
6	0	0		
Total:	9	1	3	6

In looking at the chart I saw that Paul clearly mentioned locations in his letters. The longer letter to the Galatians had nine references to locations, while the shorter letter to the Philippians had three and the letter to the Colossians had six location names.

Again, Ephesians was different than the other letters, containing only one reference to a location, and that was simply in the introduction:

"To the saints in Ephesus" (Eph. 1:1)

As I was wrapping up, I thought about the fact that I've been working on the *Go Eat Popcorn* project for a week now.

"I've learned a lot this week," I thought.

I remembered that once I had gotten started on the project, I first did a review of the resources that I had on hand in order to start my journey. Then, I made a plan to look at the "big picture" and decided to answer the "reporter's questions" of **Who, What, When, Where, and Why**.

Week One

After that, I had then tried to answer the basic question of “**What** is here?” and had looked at the total number of chapters and verses. I also did an initial reading of the letters and saw that it took about fifty minutes to read through all four letters.

Next I tried to answer the questions: “**Who** wrote the letters?” and “What can I learn about **who** wrote it?”

I had also looked at Paul’s use of the word “I” and the phrases that he used to describe himself (such as calling himself a servant and “in chains”). I remembered too that I had looked at “**Who Else**” was described in the letters.

Finally, I looked tonight at “**Where**”, in trying to understand the places that were described in the letters.

Even after reading through the letters several times this week, I realized that I still had a lot of questions.

“Is the letter to the Ephesians a lot different than the other letters?” I asked myself. “That’s what my initial information seems to show.”

“And what about the content?” I wondered. “I still need to dig deeper into the *gospel* that Paul referred to and understand more about the *new life* that Christians can discover in Christ.”

With those final thoughts, I was ready to sleep, pleased with the work that I had done over the course of a week.

Week Two – Different Versions

Day Nine - Sunday
(February 18, 2007 - 10:48pm)

Today is Sunday and I played guitar again for a church prayer group in the morning. The message at church this week was again about *The Healing Center*, with the focus today on the teenagers that would occupy part of the new building.

After the church service we quickly drove north, in order to spend time with Sue's parents, stopping first to have lunch at a deli near her parent's house. On the television in the deli was the basketball game between Duquesne University and Fordham. Playing at home, the loss was the third for the Duquesne Dukes (Final Score: Fordham 86, Duquesne 83).

It has been a difficult season for the Duquesne team, I remembered. However, a reporter for the *New York Times* noted that things had been much worse for the team:

“They were worse last month, when forward Almany Thiero, one of the Dukes’ two big men, was hospitalized briefly and sidelined indefinitely with blood clots in his lungs. And they were worse in December, when Coach Ron Everhart spent Christmas Day and four more after that in the hospital with an intestinal disorder. And they were even worse than that in September, when five Dukes players were rushed to the hospital with bullet wounds from a shooting spree (by a non-student) after a university dance.”⁶

“Things can always be worse,” is a phrase a Christian co-worker likes to tell me too. He's had a number of health

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problems over the years, but he'll tell me with a laugh, "I could be suffering a long, slow, agonizing, painful death...and going to Hell."

After lunch we drove from the deli to see Sue's parents. They live about forty-five minutes north of our house, and had even more snowfall over the past few days than we have had.

In addition to her parents, Sue's Grandmother was at her parent's house. Throughout the afternoon Sue visited with her Grandmother in the dining room and helped her with some sewing. In the living room, meanwhile, "Papa Phil", along with the boys and I watched as the men's basketball team from Ohio State played Minnesota.

Ohio State played well, with their freshman center Greg Oden scoring nineteen points, grabbing nine rebounds and blocking two shots, while Ron Lewis, the Ohio State freshman guard, scored sixteen points. (Final Score: Ohio State 85, Minnesota 67).

The Ohio State Buckeyes, with an overall record of 24-3, and a Big Ten conference record of 12-1, had won eleven games in a row, with earlier losses only to Florida, North Carolina and Wisconsin. With Ohio State's win (and the loss of several top ranked teams over the weekend) many analysts were expecting Ohio State to receive their first national Number One ranking since 1962.

As we live in Ohio, our two younger boys talked excitedly about how "cool" it was "being Number One."

"You guys aren't even on the team," our older son said in exasperation.

We stayed at Sue's parent's house through the afternoon and in the early evening drove home.

After arriving home, we did some work around the house and later watched part of the NBA All-Star Game that was being played in Las Vegas, Nevada. The boys liked watching

Week Two

Kobe Bryant, Carmelo Anthony, LeBron James and the other stars, but as I looked at the astronomical score early in the game, I wondered if defensive play was even required. We sent the kids to bed before the game had concluded. (Final Score: West 153, East 132).

Afterwards, I watched a religion professor on the C-SPAN television network. He said that he had been raised in the Church and even went to Moody Bible Institute (which is an evangelical school in Chicago, Illinois).

However, he explained that after leaving Moody, he decided to become an agnostic, in part, because of the different manuscripts that make up the Bible.

He said words to the effect of, “Once you see how there are so many different manuscripts, you really begin to doubt how the Bible could be God’s Word. It’s all made by human hands. Just look at the differences between the King James Version and modern translations. The translators had only a few Greek texts available in 1611, compared with the many Greek manuscripts that have been discovered in modern times.”

“Wow that is a pretty powerful statement,” I thought as I watched the professor on television. “I wonder if I should address that in the *Go Eat Popcorn* project? I’ve just been using one version of the Bible so far. Maybe there really are a lot of differences between the different translations?”

I thought again about the different versions of the Bible that I had available to me on my bookshelf:

- New International Version
- King James Version
- Revised Standard Version
- Good News for Modern Man
- New Century Bible
- Amplified Bible

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“Are there really that many differences between the translations like that professor said?” I wondered. “I probably need to read some other versions to see if there are.”

Day Ten - Monday
(February 19, 2007 - 10:48pm)

Today I worked at my company's office in a suburb near our house and found a project management book that I had misplaced. I enjoy the fact that I have different offices to work from, but sometimes it can be difficult, like in this case, when I misplace something. I had spent a week looking for the book because I wasn't sure which of my three desks the book was on.

After work, and a brief training session on project planning that my company offered, I picked up our youngest son from his basketball practice. Sue had dropped him and our middle son off at the Presbyterian Church where his "Upward" basketball team practices, while I was en route.

After his practice I took the kids to a nearby restaurant for dinner. I enjoy the restaurant's "Arnold Palmer" (a drink that consists of iced tea and lemonade). I also ordered a salad while the boys ordered pancakes.

I found the "family-style" food at the restaurant to be quite good, but was distracted by the modern rock music that they played on the speakers overhead.

"This doesn't sound like country cooking," I kept thinking.

While we were at the restaurant, the boys somehow got on the topic of their last will and testaments. Our middle son (the eight year old) quickly wrote a brief will on the back of his placemat and gave it to our youngest son (the seven year old).

"You sign this. It says that you'll give everything to me," he said as he gave our youngest son a blue crayon.

"Okay," our youngest son said as he read it.

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But just then he changed his mind, saying, “No, wait, I think I’ll leave everything to my kids.”

It was hilarious hearing them talked about “wills” at ages seven and eight.

On our way home our middle son found his favorite radio station and we listened to a song by his favorite band, “*Relient K*”.

After we arrived home I played basketball with the boys in the basement.

- Final Score with middle son:
Middle son 20, Me 18

- Final Score with youngest son:
Youngest son 21, Me 18

Later, Sue and our oldest son arrived home (he had been helping her with the “*Growth and Healing*” groups at our church.)

Throughout the afternoon I had been thinking about the television show I had watched yesterday with the professor of religion.

The professor had claimed that Christianity was not valid because of the different manuscripts that the Bible is based upon.

For the *Go Eat Popcorn* project I decided that I needed to look at other translations, to see if the different translations really were as different as he claimed.

In the evening, I pulled a *King James Bible* from my bookshelf. It had been awhile since I had read it, so before I read Paul’s letters, I first read a brief history of the translation. I learned that the translation was initially proposed by King James I of England at a conference in 1603. Forty-seven men

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worked on translating the entire Bible, seven of whom worked in Westminster on “The Epistles” (that is, the letters in the New Testament). After several revisions, the final version was made available to the public in 1611, with this title (and old English spellings):

"The | HOLY | BIBLE, | Conteyning the
Old Testament, | AND THE NEW, | Newly
Translated out of the Original | tongues: & with
the former Translations | diligently compared
and revised by his | Maiesties special
Comandement. | Appointed to be read in
Churches | Imprinted at London by Robert |
Barker, Printer to the Kings | most excellent
Maiestie | Anno Dom. 1611."

After reading the history of the *King James Version*, I turned to Galatians 1:1 and read:

“Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead”

“So far so good.” I thought. “It sounds pretty similar to the modern version.”

But, as I read chapter after chapter, I soon became mired in the language of 1611.

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Soon I began listing some of the old English words in Galatians:

“addeth” (Gal. 3:15)	“disannulleth” (Gal. 3:15)	“preacheth” (Gal. 1:23)
“answereth” (Gal. 4:25)	“gendereth” (Gal. 4:24)	“saith” (Gal. 4:30)
“availeth” (Gal. 5:6)	“hangeth” (Gal. 3:13)	“soweth” (Gal. 6:8)
“calleth” (Gal. 5:8)	“leaveneth” (Gal. 5:9)	“teacheth” (Gal. 6:6)
“compellest” (Gal. 2:14)	“lives” (Gal. 2:14)	“travailest” (Gal. 4:27)
“continueth” (Gal. 3:10)	“lusteth” (Gal. 5:17)	“troubleth” (Gal. 5:10)
“deceiveth” (Gal. 6:3)	“ministereth” (Gal. 3:5)	“worketh” (Gal. 3:5)

While reading Ephesians, I was slowed down with these words:

“becometh” (Eph. 5:3)	“loveth” (Eph. 5:28)	“passeth” (Eph. 3:19)
“cherisheth” (Eph. 5:29)	“maketh” (Eph. 4:16)	“sleepest” (Eph. 5:14)
“fillet” (Eph. 1:23)	“needeth” (Eph. 4:28)	“supplieth” (Eph. 4:16)
“groweth” (Eph. 2:21)	“nourisheth” (Eph. 5:29)	“worketh” (Eph. 2:2)

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In Philippians I got stuck on the early English words of:

“becometh” (Phil. 1:27)	“strengtheneth” (Phil. 4:13)	“worketh” (Phil. 2:13)
“passeth” (Phil. 4:7)	“thinketh” (Phil. 3:4)	

And while reading Colossians I was slowed down with:

“bringeth” (Col. 1:6)	“dwelleth” (Col. 2:9)	“sitteth” (Col. 3:1)
“cometh” (Col. 3:6)	“increaseth” (Col. 2:19)	“worketh” (Col. 1:29)
“doeth” (Col. 3:25)	“saluteth” (Col. 4:10)	

After reading through Paul’s letters in the *King James Version*, with its many old English words, I felt more overwhelmed than before at the task before me.

“I will never be able to figure this out,” I said to myself, feeling quite discouraged at the task that lay ahead.

Day Eleven - Tuesday
(February 20, 2007 - 11:18pm)

It is Tuesday and my morning drive downtown was slowed by foggy and rainy weather. I spent my workday in meetings, from 7:30am until 5:00pm, and was exhausted when I arrived home. I was thankful, however, for the change in temperature, which is now much warmer than the frigid weather we experienced last week. The high temperature today was fifty degrees Fahrenheit.

After dinner I played basketball again with the younger boys in the basement.

- Final score with middle son:
Middle Son 20, Me 18

- Final score with youngest son:
Youngest Son 21, Me 18

As a reader, you may have noticed that in all of these basketball match-ups I am always on the losing side. This, I must admit, is always the case, whether we are playing sock-ball in the living room or basketball in the basement, or really any sport around the house, and regardless if we are playing “first one to” ten, twenty or thirty points.

The reason?

It’s not because “Dad can’t win against us” as my youngest son once said rather proudly. But rather, it is because I hate putting up with the crying and complaining after the younger boys are defeated. I’d rather lose gracefully to the

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children than have to listen to thirty minutes of their crying after my victory.

When I was young, I loved watching ABC's *Wide World of Sports* on Saturday afternoons. The introduction was so memorable with the words, "Spanning the globe" and the footage of individuals celebrating a win while the announcer said "the joys of victory". Then, they would show some memorable losses, like a skier tumbling off a ski jump, while the announcer said "and the agony of defeat".

As an adult, I've found that sometimes there can actually be agony in winning...like hearing thirty minutes of crying and whining when I win a game of basketball against the younger boys. And so, because of that, I'll happily take a loss, at least for a few more years, in order to preserve some quiet in the house.

Letting the kids win has reminded me over the years of my Grandfather; my Mom's father. I called him "Papa Socks". He loved basketball, and although he was short, he won a district award for his basketball skills when he was in High School in the 1930s.

He also had a passion for the game of "horse shoes"; the game where players toss metal horseshoes toward a metal pole in the ground. At family reunions, when not talking to relatives, he could usually be found playing a game of horseshoes with my uncle or cousins.

My Grandfather once told me that when he was younger, he loved playing horseshoes with his Father after a long day's work on their farm. He said that it was funny that his father would always lose whenever they were just enjoying a game after a day's work.

"But, David," my grandfather told me, "after all of that winning, I would get my confidence up and say, 'Father, would

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you like to wager on this next game?’ and he would say, ‘Well, I guess so.’ And we would put some money on the game.”

“So did you win a lot of money?” I asked.

“No, actually, I didn’t.” came his reply with a chuckle. “Anytime I put money on a game, my father always won.”

“So he cheated and let you win during the practice rounds?” I asked.

My grandfather laughed again and said, “Let’s just say I never won a game of horseshoes against him whenever we put a wager on it. No matter how much I practiced, I never, ever, won any money from him.”

This evening, after my game of basketball with the boys, I took our oldest son to his basketball practice at a nearby elementary school gym. His team has practiced every Tuesday night since December from eight o’clock to nine-thirty at a school near our house.

After returning home I eventually got around to thinking about the *Go Eat Popcorn* project and my thoughts turned to my discouragement and inability to decipher the *King James Version* yesterday.

“Last night’s reading was so difficult,” I said to myself. “I really felt like ending this writing project. Maybe that’s what I should do.”

I sat for a while looking dejectedly at my notes.

Suddenly, I had an inspiration.

“Instead of stopping the *Go Eat Popcorn* project, maybe it would be helpful if I compared the King James Version of 1611, with a more modern translation. That way I could better understand what is in the older version.”

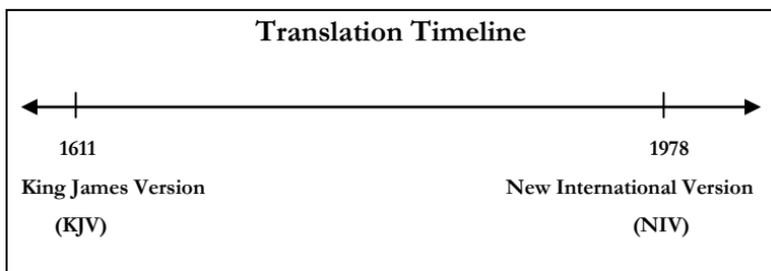
I went quickly to my bookshelf and opened my *New International Version* (also known as the “NIV” translation), and

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discovered that this translation began in 1968 and became available to the public in 1978.

“Reading these two versions together should help me see where there are differences or similarities.” I said to myself.

As I thought about these two translations I made a small timeline on my yellow legal pad to remind myself of the dates when each of the translations were written:



I also made the following note on my yellow legal pad, to remember the abbreviation for each translation:

King James Version = KJV
New International Version = NIV

Next, I went to *biblegateway.com* and took the text from the *King James Version* and copied it into my computer’s word processor. Then I opened up the NIV version of the letters that I had saved on my computer a few days before.

My word processor allowed me to compare the two documents side by side in a split screen and soon I was comparing the two versions, verse by verse.

After my initial reading of the *King James Version* yesterday, and my frustration of getting stuck on all of the early English words like “worketh”, “sitteth” and “doeth”, I had assumed

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that the *King James Version* would be completely different than the modern *New International* version.

What I discovered when I compared the two versions side by side, however, was that there were many more similarities than I had expected.

“Surely, there are a different number of chapters.” I thought. “After all, the professor on Sunday night talked about the vast differences in the texts.”

What I found, however, was that both Bibles had the identical number of chapters.

- Galatians had six chapters.
- Ephesians also had six chapters.
- Philippians had four.
- Colossians had four chapters

Then, I looked at the number of verses.

“Surely, based on the things that the professor said on Sunday, there would be a different number of verses between the Bible written in 1611 and the one written in the 1970s.” I thought.

So, I made a chart comparing the number of verses in the *New International Version* (NIV) with the number of verses in the *King James Version* (KJV).

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Number of Verses								
Ch.	Gal.		Eph.		Phil.		Col.	
	NIV	<i>KJV</i>	NIV	<i>KJV</i>	NIV	<i>KJV</i>	NIV	<i>KJV</i>
1	24	<i>24</i>	23	<i>23</i>	30	<i>30</i>	29	<i>29</i>
2	21	<i>21</i>	22	<i>22</i>	30	<i>30</i>	23	<i>23</i>
3	29	<i>29</i>	21	<i>21</i>	21	<i>21</i>	25	<i>25</i>
4	31	<i>31</i>	32	<i>32</i>	23	<i>23</i>	18	<i>18</i>
5	26	<i>26</i>	33	<i>33</i>				
6	18	<i>18</i>	24	<i>24</i>				
Total	149	<i>149</i>	155	<i>155</i>	104	<i>104</i>	95	<i>95</i>

“The number of verses are identical; they are exactly the same.” I said to myself. “There’s no difference in the organization of the translation written almost four hundred years ago and the translation from only forty years ago.”

“What was that professor talking about?” I wondered.

To learn more, I used my word processor to look at each individual verse in the two translations side by side.

What I found was that many of the individual verses in the modern *NIV* translation were nearly an exact word-for-word match with the older *King James Version*.

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I started a list of verses that were nearly identical:

Verses nearly identical in the KJV and NIV			
Gal. 1:1	Gal. 1:21	Phil. 1:3	Col. 1:9
Gal. 1:2	Gal. 1:22	Phil. 1:21	Col. 1:15
Gal. 1:3	Gal. 2:1	Phil. 2:8	Col. 1:16
Gal. 1:5	Gal. 3:29	Phil. 2:9	Col. 2:3
Gal. 1:12	Eph. 1:1	Phil. 2:10	Col. 3:18
Gal. 1:17	Eph. 1:2	Phil. 2:11	
Gal. 1:18	Eph. 1:17	Phil. 2:13	
Gal. 1:19	Phil. 1:1	Phil. 4:4	
Gal. 1:20	Phil. 1:2	Col. 1:1	

Soon, I realized that my list was incomplete, but with the limited time that I had for the project, I couldn't analyze all five hundred verses to find all of the exact matches.

I concluded, though, that there were a number of verses that were exact matches, and many more that were nearly identical.

After looking at the similarities, I decided to look next at the *differences* between the two translations.

After listening to the professor on Sunday night, I had assumed I would find vast differences.

What I found, however, was that in many cases, the *NIV* translation simply replaced an older word in the *King James Version* with a more modern word.

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I made a list of some of these “word replacements” as I read the letter to the Galatians:

Word in KJV	Word in NIV	Verse
deliver	rescue	Gal. 1:4
World	Age	Gal. 1:4
accursed	eternally condemned	Gal. 1:8
heathen	Gentiles	Gal. 1:16
transgressor	law breaker	Gal. 2:18
in vain	nothing	Gal. 3:4
just	righteous	Gal. 3:11
bond	slave	Gal. 3:28
bondmaid	slave woman	Gal. 4:21
vain glory	conceited	Gal. 5:26
corruption	destruction	Gal. 6:8
shew	good impression	Gal. 6:12

As I read the letter to the Ephesians, I made a list of some of the words that were updated in the NIV:

Word in KJV	Word in NIV	Verse
foundation	creation	Eph. 1:4
prudence	understanding	Eph. 1:8
nigh	near	Eph. 2:17
fellowheirs	heirs	Eph. 3:6
tribulations	sufferings	Eph. 3:13
vocation	calling	Eph. 4:1
longsuffering	patient	Eph. 4:2
lasciviousness	sensuality	Eph. 4:19
tenderhearted	compassionate	Eph. 4:32
servants	slaves	Eph. 6:5
wiles	schemes	Eph. 6:10
boldly	fearlessly	Eph. 6:19

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I made a list of the older words in that letter that were changed in the letter to the Philippians:

Word in KJV	Word in NIV	Verse
meet	right	Phil. 1:7
brethren	brothers	Phil. 1:12
furtherance	advance	Phil. 1:12
flesh	body	Phil. 1:22
abide	remain	Phil. 1:25
vainglory	vain conceit	Phil. 2:3
disputings	arguing	Phil. 2:14
supplication	petition	Phil. 4:6
abased	in need	Phil. 4:12

In the letter to the Colossians, I found these words that were updated:

Word in KJV	Word in NIV	Verse
fellowservant	fellow servant	Col. 1:7
preeminence	supremacy	Col. 1:18
manifest	disclosed	Col. 1:26
trespasses	Sins	Col. 2:13
shew	public spectacle	Col. 2:14
ordinances	rules	Col. 2:20
shew	appearance	Col. 2:23
mortify	put to death	Col. 3:5
charity	love	Col. 3:14
beloved	dear	Col. 4:9
epistle	letter	Col. 4:16

Week Two

“Sure, the words are different between the 1611 version and the version from the 1970s, but the meaning is really not any different,” I said to myself, after reviewing the words that had been changed in the NIV.

“How can someone say that things are *totally* different?” I wondered. “We are talking about the difference between using the word ‘*deliver*’ in the *King James Version* and ‘*rescue*’ in the *New International Version*.”

“There’s really not that much of a difference between these words.” I concluded.

I did a quick calculation of the number of years between the translations and found that there were 359 years between the two translations.

“I’d expect that after 359 years, some words that were commonly used in 1611 would not be used in modern times.”

As I thought about the differences between the two translations, I reflected for a few minutes on the words that described people or groups of people.

Cephas, I noticed, in the 1611 *King James Version* is called *Peter* in the NIV. *Heathen* in the *King James Version* are called *Gentiles* in the newer translation.

People that are referred to as “*the circumcision*” (Gal. 2:9) or “*of the circumcision*” (Col. 4:11) in the *King James* are simply called “*Jews*” in the modern translation.

Other names that changed were *Timotheus* and *Marcus* (found in the older version) in Phil. 2:19 and Col. 4:10, to *Timothy* and *Mark* in the newer translation.

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I noticed, however, that not all of the names had been changed. There were no differences between the translations for:

- Paul (Gal. 1:1, Eph. 1:1, Phil. 1:1, and Col. 1:1)
- Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25)
- Eudois (Phil. 4:2)
- Syntyche (Phil. 4:2)
- Tychicus (Col. 4:7)
- Onesimus (Col. 4:9)
- Aristarchus (Col. 4:10)
- Justus (Col. 4:10)
- Luke (Col. 4:14)
- Demas (Col. 4:14)
- Archippus (Col. 4:17)

As I finished my reading for the evening, I realized that I felt so much better than I had the day before. I was no longer discouraged in working with the older translation. I had found that comparing the two translations side by side on my computer was a very helpful way to see the similarities and differences between the two translations. It gave me hope that I could actually understand what Paul had written.

Many of the changes that the translators of the NIV had made in the 1970s had made sense to me. In many cases, I found that they simply found a more modern word to update the old English of the KJV to translate the words from the original Greek language.

After my second reading of the *King James Version* and comparing it with the NIV, I didn't notice any major theological differences between the two translations, but thought that it would be good to look further into the differences between the two translations in the days to come.

Day Twelve - Wednesday
(February 21, 2007 - 9:18pm)

Today we had heavy fog in the morning and it took me over an hour to get into work. And again for work, I was in meetings all day.

In the late afternoon, Sue took our youngest son and his Cub Scout den (a group of other seven year olds) on a field trip to the local fire station. She called me on my drive home and asked me to stop by the fire station with our camera so she could get a picture of the boys in front of the big ladder truck.

Later in the evening we took all of the boys to a Boy Scout meeting called a “Court of Honor” at a Lutheran Church near our house. Our oldest son has enjoyed scouting since he was seven, and tonight he was awarded the “First Class Boy Scout” badge. We were, of course, really proud of all of his work.

After we returned home I called my sister, as today is her birthday. We have a running joke that she is perpetually twenty five, so I asked her if she had received the “Happy 25th Birthday” card that I had sent to her earlier in the week.

I enjoy my “twenty-five year old” sister. I would say that we are pretty good friends. She travels a lot, but every year we try to do a family vacation together. For the past few years we’ve also spent part of the boy’s spring break with her. She lives outside of Washington, D.C. and we’ve been able to visit a number of museums and historical sites in the area.

One of the best things about my sister is how she adores our boys. Our boys all call her “Aunt Jan”, and it can be so fun to watch them interact with her. At my parent’s house they’ll tease her that she shouldn’t sleep in the room where she spent

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her youth, because the upstairs is now for “boys only.” Each morning the boys will fill an entire door with “boys only” signs, and then in the evening she will re-cover the door with “girls only” signs. It’s pretty funny, especially reading the signs made by the younger boys, who until recently have had some very creative spelling.

For the *Go Eat Popcorn* project tonight, I thought that it would be helpful to continue looking at the differences in Bible translations. A professor that I had seen on Sunday night had referred to the Bible as being unreliable because it was written solely “by human hands” and that one could see its “flaws” by looking at the differences between the different manuscripts over the years.

At the end of my reading yesterday, I had concluded that in most of the places where the modern version had replaced a word, the meaning did not significantly change. I had noticed, for example, that the word “*trespasses*” (in Col. 2:13) in the King James Version was translated as “*sins*” in the New International Version. And “*vainglory*” in the KJV was translated as “*vain conceit*” in the modern NIV (Phil. 2:3). These changes did not seem very significant to me.

Today, I thought that instead of just looking at individual words, I’d look at the *phrases* in the 1611 *King James Version* that had been changed in the more modern *New International Version*.

As I read the letter to the Galatians, I wrote down some of the phrases that had been changed:

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Phrase in KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
“ye are so soon removed”	“you are quickly deserting”	Gal. 1:6
“some that trouble you”	“some people are throwing you into confusion”	Gal. 1:7
“I certify you”	“I want you to know”	Gal. 1:11
“separated from my mother’s womb”	“set me apart from birth”	Gal. 1:15
“I went up by revelation”	“I went in response to a revelation”	Gal. 2:2
“came in privily”	“infiltrated our ranks”	Gal. 2:4
“to whom we gave place by subjection”	“we did not give into them”	Gal. 2:5
“I also was forward to do”	“I was eager to do”	Gal. 2:10
“I withstood him to his face”	“I opposed him to his face”	Gal. 2:11
“the other Jews dissembled likewise with him”	“the other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy”	Gal. 2:13
“Jews by nature”	“Jews by birth”	Gal. 2:15
“is therefore Christ the minister of sin?”	“does that mean that Christ promotes sin?”	Gal. 2:17
“made perfect by the flesh”	“attain your goal through human effort”	Gal. 3:3
“know ye therefore”	“understand, then”	Gal. 3:7
“continueth not”	“not continue”	Gal. 3:10

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Phrase in KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
“receive the adoption of sons”	“receive the full rights of sons”	Gal. 4:5
“infirmity of the flesh”	“illness”	Gal. 4:13
“where is the blessedness ye spake of?”	“what has happened to all your joy?”	Gal. 4:15
“I stand in doubt of you”	“I am perplexed by you”	Gal. 4:20
“debtor to”	“obliged to obey”	Gal. 5:3
“Christ is become of no effect unto you”	“alienated from Christ”	Gal. 5:4
“called to liberty”	“called to be free”	Gal. 5:13
“to the flesh”	“indulge the sinful nature”	Gal. 5:13
“overtaken in a fault”	“caught in a sin”	Gal. 6:1

In the letter to the Ephesians I read:

Phrase in KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
“in the dispensation of the fulness of times”	“when the times will have reached their fulfillment”	Eph. 1:10
“the earnest”	“a deposit guaranteeing”	Eph. 1:14
“cease not to give thanks for you”	“I have not stopped giving thanks for you”	Eph. 1:16
“children of wrath”	“objects of wrath”	Eph. 2:3
“lusts of flesh”	“gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature”	Eph. 2:3
“quicken us together with Christ”	“made live in Christ”	Eph. 2:5

Week Two

Phrase in KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
“before ordained”	“prepared in advance”	Eph. 2:10
“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry”	“to prepare God’s people for works of service”	Eph. 4:12
“a perfect man”	“become mature”	Eph. 4:13
“corrupt communication”	“unwholesome talk”	Eph. 4:29
“vain words”	“empty words”	Eph. 5:6
“walk circumspectly”	“be careful, then, how you live”	Eph. 5:15
“redeeming the time”	“making the most of every opportunity”	Eph. 5:16
“in the fear of God”	“out of reverence for Christ”	Eph. 5:21
“glorious church”	“radiant church”	Eph. 5:27
“in bonds”	“in chains”	Eph. 6:20

In the letter to the Philippians I found these phrases:

Phrase in KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
“fellowship in the gospel”	“partnership in the gospel”	Phil. 1:5
“will perform it”	“will carry it out”	Phil. 1:6
“God is my record”	“God can testify”	Phil. 1:8
“bowels of Jesus Christ”	“affection of Christ Jesus”	Phil. 1:8
“and this I pray”	“this is my prayer”	Phil. 1:9
“approve things”	“discern things”	Phil. 1:10
“without offense”	“blameless”	Phil. 1:10
“I would ye should understand”	“I want you to know”	Phil. 1:12

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Phrase in KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
“all the palace”	“the whole palace guard”	Phil. 1:13
“I am in a strait betwixt two”	“I am torn between the two”	Phil. 1:23
“token of perdition”	“that they will be destroyed”	Phil. 1:28
“consolation in Christ”	“encouragement from being united in Christ”	Phil. 2:1
“sons of God”	“children of God”	Phil. 2:15
“run in vain”	“run for nothing”	Phil. 2:16
“offered upon”	“poured out”	Phil. 2:17
“sick unto death”	“almost died”	Phil. 2:27
“the concision”	“those mutilators of the flesh”	Phil. 3:2
“touching the righteousness”	“legalistic righteousness”	Phil. 3:6
“I count them but dung”	“I consider them rubbish”	Phil. 3:8
“be careful for nothing”	“do not be anxious about anything”	Phil. 4:6

In the letter to the Colossians I read:

Phrase in KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
“laid up for you in heaven”	“stored up for you in heaven”	Col. 1:5
“bringeth forth fruit”	“bearing fruit”	Col. 1:6
“declared unto us”	“told us”	Col. 1:7
“made us meet”	“qualified you”	Col. 1:12
“power of darkness”	“dominion of darkness”	Col. 1:13

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Phrase in KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
“wicked works”	“evil behavior”	Col. 1:21
“made a minister”	“become a servant”	Col. 1:23
“striving according to his working”	“struggling with all his energy”	Col. 1:29
“have not seen my face in the flesh”	“have not met me personally”	Col. 2:1
“knit together in love”	“united in love”	Col. 2:2
“ye are complete in him”	“you have been given fullness in Christ”	Col. 2:10
“he quickened together with Him”	“God made you”	Col. 2:13
“set your affection on things above”	“set your hearts on things above”	Col. 3:2
“lie not to one another”	“do not lie to each other”	Col. 3:9
“elect of God”	“God’s chosen people”	Col. 3:12
“continue in prayer”	“devote yourselves to prayer”	Col. 4:2
“that I may make it manifest”	“that I may proclaim it clearly”	Col. 4:4
“all my state shall Tychicus declare to you”	“Tychicus will tell you all the news about me”	Col. 4:7
“saluteth you”	“sends you his greetings”	Col. 4:10
“labouring fervently for you in prayers”	“always wrestling in prayer for you”	Col. 4:12
“I bear him record”	“I vouch for him”	Col. 4:13
“the salutation by the hand of me Paul”	“I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand”	Col. 4:18

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Like yesterday, I saw that there were some differences between the 1611 version and the modern NIV translation. But in nearly all of these instances, I felt that the modern translation made sense by using more modern phrases. I noticed, for example, that the *King James Version* used the phrase, “loins girt about with truth”, while the NIV used the more modern phrase, “with the belt of truth buckled around your waist” (Eph. 6:14). The phrase “wicked works” in the KJV was translated as “evil behavior” in the NIV (Col. 1:21). These modern updates of language made sense to me, and I was really quite amazed that things had not significantly changed any more than they had from 1611 to the mid-1970s.

As I read Paul’s letters, however, I did notice a few differences between the phrases in the *King James Version* and the *New International Version*, which I attributed to Greek manuscripts discovered by scholars after 1611.

I made a list on my notepad of four major differences that had caught my attention between the two translations. I wrote:

- 1. Absolute statements**
- 2. Walk phrases**
- 3. Difference in tense**
- 4. “Faith of Christ” vs. “Faith in Christ”**

The first noticeable difference between the two versions was something that I called “**absolute statements.**” The NIV translation, I noticed, added the words “*seemed*” or “*tried to*” to phrases that were more “absolute” in the *King James Version*.

In Galatians 1:13, for example, I noticed that both translations described Paul’s persecution of the Early Church prior to his encounter with Christ. The *King James Version*,

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described Paul as writing that he “*wasted* it” (that is, he “wasted” the church because of his persecution). The NIV, however, used the phrase “*tried to destroy* it”, which qualified the more absolute rendering of the KJV.

I saw this again in Galatians 1:23. The KJV described “the faith which he *once destroyed*”, whereas the NIV used the phrase, “*tried to destroy*.”

In Galatians 2:2, in referring to other leaders, the KJV had Paul describing leaders “which *were of* reputation”, whereas the NIV used the phrase “those who *seemed* to be leaders”.

After reviewing these absolute statements in the older translation and their loss of absolute qualities in the modern translation, I asked myself, “Do these differences in translation make a significant theological difference?”

“None that I can tell.” I answered.

A second difference between the two translations that I noticed was in the use of the term “*walk*.” On my yellow notepad I referred to these as “**Walk Phrases.**”

In reading the letters, I had noticed that in all but one instance where the *King James Version* used the word “walk”, the *NIV* used the words “live”, “follow” or “act”.

Again, I attributed these changes to newer manuscripts that are now available to translators.

Once I noticed this, I made chart on my notepad that listed each of the places where the *King James Version* used the word “walk” and how the phrase was changed in the NIV.

Phrase in KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
they <i>walked not</i> uprightly according to the truth of the gospel	they were <i>not acting</i> in line with the truth of the gospel	Gal. 2:14

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Phrase in KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
This I say then, <i>walk</i> in the Spirit	So I say, <i>live by</i> the Spirit	Gal. 5:16
If we live in the Spirit, let us also <i>walk in</i> the Spirit	Since we live by the Spirit, let us <i>keep in step</i> with the Spirit	Gal. 5:25
And as many as <i>walk according to</i> this rule, peace be on them	Peace and mercy to all who <i>follow</i> this rule	Gal. 6:16
in time past ye <i>walked according to</i> the course of this world	you <i>used to live</i> when you followed the ways of this world	Eph. 2:2
For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should <i>walk in them</i>	For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance <i>for us to do</i>	Eph. 2:10
I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye <i>walk worthy</i> of the vocation wherewith ye are called	As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to <i>live a life worthy</i> of the calling you have received	Eph. 4:1
This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth <i>walk not as</i> other Gentiles <i>walk</i> , in the vanity of their mind	So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you <i>must no longer live</i> as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking	Eph. 4:17

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Phrase in KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
And <i>walk in</i> love, as Christ hath loved us	and <i>live a life of</i> love, just as Christ loved us	Eph. 5:2
<i>walk</i> as children of light	<i>live</i> as children of light	Eph. 5:8
see then that ye <i>walk</i> circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise	Be very careful, then, <i>how you live</i> —not as unwise but as wise	Eph. 5:15
Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us <i>walk</i> by the same rule	let us <i>live up to</i> what we have already attained	Phil. 3:16
Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which <i>walk</i> so as ye have us for an ensample.	Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who <i>live according to</i> the pattern we gave you	Phil. 3:17
for many <i>walk</i>	many <i>live</i> as	Phil. 3:18
that ye might <i>walk</i> worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in very good work	that you may <i>live a life</i> worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way	Col. 1:10
As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so <i>walk</i> ye in him	So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, <i>continue to live</i> in him	Col. 2:6
<i>walk</i> in wisdom	be wise	Col. 4:5

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It was interesting to see that in the four letters, the NIV used a word other than “walk” seventeen times. The only exception where the “walk phrase” was not changed was in Colossians 3:7. In this verse, the older KJV used the phrase,

- “In which *ye also walked* some time, when ye lived in them” (Col. 3:7)

And the newer NIV used the very similar,

- “*You used to walk* in these ways, in the life you once lived.”

Again I asked myself, “Do these differences in translation make any theological difference?”

“None that I can tell.” I told myself again.

A third difference between the translations that I noticed were a few cases of a **difference in tense**.

This “difference in tense” was not all pervasive, but I did find a few instances where the *King James Version* used one verb tense and the NIV used another.

For example, in Philippians 1:11 the King James used the phrase, “*being filled* with the fruit of righteousness”, while the NIV used the phrase: “*filled* with the fruit of righteousness”.

In Galatians 2:20, I found another example of this. In this verse, the *King James Version* used the phrase “I *am* crucified with Christ”, while the NIV translated the phrase as: “I *have been* crucified with Christ.”

So again I asked myself, “Do these differences in translation make any significant theological difference?”

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“There may be some slight differences between the words,” I told myself, “but nothing really significant that I can see.”

The fourth difference that I noticed was what I labeled as: “**Faith of Christ vs. Faith in Christ.**” I noticed that the King James Version used the phrase “faith *of* Christ” in several places, while the NIV translated the same phrases as “faith *in* Christ”.

I found that this change in words happened *six times* in five different verses in the *New International Version*, and soon I made a list of where the changes appeared.

Phrase in KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the <i>faith of Jesus Christ</i> , even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the <i>faith of Christ</i> , and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.	know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by <i>faith in Jesus Christ</i> . So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by <i>faith in Christ</i> and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified	Gal. 2:16

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Phrase in KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
<p>I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the <i>faith of the Son of God</i>, who loved me, and gave himself for me.</p>	<p>I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by <i>faith in the Son of God</i>, who loved me and gave himself for me.</p>	<p>Gal. 2:20</p>
<p>But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by <i>faith of Jesus Christ</i> might be given to them that believe</p>	<p>the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through <i>faith in Jesus Christ</i>, might be given to those who believe</p>	<p>Gal. 3:22</p>
<p>According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the <i>faith of him</i>.</p>	<p>according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through <i>faith in him</i> we may approach God with freedom and confidence.</p>	<p>Eph. 3:11-12</p>

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Phrase in KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the <i>faith of Christ</i> , the righteousness which is of God by faith:	and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through <i>faith in Christ</i> —the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.	Phil. 3:9

“Wow, so I have found a possible theological difference between these two translations,” I thought as I reflected on the two phrases.

“But, what does it mean?” I wondered. “Clearly the translators of the *King James Version* were not saying that faith *in Christ* is not necessary.”

In reading the *King James Version* I found several instances that noted the importance of having faith “in Christ”, such as:

- “For ye are all the children of God by *faith in Christ Jesus* (Gal. 3:26)
- “Wherefore I also, after I heard of your *faith in the Lord Jesus*, and love unto all the saints,” (Eph. 1:15)
- “Since we heard of your *faith in Christ Jesus*, and of the love which ye have to all the saints (Col. 1:4)

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- “For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your ***faith in Christ***” (Col. 2:5)

“So the King James translation does not discount the idea of having faith in Christ,” I concluded.

“But still, I have found these six instances in the *King James* translation of Paul’s letters that referred to ‘faith of Christ’ instead of ‘faith in Christ’. I’ll need to look into this in more detail,” I thought to myself. “This potentially is a significant theological difference.”

As I wrapped up my study of the two translations I thought about how the NIV had modernized some phrases but without making any significant differences that I could tell, except for the “*faith of Christ*” and “*faith in Christ*” verses.

“Really, there aren’t that many differences between the two translations,” I concluded.

As the night grew to a close, I decided that comparing the two translations had been helpful to my *Go Eat Popcorn* project.

“But, perhaps I need to look at other translations, just to see if there are any other differences.”

Day Thirteen - Thursday
(February 22, 2007 – 9:58pm)

Today is Thursday and I was able to meet Sue for lunch; joining her briefly at a restaurant after she had met with a volunteer from church. After Sue left to return to work, I read the beginning of a short book called, *Knowing Scripture* by R.C. Sproul, a pastor and teacher who directs Ligonier Ministries in Orlando, Florida.

I enjoyed Dr. Sproul's first chapter that explored the common myth that,

“The Bible is so difficult to understand that only highly skilled theologians with technical training can deal with it”⁷

I was encouraged by his words,

“If we can read the newspaper, we can read the Bible. In fact, I would venture to guess that more difficult concepts and words are expressed on the front page of a newspaper than on most pages of the Bible.”⁸

In light of my recent reading, I also found his discussion on the *King James Version* helpful, writing that:

“Some have charged that to replace the King James Bible is nothing less than the work of the devil! Others have acted as though the King James Version was a verbally inspired translation.”⁹

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Dr. Sproul explained that, “No one loves the beauty of this translation more than I.”¹⁰ He continued,

“But one fact concerning the King James Version cannot and must not be ignored: the King James Version is simply less accurate in its representation of the original writings of Scripture than most modern translations.”¹¹

He explained that,

“Manuscript discoveries since the sixteenth century have greatly enriched our knowledge of the original text.”¹²

“So, according to Dr. Sproul, modern translations can be *more accurate* than the *King James Version*.” I concluded. “I better focus on the modern versions then.”

After spending the past several days reading the *King James Version*, I was ready for something less difficult.

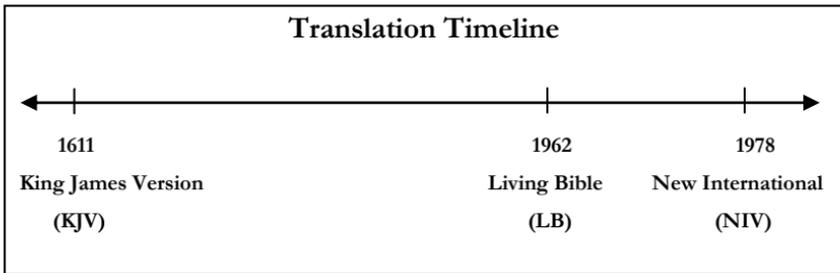
In the evening, as I sat down to work on the *Go Eat Popcorn* project, I thought about my earliest Bible called, *The Children's Picture Bible* that contained pictures and a few words describing many of the great characters in the Bible: Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus Christ.

I thought also about the next Bible that I had received from my parents, a *Living Bible* translation, that my parents had given me on the Sunday that I completed “Confirmation Class” at the United Methodist church in our hometown. As a teenager this was the Bible that I read, keeping it next to my bed. A few years later, my parents gave me another *Living Bible*, translation, a narrow book with a shiny black cover.

Week Two

To learn more about this translation, I read a brief history of the *Living Bible* translation. Like the NIV, I learned that the *Living Bible* translation was started in the 1960s. The letters of the New Testament were first released in 1962 in a volume called the *Living Letters* and the entire Bible was released in 1971 by author Kenneth N. Taylor.

To remember the timeline for the translations I was reading, I updated my timeline on my yellow legal pad.



Unlike the NIV and many other Bible translations that were translated by scholars, the *Living Bible* was written as a *paraphrase*, taking the general ideas in the Bible's chapters and verses and rewording them into words that the author hoped was easier to understand.

The preface to the *Living Bible* explained,

“The book you have in your hands is a paraphrase of the Bible. What does paraphrase mean? To paraphrase is to say something in different words than the author used. It is a restatement of an author's thoughts, using different words than he did.”¹³

As a young teenager, I did not comprehend this concept and found myself feeling quite confused when I would read an

Different Versions

interesting phrase or passage in the *New Testament* of the Living Bible which had a footnote indicating that it was a quote from the *Old Testament*. I would then turn to the verse in the Living Bible's *Old Testament*, but the words were surprisingly different than the words I had just read in the *New Testament*. I thought that I had been reading a direct quote from the Old Testament and it did not make any sense to me how the phrase could be so different. What I failed to understand was that the *Living Bible* translators were more interested in conveying *ideas* instead of a word for word match of the original language into English.

In the evening, I pulled the slim, black leather covered *Living Bible* from my bookshelf and read through Paul's four letters. I found the translation very easy to read (just as I had found in my teenage years). I forgot to check the clock as I read the four letters, but the reading went quickly, much more quickly than reading the NIV or the *King James* versions.

As I expected, there were many differences between the *Living Bible* and the NIV.

The NIV, I saw was a much more literal translation, compared with the paraphrased *Living Bible*.

In Philippians, for example, I noticed that the NIV gave this more literal translation of Phil. 3:6:

- "as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless."

The *Living Bible*, however, gave this paraphrase:

- "And sincere? Yes, so much so that I greatly persecuted the church; and I tried to obey every Jewish rule and regulation right down to the very last point."

Week Two

On my yellow legal pad, I made a chart listing some of the noticeable differences between the phrases in the *Living Bible* and the NIV:

Phrase in The Living Bible	Phrase in NIV	Verse
you are turning away so soon	you are quickly deserting	Gal. 1:6
you are being fooled by those who twist and change the truth	some people are throwing you into confusion	Gal. 1:7
I solemnly swear	I want you to know	Gal. 1:11
even before I was born God had chosen me	set me apart from birth	Gal. 1:15
I went there with definite orders from God	I went in response to a revelation	Gal. 2:2
who came to spy on us	infiltrated our ranks	Gal. 2:4
we did not listen to them for a single moment	we did not give into them	Gal. 2:5
I, too, was eager for that	I was eager to do	Gal. 2:10
I had to oppose him publicly	I opposed him to his face	Gal. 2:11
and then all the other Jewish Christians and even Barnabas became hypocrites too, following Peter's example, though they certainly knew better	The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray	Gal. 2:13

Different Versions

Phrase in The Living Bible	Phrase in NIV	Verse
Wouldn't we need to say that faith in Christ had ruined us?	does that mean that Christ promotes sin?	Gal. 2:17
Then have you gone completely crazy? For if trying to obey the Jewish laws never gave you spiritual life in the first place, why do you think that trying to obey them now will make you strong Christians?	Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?	Gal. 3:3
so that he could adopt us and us as his very own sons	receive the full rights of sons	Gal. 4:5
I was sick	because of an illness	Gal. 4:13
Where is that happy spirit that we felt together then?	what has happened to all your joy?	Gal. 4:15
I frankly don't know what to do with you	I am perplexed by you	Gal. 4:20
must always obey	obliged to obey	Gal. 5:3
Christ is useless to you	alienated from Christ	Gal. 5:4
you have been given freedom	called to be free	Gal. 5:13
do wrong	indulge the sinful nature	Gal. 5:13
overcome by some sin	caught in a sin	Gal. 6:1

Week Two

In the letter to the Ephesians I read:

Phrase in The Living Bible	Phrase in NIV	Verse
when the time is ripe	when the times will have reached their fulfillment	Eph. 1:10
God's guarantee	a deposit guaranteeing	Eph. 1:14
I have never stopped thanking God for you	I have not stopped giving thanks for you	Eph. 1:16
under God's anger	objects of wrath	Eph. 2:3
doing every wicked thing that our passions or evil thoughts might lead us into	gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature	Eph. 2:3
he gave us back our lives again	made live in Christ	Eph. 2:5
it is that God's people will be equipped to do better works for him	to prepare God's people for works of service	Eph. 4:12
full-grown	become mature	Eph. 4:13
bad language	unwholesome talk	Eph. 4:29
So be careful how you act	be careful, then, how you live	Eph. 5:15
make the most of every opportunity	making the most of every opportunity	Eph. 5:16
Honor Christ	out of reverence for Christ	Eph. 5:21
glorious church	radiant church	Eph. 5:27

Different Versions

In the letter to the Philippians I noted:

Phrase in The Living Bible	Phrase in NIV	Verse
your wonderful help	partnership in the gospel	Phil. 1:5
will keep right on helping you	will carry it out	Phil. 1:6
only God knows	God can testify	Phil. 1:8
tenderness of Jesus Christ	affection of Christ Jesus	Phil. 1:8
my prayer for you	this is my prayer	Phil. 1:9
see clearly the difference	discern what is best	Phil. 1:10
inwardly clean	blameless	Phil. 1:10
soldiers in the barracks	the whole palace guard	Phil. 1:13
sign of their downfall	that they will be destroyed	Phil. 1:28
Christians cheering each other up	encouragement from being united in Christ	Phil. 2:1
how glad I will be that my work among you has been worthwhile	that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing	Phil. 2:16
who say you must be circumcised to be saved	those mutilators of the flesh	Phil. 3:2
and I tried to obey every Jewish rule and regulation right down to the very last point	as for legalistic righteousness, faultless	Phil. 3:6

Week Two

Phrase in The Living Bible	Phrase in NIV	Verse
everything else is worthless	I consider them rubbish	Phil. 3:8
Don't worry about anything	do not be anxious about anything	Phil. 4:6

In the letter to the Colossians I saw these different phrases:

Phrase in The Living Bible	Phrase in NIV	Verse
the joys of heaven	stored up for you in heaven	Col. 1:5
changing lives	bearing fruit	Col. 1:6
made us fit	qualified you	Col. 1:12
Satan's kingdom	dominion of darkness	Col. 1:13
evil thoughts and actions	evil behavior	Col. 1:21
And I, Paul, have the joy of telling others	which I, Paul, have become a servant	Col. 1:23
This is my work	To this end I labor	Col. 1:29
strong ties of love	united in love	Col. 2:2
you have everything when you have Christ	you have been given fullness in Christ	Col. 2:10
he gave you a share in the very life of Christ	God made you alive with Christ	Col. 2:13
let heaven fill your thoughts	set your hearts on things above	Col. 3:2
you have been chosen by God	God's chosen people	Col. 3:12
don't be weary at prayer; keep at it	devote yourselves to prayer	Col. 4:2

Different Versions

Phrase in The Living Bible	Phrase in NIV	Verse
pray that I will be bold enough to tell it freely and fully, and make it plain	pray that I may proclaim it clearly	Col. 4:4
sends you his love	sends you his greetings	Col. 4:10
always earnestly praying for you	always wrestling in prayer for you	Col. 4:12
I can assure you	I vouch for him	Col. 4:13
Here is my own greeting in my own handwriting	I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand	Col. 4:18

I enjoyed reading the *Living Bible* translation, particularly the phrases where the translators added punctuation (like question marks or exclamation marks) which made Paul's emotions seem heightened:

- "Have you gone completely crazy?" (Gal. 3:3)
- "...are you going to just throw it all overboard? I can't hardly believe it!" (Gal. 3:4)
- "I want you to realize that God has been made rich because we who are Christ's have been given to him!" (Eph. 1:18)
- "If others could be saved by what they are, certainly I could!" (Phil. 3:4)

Week Two

With the *Living Bible* I expected the phrases to be different than the NIV because it was a paraphrased version.

“Perhaps I should look at a few more translations,” I thought before falling asleep.

Day Fourteen - Friday
(February 23, 2007 – 11:38pm)

Tonight was *Carnival Night*; an annual fundraising event hosted by the Parent Teacher Organization of our sons' Elementary School. At the school, Sue worked a ring-toss game in a First Grade room, while I helped the Boy Scouts in the parking lot direct traffic to a shuttle bus at a nearby church.

The weather turned quite cold after sunset, so I made frequent trips to the school's cafeteria to get hot chocolate.

As I stood in the school's parking lot directing traffic, holding my white styrofoam cup filled with hot chocolate, I was struck by the thought that this would be the last time all three boys would likely be at the same school.

It has really been convenient for us to have them all together, with one in the first grade, another in third grade and our oldest in sixth grade.

As I stood alone in the parking lot, I thought also about Bible translations. I thought about my youth, and how after receiving the *Living Bible* as a young teenager, the next Bible that I was given was a thick green paperback New International Version *One Year Bible* as a gift from my parents for my High School graduation,

The *One Year Bible*, as one could guess, had 365 entries, one for each day of the year. Each day's reading contained four passages from Scripture: one long section from the Old Testament, another from the New Testament, a section from the Psalms and a verse or two from Proverbs.

Just before I started college, I began reading my *One Year Bible* and a year and a half later had finished it. So for me, I've always thought of it as my *One and a Half Year Bible*.

Week Two

A year later, I received another New International translation of the Bible for my birthday; a brown leather *Thompson Chain Reference NIV*, with many helpful maps and definitions of words. It is a Bible that I still use today.

After college, when I was in seminary, an Old Testament professor recommended another version that has also been one of my favorites: *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* which uses the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV) as its text. This Bible, with a red hardcover, is now filled with notes and underlined passages that I've found helpful over the years. A few months ago I showed this translation of the Bible to my oldest son who noticed that the Bible contained the books of the Apocrypha.

"Why didn't anyone tell me that these books were in the Bible?" he asked incredulously.

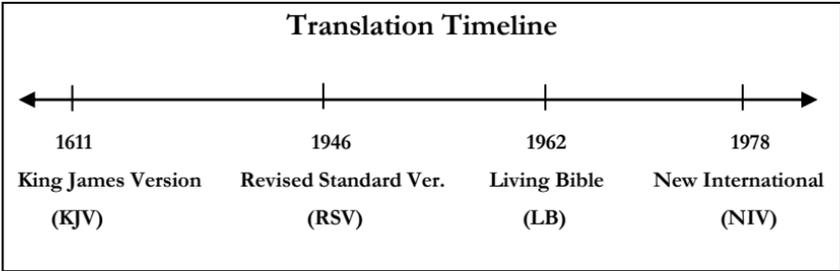
"Those books were written during what is called the inter-testamental period," I explained. "That's the time between the Old and New Testaments, so not all Bibles have those books."

I don't typically read the books of the Apocrypha but I like the *New Oxford Annotated Bible* all the same.

Back home, after the carnival, I picked up my red covered New Oxford *Revised Standard Version* and looked first at the Bible's Preface. According to the preface, the translation of the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV) took place in the 1940s and 1950s. The New Testament, I learned, was finalized in 1946 and the Old Testament in 1952.

To remember when the translations occurred, I updated my timeline on my yellow legal pad again.

Different Versions



Next, I looked at the number of chapters of Paul's letters in the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV). What I found was what I had seen in all of the Bible translations:

Galatians had six chapters.

Ephesians also had six chapters.

Philippians had four.

Colossians had four chapters.

Then I looked at the number of verses in each chapter, and made another chart of what I found.

Number of Verses								
Ch.	Gal.		Eph.		Phil.		Col.	
	NIV	RSV	NIV	RSV	NIV	RSV	NIV	RSV
1	24	24	23	23	30	30	29	29
2	21	21	22	22	30	30	23	23
3	29	29	21	21	21	21	25	25
4	31	31	32	32	23	23	18	18
5	26	26	33	33				
6	18	18	24	24				
Total	149	149	155	155	104	104	95	95

Again I found that all of the Bible translations that I've examined had the same number of chapters and verses.

Week Two

Next, I turned to Galatians in the *Revised Standard Version* and read these words:

“Paul an Apostle – not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead – and all the brethren who are with me.” (Gal. 1:1-2)

As I read through the RSV, I noted some of the differences between this translation and the older *King James Version* and the more modern NIV.

On my yellow notepad I noted these differences as I read the letter to the Galatians:

Phrase in the RSV	Phrase in the KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
there are some who trouble you	there be some that trouble you	some people are throwing you into confusion	Gal. 1:7
I would have you know	I certify you	I want you to know	Gal. 1:11
set me apart before I was born	separated from my mother's womb	set me apart from birth	Gal. 1:15
I went up by revelation	I went up by revelation	I went in response to a revelation	Gal. 2:2
secretly brought in	came in privily	infiltrated our ranks	Gal. 2:4
we did not yield submission	to whom we gave place by subjection	we did not give into them	Gal. 2:5

Different Versions

Phrase in the RSV	Phrase in the KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised	when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter	they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews	Gal. 2:7
And with him the rest of the Jews acted insincerely, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their insincerity.	And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation	The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.	Gal. 2:13
is Christ then an agent of sin?	is therefore Christ the minister of sin	does that mean that Christ promotes sin?	Gal. 2:17

Week Two

Phrase in the RSV	Phrase in the KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?	Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?	Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?	Gal. 3:3
receive adoption as sons	receive the adoption of sons	receive the full rights of sons	Gal. 4:5
bodily ailment	infirmity of the flesh	illness	Gal. 4:13
What has become of the satisfaction you felt?	where is the blessedness ye spake of	what has happened to all your joy?	Gal. 4:15
I am perplexed about you	I stand in doubt of you	I am perplexed by you	Gal. 4:20
bound to keep	debtor to	obliged to obey	Gal. 5:3
severed from Christ	Christ is become of no effect unto you	alienated from Christ	Gal. 5:4
called to freedom	called to liberty	called to be free	Gal. 5:13
an opportunity for the flesh	an occasion to the flesh	indulge the sinful nature	Gal. 5:13
overtaken in any trespass	overtaken in a fault	caught in a sin	Gal. 6:1

Different Versions

In the letter to the Ephesians I noted these differences:

Phrase in the RSV	Phrase in the KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
in the fulness of time	in the dispensation of the fulness of times	when the times will have reached their fulfillment	Eph. 1:10
the guarantee of our inheritance	the earnest of our inheritance	a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance	Eph. 1:14
I do not cease to give thanks for you	I cease not to give thanks for you	I have not stopped giving thanks for you	Eph. 1:16
children of wrath	children of wrath	objects of wrath	Eph. 2:3
made us alive together with Christ	quicken us together with Christ	made live in Christ	Eph. 2:5
For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God	For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God	For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God	Eph. 2:8
to equip the saints for works of ministry	For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry	to prepare God's people for works of service	Eph. 4:12

Week Two

Phrase in the RSV	Phrase in the KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
to mature manhood	a perfect man	become mature	Eph. 4:13
evil talk	corrupt communication	unwholesome talk	Eph. 4:29
look carefully then how you walk	walk circumspectly	be careful, then, how you live	Eph. 5:15
making the most of the time	redeeming the time	making the most of every opportunity	Eph. 5:16
the church...in splendor	glorious church	radiant church	Eph. 5:27
in chains	in bonds	in chains	Eph. 6:20

In the letter to the Philippians I read these phrases:

Phrase in the RSV	Phrase in the KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
will bring it to completion	will perform it	will carry it out	Phil. 1:6
God is my witness	God is my record	God can testify	Phil. 1:8
so you may approve what is excellent	that ye may approve things that are excellent	so that you may be able to discern what is best	Phil. 1:10

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Phrase in the RSV	Phrase in the KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
the whole praetorian guard	in all the palace	the whole palace guard	Phil. 1:13
their destruction	token of perdition	that they will be destroyed	Phil. 1:28
encouragement in Christ	consolation in Christ	encouragement from being united in Christ	Phil. 2:1
in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain	that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain	that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing	Phil. 2:16
those who mutilate the flesh	the concision	those mutilators of the flesh	Phil. 3:2
as to righteousness under the law blameless	touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless	as for legalistic righteousness, faultless	Phil. 3:6
I count them as refuse	I count them but dung	I consider them rubbish	Phil. 3:8
Have no anxiety about anything	be careful for nothing	do not be anxious about anything	Phil. 4:6

Week Two

In the letter to the Colossians I read:

Phrase in The RSV	Phrase in the KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
laid up for you in heaven	laid up for you in heaven	stored up for you in heaven	Col. 1:5
qualified us	made us meet	qualified you	Col. 1:12
doing evil deeds	wicked works	evil behavior	Col. 1:21
which, I, Paul became a minister	whereof I Paul am made a minister	which I, Paul, have become a servant	Col. 1:23
for this I toil	Whereunto I also labour	to this end I labor	Col. 1:29
knit together in love	knit together in love	united in love	Col. 2:2
you have come to fulness of life in him	ye are complete in him	you have been given fullness in Christ	Col. 2:10
God made alive together with him	he quickened together with Him	God made you alive with Christ	Col. 2:13
set your minds on things above	set your affection on things above	set your hearts on things above	Col. 3:2
God's chosen ones	elect of God	God's chosen people	Col. 3:12

Different Versions

Phrase in The RSV	Phrase in the KJV	Phrase in NIV	Verse
continue steadfastly in prayer	continue in prayer	devote yourselves to prayer	Col. 4:2
that I may make it clear, as I ought to speak	that I may make it manifest	pray that I may proclaim it clearly	Col. 4:4
greet you	saluteth you	sends you his greetings	Col. 4:10
always remembering you earnestly in his prayers	labouring fervently for you in prayers	always wrestling in prayer for you	Col. 4:12
I bear him witness	I bear him record	I vouch for him	Col. 4:13
I, Paul, write this greeting <i>with</i> my own hand	the salutation <i>by</i> the hand of me Paul	I, Paul, write this greeting <i>in</i> my own hand	Col. 4:18

As I looked at my list, I noticed that the *Revised Standard Version* kept some elements of the earlier *King James Version*, but also changed some words and phrases.

Next, I looked at my previous notes in my yellow notepad. Earlier, I had noted four major differences between the *King James Version* and the *New International Version* and I had written:

1. Absolute statements
2. Walk phrases
3. Difference in tense
4. “Faith *of* Christ” vs. “Faith *in* Christ”

“It will be interesting to see how the RSV translators handled these issues.” I thought. “I wonder if their translation reflects the earlier *King James Version*, or if they made changes similar to the changes made in the 1970s by the translators of the NIV translation?”

To learn more, I first looked at what I had called “**Absolute Statements**”. I had noticed a few days earlier, that for some statements where the *King James Version* had used a word like *always* the NIV had changed the phrase with the words *seemed* or *tried to*, which lessened the “absoluteness” of the original translation.

As I read the first chapter of Galatians in the *Revised Standard Version*, I noticed that it too eliminated the “absolute” statements just as the NIV had. In describing the persecution of the church, I remembered that the *King James Version* described Paul as having “*wasted*” and “*destroyed*” the church. The RSV, like the NIV that came after it, used the phrase “*tried to destroy*” the church.

“So in this case,” I thought, “the NIV of the 1970s followed the lead of the RSV written in the 1940s in eliminating this ‘absolute’ phrase used by the *King James Version*.”

In Galatians chapter two, I had noticed several days ago that the *King James Version* had Paul describing leaders “*which were of reputation*”, while the NIV used the phrase “those who *seemed to be leaders*” (in Gal. 2:2). Interestingly, in this case, the RSV of the 1940s was different than both translations, but

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closer in its tone to the *King James Version*. The RSV from the 1940s translated Galatians 2:2, as: “those who were of repute”.

“So, in these cases of *Absolute Phrases*,” I concluded, “the RSV changed some of the absolute statements that were in the King James Version but not all of them.”

Next I turned my attention to the second item on my list of differences between the translations, something that I had called the “**Walk Phrases**”.

I had noticed that in all but one of Paul’s letters where the *King James Version* used the word “*walk*” the NIV instead used the words “*live*”, “*follow*” or “*act*.”

On my yellow legal pad, I made a chart noting where the *Revised Standard Version* changed or kept the “walk phrase”:

Phrase in KJV	Phrase in RSV	Verse	Status of word “walk”
they <i>walked not</i> uprightly according to the truth of the gospel	they were <i>not straightforward</i> about the truth of the gospel	Gal. 2:14	Changed
This I say then, <i>walk</i> in the Spirit	But I say, <i>walk by</i> the Spirit	Gal. 5:16	Kept
If we live in the Spirit, let us also <i>walk in</i> the Spirit.	If we live by the Spirit, let us also <i>walk by</i> the Spirit.	Gal. 5:25	Kept
And as many as <i>walk according to</i> this rule, peace be on them	Peace and mercy be upon all who <i>walk by</i> this rule	Gal. 6:16	Kept

Week Two

Phrase in KJV	Phrase in RSV	Verse	Status of word "walk"
in time past ye <i>walked according to</i> the course of this world	in which you once <i>walked</i> , following the course of this world	Eph. 2:2	Kept
For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should <i>walk in them</i>	For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should <i>walk in them</i>	Eph. 2:10	Kept
therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye <i>walk worthy</i> of the vocation wherewith ye are called	I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a <i>life worthy</i> of the calling to which you have been called	Eph. 4:1	Changed
This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth <i>walk not as</i> other Gentiles <i>walk</i> , in the vanity of their mind	Now I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you <i>must no longer live</i> as the Gentiles <i>do</i> , in the futility of their minds.	Eph. 4:17	Changed

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Phrase in KJV	Phrase in RSV	Verse	Status of word "walk"
And <i>walk in</i> love, as Christ hath loved us	And <i>walk in</i> love, as Christ loved us	Eph. 5:2	Kept
<i>walk</i> as children of light	<i>walk</i> as children of light	Eph. 5:8	Kept
see then that ye <i>walk</i> circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise	Look carefully then <i>how you walk</i> , not as unwise men but as wise	Eph. 5:15	Kept
Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us <i>walk</i> by the same rule	let us <i>hold true to</i> what we have attained	Phil. 3:16	Changed
Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which <i>walk</i> so as ye have us for an ensample.	Brethren, join in imitating me, and mark those <i>who so live</i> as you have an example in us.	Phil. 3:17	Changed
for many <i>walk</i>	many... <i>live</i> as	Phil. 3:18	Changed
that ye might <i>walk</i> worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in very good work	to <i>lead a life</i> worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work	Col. 1:10	Changed

Week Two

Phrase in KJV	Phrase in RSV	Verse	Status of word "walk"
"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so <i>walk</i> ye in him"	"As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, <i>so live</i> in him"	Col. 2:6	Changed
"in which ye also <i>walked</i> some time, when ye lived in them"	"in these you once <i>walked</i> , when you lived in them"	Col. 3:7	Kept
" <i>walk</i> in wisdom"	" <i>conduct</i> yourselves wisely toward outsiders"	Col. 4:5	Changed

In reading the *Revised Standard Version* tonight, I noticed that of the *eighteen* times the "walk phrase" appeared in the King James Version, the RSV **kept** the word "walk" *nine* times and **changed** it to another word *nine* times.

What was even more interesting to me, was that in the nine instances when the RSV followed the KJV translation and kept the word *walk*, it utilized a different word immediately following it. For example, where the KJV used the phrase "walk **in** the Spirit" the *Revised Standard Version* used the phrase "walk **by** the Spirit".

"So, unlike the NIV of the 1970s that changed the *walk phrase* seventeen out of eighteen times, the RSV of the 1940s changed the "walk phrase" in half of the cases but not in others." I concluded.

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“And, just like the last area I looked at, the *Revised Standard Version* kept some elements of the earlier *King James Version*, but also changed some words and phrases.”

A third difference between the *King James* and the NIV translations that I had noticed several days ago were a few cases of a **difference in tense**.

This “difference in tense” was not all pervasive, but I had found a few instances where the *King James Version* used one tense in its translation of a verb, and the NIV used another tense.

I thought of Philippians 1:11 where the *King James Version* described “*being filled* with the fruit of righteousness”, compared with the NIV’s translation: “*filled* with the fruit of righteousness.”

When I looked at this verse, in the *Revised Standard Version*, I noticed, interestingly, that the RSV was different than both translations. The RSV translated Phil. 1:11 as: “*filled with the fruits of righteousness*.” In this verse, the RSV translated the word “filled” in a similar way that was utilized later by the NIV, however, the RSV used a word ‘*fruits*’ which was different than both the NIV and KJV.

In Gal. 2:20, I had seen another example of the difference in tense between the *King James Version* and the NIV. The *King James* translation used the phrase, “*I am crucified with Christ*” while the NIV had “*I have been crucified with Christ*.”

When I read the verse in the *Revised Standard Version*, I discovered that its translation was the same as the one used later by the NIV.

“So, in each of these cases of a difference in tense, it appears that the NIV of the 1970s basically followed the changes made by the *Revised Standard Version* in the 1940s.”

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The fourth difference that I had noticed between the *King James Version* and the NIV translations were the phrases “**Faith of Christ**” and “**Faith in Christ**.” The *King James Version*, I noticed, used the phrase “*faith of Christ*” several times in Paul’s four letters, while the NIV translated the same phrases as “*faith in Christ*”.

“How did the RSV translate these phrase?” I wondered.

To compare the translations, I made a chart to learn how each of the versions (the KJV and the RSV) translated the “faith of Christ/faith in Christ” phrases:

Phrase in KJV	Phrase in the RSV	Verse
Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the <i>faith of Jesus Christ</i> , even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the <i>faith of Christ</i> , and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.	know that a man is not justified by works of the law but through <i>faith in Jesus Christ</i> , even we have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by <i>faith in Christ</i> , and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified.	Gal. 2:16
I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the <i>faith of the Son of God</i> , who loved me, and gave himself for me.	I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by <i>faith in the Son of God</i> , who loved me and gave himself for	Gal. 2:20

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Phrase in KJV	Phrase in the RSV	Verse
	me.	
But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by <i>faith of Jesus Christ</i> might be given to them that believe	But the scripture consigned all things to sin, that what was promised to <i>faith in Jesus Christ</i> , might be given to those who believe	Gal. 3:22
According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the <i>faith of him</i> .	This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confidence of access through our <i>faith in him</i> .	Eph. 3:11-12
And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the <i>faith of Christ</i> , the righteousness which is of God by faith:	and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through <i>faith in Christ</i> , righteousness from God that depends on faith.	Phil. 3:9

In looking at the chart, I saw that in all of the places where the *King James Version* used the phrase “faith *of* Christ” the *Revised Standard Version* used the phrase “faith *in* Christ”.

“So, in each of these phrases,” I concluded, “just like the phrases that used a difference in tense -- the NIV of the 1970s

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followed the changes made by the *Revised Standard Version* in the 1940s.”

Next, my thoughts turned to the professor that I had seen on television who had referred to the Bible as solely being written “by human hands” and that one could see the Bible’s ‘flaws’ “by looking at the differences between all of the different manuscripts over the years”.

“I’m really confused as to how he could say that these translations show so many differences,” I pondered. “The NIV translation (which is one of the most popular and revered modern translations) seems to have followed most of the choices made by translators of the RSV of the 1940s. And none of those changes in the translation reveal gigantic flaws or deviations from the meaning of the words translated into English in 1611.”

I had to conclude that after reading the three (more literal) translations: the *King James Version* of 1611, the *Revised Standard Version* of the 1940s, and the *New International Version* of the 1970s, I could find no major theological differences between them.

After reading the RSV during the evening, I also had to admit that it was one of my favorite English translations. I liked how it used some of the phrases from the *King James Version*, but also included more modern words.

I thought again about the different versions of the Bible that I had on my bookshelf:

- King James Version
- Revised Standard Version
- New International Version
- Good News for Modern Man
- New Century Bible
- Amplified Bible

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“I need to pick a standard translation for the *Go Eat Popcorn* booklet,” I thought. “It might be confusing to readers if I jump back and forth between different translations throughout the booklet. If I pick one translation to quote from, maybe readers can have their Bibles open and follow along with me.”

After some thought, I decided to use the NIV when quoting Scripture.

“It’s one of the most popular of the modern English translations that I have,” I concluded.

But even with that decision, though, I knew that throughout the project, I would be looking to see how other versions translated the text.

Day Fifteen - Saturday
(February 24, 2007 – 10:12 pm)

Today is Saturday and we had three basketball games to attend. Our youngest son played *Upward Basketball* at a local Presbyterian Church at 8:00am. And again, to his chagrin, no score was kept.

“Who do you think won?” he asked me when the game was over.

“It was close,” I told him. “I don’t know.”

“I’m pretty sure we did,” he replied. “We did really good in the second half.”

Later in the morning, our oldest son’s team played at a local Junior High School (Final Score: Oldest Son’s Team: 33, Opponents 30).

Then, in the afternoon, our middle son played at a local Elementary School (Final Score: Middle Son’s Team 14, Opponents 17).

As usual, I was proud of each of the boys. All three really hustled out on the court.

Afterwards, I gave them my “taking shots isn’t everything” speech. “Remember guys,” I told them, sounding more and more like Mike Brady from TV’s *The Brady Bunch* than I would have liked, “taking shots isn’t just what you need to focus on. Your team needs you guys to be good on defense; to box out and get rebounds, and then to pass to the open guy.”

When we returned home, I had a chance to think about the *Go Eat Popcorn* project. For the past few days I had been thinking about a passage from R.C. Sproul’s book called *Knowing Scripture*. Dr. Sproul had noted that,

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“Reading foreign translations of Scriptures can give subtle nuances of meaning that can be better captured in a language other than English.”¹⁴

“Reading a foreign translation might be interesting,” I thought. So, I searched through my bookshelves and found my French and Spanish translations of the Bible.

In High School, I had taken three years of French and in college I had taken two years of Spanish. Today I was hoping that twenty years later, at least some of the words would come back to me, and that the foreign translations would prove insightful.

Among all of my classes in High School and college, foreign languages were the ones that I struggled with the most. One of the French textbooks in High School, as I recall, had a short story that needed to be translated. The story was about a boy and his High School friends who had formed a band called the *Orange Ducks*.

“Wait a minute,” I had asked myself, confused as I translated the words. “Is this a rock band or a dinner entrée?”

As French was the first foreign language that I had studied in school, I decided to start with that translation of the Bible this afternoon.

A few years ago, in 2004, when I was traveling for work in Geneva, Switzerland I stumbled upon a wonderful Christian bookstore called, *La Maison du Bible* (The House of the Bible). The bookstore was fantastic, and contained many books by Christian authors. What I found fascinating, though, was that the upstairs of the bookstore contained the Geneva Bible Society’s “lending library”. *La Maison du Bible* was the only bookstore that I’ve ever been in where someone could either

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find a book on the shelf and buy it, or go to the upstairs of the store and “borrow” the book from the lending library and return it a few days later.

In the bookshop, the workers directed me to a modern French translation that was simply titled, *La Bible*.

I purchased the small red covered Bible as well as a devotional book called *Promesses de la Bible pour lui* (Bible Promises for Men). At the time I thought I would read both books, however, other than the few days when I was in Geneva, I had not read either of the books since.

This afternoon I looked inside the cover, and saw that the copyright was for the year 2000, and the official title of the translation was called “*La Bible du Semeur*” (The Bible of the Sower). Next, I turned to the New Testament (called the *Nouveau Testament* in French) and found Paul’s letters.

Galatians, I discovered, was called, *Lettre Aux Galates*.

Ephesians was called, *Lettre Aux Ephesiens*.

Philippians was called, *Lettre Aux Philippiens*.

Colossians was called, *Lettre Aux Colossiens*.

I began by reading the *Lettre Aux Galates* (the letter to the Galatians) and read the first verse:

Cette lettre vous est adressée par Paul, apôtre, non par une autorité humaine, ni par l'intermédiaire d'un homme, mais par Jésus-Christ et par Dieu, le Père, qui l'a ressuscité d'entre les morts.

Some of the words were similar to English, I noticed, but others were not.

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I liked seeing how some familiar English names were translated into French, and wrote them down on my legal pad:

Name in French	Name in English	Verse
Paul	Paul	Gal. 1:1
Jésus-Christ	Jesus Christ	Gal. 1:1
Dieu, le Père	God, the Father	Gal. 1:1
notre Père	Our Father	Gal. 1:3
l'Arabie	Arabia	Gal. 1:17
Damas	Damascus	Gal. 1:17
Tite	Titus	Gal. 2:1

I also enjoyed seeing some familiar French words and phrases that I had learned in High School :

French	English	Verse
Au contraire!	On the contrary	Gal. 2:7, 3:12
Liberté	Freedom	Gal. 5:1
l'assurance	Confident	Gal. 5:10
au bon moment	at the proper time	Gal. 6:9
ces grandes lettres	large letters	Gal. 6:11

Next, I wrote down more French phrases on my notepad thinking about how some of the phrases seemed similar to the English, yet others seemed so very different.

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Phrase in French	Phrase in English (NIV)	Verse
de la rapidité avec laquelle vous abandonnez	so quickly deserting	Gal. 1:6
Dans la pratique du judaïsme, j'allais plus loin que la plupart	I was advancing in Judaism	Gal. 1:14
pour les traditions que j'avais reçues de mes ancêtres	for the traditions of my fathers	Gal. 1:14
O Galates insensés!	You foolish Galatians!	Gal. 3:1
Manquez-vous à ce point d'intelligence?	Are you so foolish?	Gal. 3:3
une alliance	covenant	Gal. 3:17
Ne vous faites pas d'illusions: Dieu ne se laisse pas traiter avec mépris. On récolte ce que l'on a semé.	Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows	Gal. 6:7

One thing that I noticed while I was reading Paul's letter to the Galatians in French, which I hadn't noticed in the English translation, was the frequent use of the word *frères* (in Galatians 1:11, Gal. 4:31, and Gal. 6:18). The English translation of the word *frères*, I remembered, is "**brothers**."

In my initial reading of Galatians in English, I had the impression that Paul was deeply upset with the Galatians, even mad at them because he had called them "foolish" and "bewitched" (in Gal. 3:1 and Gal. 3:3). I didn't change this view after reading the French translation, but the French

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translation did help me see something that I hadn't seen before.

“Even though Paul was concerned and upset with his readers in Galatia,” I summarized, “he still considered them to be *brothers in Christ*.”

“I didn't notice that in the English translation,” I concluded.

In Ephesians, called *La Lettre Aux Ephesiens* in French, I enjoyed how many of the words and phrases sounded, and wrote a few down.

Phrase in French	Phrase in English	Verse
moi aussi	me also (literally, but not translated in the NIV)	Eph. 1:15
la glorieuse richesse de l'héritage que Dieu vous fait partager avec tous ceux qui lui appartiennent	the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints	Eph. 1:18
Chef à l'Eglise	head over everything for the church	Eph. 1:22
préparées à l'avance	prepared in advance	Eph. 2:10
le prisonnier de Jésus-Christ pour vous, les non-Juifs	the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles	Eph. 3:1
la Bonne Nouvelle	The Good News	Eph. 3:6

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Phrase in French	Phrase in English	Verse
Que le Christ habite dans votre cœur par la foi. Enracinés et solidement fondés dans l'amour	so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love	Eph. 3:17
prisonnier à cause du Seigneur	as a prisoner for the Lord	Eph. 4:1
exprimant la vérité dans l'amour	speaking the truth in love	Eph. 4:15
Réveille-toi	Wake up	Eph. 5:14
Vous, enfants	You children	Eph. 6:1
la Bonne Nouvelle de la paix	The Good News of peace	Eph. 6:15
la Parole de Dieu	The Word of God	Eph. 6:17
un ambassadeur enchaîné	an ambassador in chains	Eph. 6:20
amour inalterable	an undying love	Eph. 6:24

In Ephesians, I found it interesting that the word for Gentiles was “non-Juifs” (Eph. 3:1), literally, “non-Jews”. A word, I thought that was so much easier to remember than the word *Gentiles* in English.

In the letter to the Philippians (called the *Lettre Aux Philippiens*) I enjoyed how these phrases sounded in French:

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Phrase in French	Phrase in English	Verse
je prie pour vous tous en toute occasion, et c'est toujours avec joie que je le fais	in all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy	Phil. 1:4
place particulière dans mon cœur	since I have you in my heart	Phil. 1:7
mon emprisonnement a encouragé la plupart des frères	because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged	Phil. 1:14
la grandeur du Christ	the magnitude of Christ	Phil. 1:20
ne chercha pas à profiter de l'égalité avec Dieu	did not consider equality with God something to be grasped	Phil. 2:7
pour être irréprochables et purs, des enfants de Dieu	to be irreproachable and pure, children of God	Phil. 2:15
Si quelqu'un croit pouvoir se confier en ce qui vient de l'homme, je le puis bien davantage	If someone believes to be able to entrust themselves in this that comes from man, I then have well more	Phil. 3:4
Réjouissez-vous en tout temps de tout ce que le Seigneur est pour vous. Oui, je le répète, soyez dans la joie	<i>Literal translation:</i> Rejoice all the time that the Lord is for you. Yes, I repeat it, be in joy	Phil. 4:4

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Phrase in French	Phrase in English	Verse
	<i>NIV translation:</i> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!	

In the letter to the Colossians (called the *Lettre Aux Colossiens*) I enjoyed how these words and phrases sounded in French:

Phrase in French	Phrase in English	Verse
saluent	greetings	Col. 1:1
royaume de lumière	kingdom of light	Col. 1:12
dans le royaume de son Fils bien-aimé	<i>Literal translation:</i> in the kingdom of his well-loved Son	Col. 1:13
et la fermeté de votre foi en Christ	Firmness in your faith in Christ	Col. 2:5
Là, il a désarmé toute Autorité, tout Pouvoir, les donnant publiquement en spectacle quand il les a traînés dans son cortège triumphal près sa victoire à la croix.	And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross	Col. 2:15
Car vous êtes morts, et votre vie est cachée avec le Christ en Dieu	For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God	Col. 3:3
Dans cette nouvelle humanité	<i>Literally:</i> In this new humanity	Col. 3:11

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Que votre parole soit toujours empreinte de la grâce de Dieu	<i>Literally:</i> Let your word always be tinged with the grace of God	Col. 4:6
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I was glad to have read the French translation and found it helpful in learning more about Paul's letters.

Later in the evening, I decided to read my Spanish translation. I had studied *Espanol* for four semesters when I was in college. During that time I had picked up a Spanish translation of the New Testament called *El Camino A La Luz* (The Way of the Light) when I had gone to Mexico City for a week with some friends from church.

In the small New Testament (called *El Nuevo Testamento* in Spanish) I turned to Paul's letters.

Galatians, I discovered, was called, *Galatas*.

Ephesians was called, *Efesios*.

Philippians was called, *Filipenses*.

Colossians was called, *Colosenses*.

I began by reading the *Galatas* (the letter to the Galatians) and read Galatians 1:1-2 in Spanish,

“Pablo, apóstol, enviado no de parte de hombres ni por medio de ningún hombre, sino por Jesucristo y por Dios Padre que lo resucitó de entre los muertos, y todos los hermanos que están conmigo, a las iglesias de Galacia”¹⁵

Like the French, I enjoyed seeing how some familiar English names were translated in Spanish.

Name in Spanish	Name in English	Verse
Pablo	Paul	Gal. 1:1
Jesucristo	Jesus Christ	Gal. 1:1

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Name in Spanish	Name in English	Verse
Dios Padre	God, the Father	Gal. 1:1
Nuestro Padre	Our Father	Gal. 1:3
Damasco	Damascus	Gal. 1:17
Pedro	Peter	Gal. 1:18
Bernabe	Barnabas	Gal. 2:1
Tito	Titus	Gal. 2:1

In *Galatas* (Galatians) I wrote down these Spanish phrases:

Phrase in Spanish	Phrase in English	Verse
rapidametne esten desertando	so quickly deserting	Gal. 1:6
conocer a Pedro	to get acquainted with Peter	Gal. 1:18
yo me opuse a el cara a cara porque estaba equivocado	I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong	Gal. 2:11
sabemos que no se alcanza la justificacion por la observancia de la ley, sino por la fe en Jesucrito	a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ	Gal. 2:16
la observancia de la ley nadie sera justificado	because by observing the law no one will be justified	Gal. 2:16

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Phrase in Spanish	Phrase in English	Verse
¡Oh insensato gálatas! ¿Quién los ha embrujaado? Ante sus propios ojos Cristo ha sido presentado graficamente como crucificado.	You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified	Gal. 3:1-2
Abraham, el hombre de fe	Abraham, the man of faith	Gal. 3:9
El justo por la fe vivira	The righteous will live by faith	Gal. 3:11
Un mediador no representa solo a una de las partes; pero Dios es uno solo	A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one	Gal. 3:20
Antes de venir esta fe, eramos prisioneros de al ley, custodiados hasta que la fe fuera revelanda	Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed	Gal. 3:23
como ustedes son sus hijos, Dios ha enviado Espiritu de su Hijo al interior de sus corazones, el Espiritu que clama: Abba.	Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."	Gal. 4:6

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Phrase in Spanish	Phrase in English	Verse
La gracia de nuestro Señor Jesúscristo sea con su espíritu, hermanos. Amen.	The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.	Gal. 6:18

Just as I had noticed the word *frères* while reading Galatians in French, I noticed the frequent use of the word *hermanos* while reading the Spanish translation of Galatians (Gal. 1:11, Gal. 4:28, Gal. 6:18). Again I saw this word, which in the English is translated “brother” or “brothers”, much more frequently than I had expected, which again seemed to indicate that even though Paul was upset with the Christians in Galatia, even calling them “*foolish*”, he still considered them to be *brothers* in Christ.

I also found the phrase, “Yo, Pablo” funny to read in the Spanish translation. The phrase literally can be translated, “I, Paul” and was used throughout the letter to the Galatians. But, as I read it, I thought about how the phrase could also be heard as a greeting in many U.S. cities.

In Ephesians, or “Efesios”, I enjoyed reading these Spanish phrases:

Phrase in Spanish	Phrase in English	Verse
Gracia y paz a ustedes de Dio nuestro Padre y del Señor Jesucristo.	Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ	Eph. 1:2

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Phrase in Spanish	Phrase in English	Verse
En amor nos predestine para ser adoptados como hijos por medio de Jesucristo, de acuerdo con su complacencia y voluntad	In love He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will	Eph. 1:5
Dios, que es rico en misericordia	God, who is rich in mercy	Eph. 2:4
Por lo tanto	Therefore	Eph. 2:11 and 2:19
Por esta razon yo, Pablo, el prisionero de Cristo Jesus por la causa de ustedes los gentiles	For this reason, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles	Eph. 3:1
en el cielo y en la tierra	in heaven and on earth	Eph. 3:14
Por lo tanto, sean imitadores	Be imitators of God, therefore	Eph. 5:1
Vivan como hijos de luz	Live as children of Light	Eph. 5:8
Padres, no exasperen a sus hijos	Fathers, do not exasperate your children	Eph. 6:4
Gracia a todos los que aman a nuestro Senor Jesucristo con amor immutable	Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love	Eph. 6:24

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It was interesting to see the phrase “por lo tanto” (Eph. 2:11, 2:19 and 5:1) in the Spanish translation, which can be translated as “therefore.” It made me realize that there was a logical argument that Paul was presenting in his letters, and that it would be important for me to look at the places where Paul used the word “therefore” in my English translation.

In Philippians I enjoyed reading these phrases in Spanish:

Phrase in Spanish	Phrase in English	Verse
Pablo y Timoteo, siervos de Jesucristo, a todos los santos en Cristo Jesus que estan en Filipos, juntamente con los sperintendentes y diaconos	Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons	Phil. 1:1
Y esto pido en oración: que vuestro amor abunde aún más y más en conocimiento y en toda comprensión	And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight	Phil. 1:9
para gloria y alabanza de Dios	to the glory and praise of God	Phil. 1:11
esos mutiladores de la carne	those mutilators of the flesh	Phil. 3:2
Y la paz de Dios, que trasciende toda comprensión, guardara sus corazones y sus mentes en Cristo Jesús	And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus	Phil. 4:7

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Next I read the translation of Colossians in Spanish and noted these phrases:

Phrase in Spanish	Phrase in English	Verse
Pablo, apostol de Cristo Jesé por la voluntad de Dios, y Timoteo nuestro hermano	Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother	Col. 1:1
Cristo es la imagen del Dios invisible, el primogénito de toda creación	He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation	Col. 1:15
Él es también la cabeza del cuerpo que es la iglesia, y es el principio, el primogénito de entre los muertos, para que en todo tenga la preeminencia	he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy	Col. 1:18
Pero ahora los ha reconciliado mediante la muerte que Cristo sufrió en su cuerpo físico	now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death	Col. 1:22
no con una circuncisión hecha por manos de hombres, sino con la circuncisión de Cristo	not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ	Col. 2:11

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Phrase in Spanish	Phrase in English	Verse
Por lo tanto, como pueblo escogido de Dios, santos y muy amados, vistanse de compasión, bondad, humildad, mansedumbre y paciencia	Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience	Col. 3:12
Que la paz de Cristo reine en sus corazones, pues han sido llamados a la paz como miembros de un solo cuerpo	Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, as members of one body	Col. 3:15
Yo, Pablo, escribo este saludo de mi propia mano. Acuérdense de mis cadenas. La gracia sea con ustedes.	I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.	Col. 4:18

I was glad to have read the Spanish translation and like the French translation, found it helpful in learning more about Paul's letters.

The last thing I did this evening for the *Go Eat Popcorn* project, like last Saturday, was to try to summarize what I'd learned this week. I thought first about last Sunday, when I had heard the criticism by a theology professor on TV who had said that the Bible was flawed because it was written by "human hands".

On Monday I decided to look at several versions of the Bible and started with the *King James Version*, (which was written in 1611) and compared it to the popular *New International Version* (known as the NIV) which was published

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in the 1970s. And even though the *King James Version* was initially difficult for me to read, I did not see any significant theological differences between the two.

The only major difference that I noted, were the phrases “Faith *of* Christ” (that was used in the *King James Version*) and “Faith *in* Christ” (that was used in the modern translation). I decided that I would need to do a little bit more research when I get into a “deep dive” of Paul’s letters.

Next I read the *Living Bible* translation, and found its paraphrase of the Bible to be very easy to read.

Then I read the *Revised Standard Version* which I really enjoyed. The RSV, I learned was a translation that was written in the 1940s. And, like the NIV, I did not see any significant theological differences between it and the *King James Version* of 1611.

Lastly, I read the Spanish and French translations of Paul’s letters and noted Paul’s frequent use of the word “*brothers*” in the letter to Galatians and looked at other phrases that were similar to the English.

“Wow,” I thought, “I’ve learned a lot, but I have so much more to learn about the content of Paul’s four letters.”

Week Three – Letter Writing

Day Sixteen - Sunday
(February 25, 2007 – 10:14pm)

Today is Sunday and we went to our church's eleven-thirty service this morning. During his sermon, our pastor talked about a trip that he took last year to Jos, Nigeria --a city in central Nigeria, northeast of Lagos. During his time there, he told us that had been praying, "God, why did you bring us here?"

Near the end of his visit to the area, he said that he met with the local governor of the area.

"The number one thing for him was clean accessible drinking water," our pastor explained. "In his state, less than nineteen percent of the people have access to safe water. The governor told us that in one village, water from a disease infested shallow well had killed forty percent of the children."

"So, I'm sitting there," our pastor continued, "and then it hit me like lightening. This is why we're here. This is why You sent us God."

Our pastor then explained that as he was talking with the governor, he had this thought, "What would happen if we raised the money to get a drilling rig? What if we went from village, to village, to village, drilling wells?"

He then had the ushers pass out bottles of water for each person in the church.

"We don't even think about it," he told us as the water was being distributed.

"In Nigeria, the average person uses eight of these water bottles a day for everything, for cooking, cleaning, bathing, and drinking. As a reference point, the average American will use

Week Three

1,330 of these bottles a day for cooking, cleaning, bathing, and drinking.”

“The average distance to get water in that region of Nigeria,” our pastor continued, “is four miles. And the average weight of a water jug is 45 pounds.”

“We are someone’s answer to prayer,” our pastor explained.

Next, he interviewed Rev. Emmanuel Itapson, who is part of an organization called Self-Sustaining Enterprises (a group our church’s leaders had decided to partner with to drill the wells in Nigeria).

Poignantly, Rev. Itapson concluded, “Sometime, in God’s presence you will meet these people, and they will know that you had something to do with their survival. And what a joy that will be.”

It was a good interview.

At four o’clock this afternoon, our oldest son had a basketball game against a team whom they played earlier in the season (and whom they had lost badly to). Unfortunately, only six players from his team showed up for the game.

At the half my son’s team was behind 14-22, but in the third quarter they came close to tying the game. In the fourth quarter, however, the other team surged ahead to capture the win. (Final Score: Oldest Son’s Team 29, Opponents 38).

After the game we came home to watch the Ohio State University men’s basketball team (ranked number one in the nation) play Wisconsin (ranked number two).

It was a very close game.

With less than a minute remaining, Wisconsin’s Alando Tucker scored from inside to give the Badgers a one point lead.

Letter Writing

Next, Ohio State got the ball but were unable to score and turned the ball over to Wisconsin. So, with a one point deficit, and twenty seconds left on the game clock, an Ohio State player fouled Wisconsin's Kammron Taylor, sending him to the foul line. Unfortunately for Wisconsin, Taylor missed the foul shot, and Greg Oden, the tall Ohio State freshman center got the rebound.

Then, with sixteen seconds remaining in the game, Ohio State called a time out. After a short break for the timeout, the Ohio State Buckeyes quickly got the ball into the hands of their freshman guard, Mike Conley Jr.

The son of the 1992 Olympic triple-jump winner, Mike Conley Jr. had played on the same High School team in Indiana with fellow Ohio State freshman, Greg Oden. With only four seconds remaining, Conley took the ball and cutting through the lane, made a basket putting Ohio State up by one point.

Next, with only three point nine seconds remaining in the game, Wisconsin called a timeout to try to inbound the ball, but Ohio State's defense forced Wisconsin to call another timeout before they could safely in-bound the ball.

Eventually Wisconsin inbounded the basketball, but were unable to produce a basket for the win. (Final Score: Ohio State 49, Wisconsin 48). The win gave Ohio State the regular-season Big Ten Conference title.

Unfortunately for me, I didn't do any work on the *Go Eat Popcorn* project.

Day Seventeen - Monday
(February 26, 2007 – 11:24pm)

I had meetings for work all day today. Then, in the early evening I had a monthly meeting with the local Zoning Commission. I have served on the commission for the past two years and have found it interesting to hear the plans of new businesses and organizations seeking to build in our suburb. We had a number of cases tonight, including a very long discussion about the parking needs of the local High School, so I didn't arrive home until after ten o'clock.

During the meeting I felt like I was coming down with a cold and when I returned home I continued to feel "puny" as my Dad would say.

At home, I laid down on our living room couch and watched the Kansas men's basketball team play Oklahoma. In their previous six games, the Kansas Jayhawks had averaged victories of over twenty points. Tonight's game against Oklahoma, however, was much closer.

Kansas was able to take a large lead by the end of the first half, leading 33-19. But in the second half, Oklahoma tied the game at 51 points apiece. Soon afterwards, however, Kansas responded with a strong run of nine points, including four free throws by Mario Chalmers (who scored eighteen points during the game). (Final Score: Kansas 67, Oklahoma 65).

The win was the seventh in a row for the Kansas Jayhawks.

And today, for the second day in a row, I didn't do any work on the *Go Eat Popcorn* project.

Day Eighteen - Tuesday
(February 27, 2007 – 10:54pm)

During my lunch hour today I drove to a social services agency for a meeting. I've volunteered with the organization for several years and serve on its Board.

At the meeting, the organization's President announced the possibility of offering a program that could help provide health care insurance to low-income employees in our county. It was a very exciting new step for the organization.

In the afternoon I was able to work from home, which was good because my sinuses were congested from the cold that had started the night before.

In the evening, Sue made a nice dinner of chicken, green beans and rolls. And after dinner, I played three games of chess with our youngest son while we periodically watched the Michigan State/University of Michigan basketball game on the television.

- Final Score in the chess match: 1 win me, 2 wins youngest son.
- Final score in the basketball game: Michigan: 67, Michigan State: 56.

Later in the evening I watched the end of the game between Tennessee and the Florida Gators.

The game was played at Tennessee's basketball arena, with its distinctive orange and white checkered out-of-bounds areas behind the baskets; a pattern similar in appearance to the

Week Three

orange and white checkered end zones of their football stadium.

The game was the last of Tennessee's regular season, and called, *Senior Night*, in recognition of the departing upperclassmen.

During the game the television coverage showed Payton Manning cheering on the Tennessee Volunteers from the stands. Manning, a quarterback who had played football at Tennessee, had recently led the Indianapolis Colts to a victory in the NFL Super Bowl.

It was fun to see the Tennessee kids in orange t-shirts sing, "*Good Old Rocky Top, Rocky Top Tennessee*" at the game's conclusion. It was also fun to watch Pat Summitt, the coach of the women's basketball team, dressed as a cheerleader in support of the men's team.

The game was exciting to watch, as the underdog Tennessee Volunteers faced Florida, who are currently ranked fourth in the nation.

The Tennessee team quickly took a sixteen point lead against the defending national champions and played well throughout the game. Their win provided them with a record of eight wins and no losses in their conference.

The loss for Florida brought the returning champion Gators their third loss in their last four games. (Final Score: Tennessee 86, Florida 76).

For the *Go Eat Popcorn* project, my thoughts turned tonight again to my need of trying to understand the "The Big Picture" of Paul's letters.

The ultimate "big picture" concept, I thought, was that all of these words were written by Paul and communicated to the churches in **LETTERS**.

Letter Writing

As I thought about it, there seemed to be a number of *differences* between Paul's letters and a modern letter that I might write.

"When I write a letter, which isn't often," I reflected, "I will send it to just one person. Paul's letters were intended for many people; they were written to an entire church or a group of churches."

I thought next about the *structure* of modern letters and was reminded of how our oldest son had recently written a letter for one of his Boy Scout merit badges. As he was working on the letter to our U.S. Congressman, I reminded him that all formal letters follow the same structure.

"Your letter should start with the date at the top," I told him. "Then you'll want to have a few blank spaces and then write the word '*Dear*' and then the person's name."

"I remember that from school," he said.

"After the greeting, you'll want to have an introduction to the letter. In this case, because our congressman doesn't know you, you'll probably want to introduce yourself."

"Do I have to do that?" he asked.

"I think it'd be good if you told him a little bit about yourself," I replied. "Maybe you could mention how old you are, what school you go to, or maybe the city where we live."

"I don't know about that Dad," he said, "that seems kind of weird."

"Well, it's your letter." I said. "Just remember at the end of it to write the word '*Sincerely*' and a comma, and then sign your name."

As I thought about our modern letters tonight, I turned on our computer and read the letter that he had written to our congressman:

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February 9, 2007

Dear Congressman Boehner,

My name is ____ Stiles and I'm in 6th grade. I read an article in the newspaper about the new laws in Orlando, Florida about homeless people. These laws stop homeless people from sleeping in the public parks and using the rest room for bathing and shaving. Another law stops people from feeding more than 25 homeless people without a permit, and only two permits per year would be given.

I understand the laws that stop homeless people from sleeping in the parks. I wouldn't want anyone sleeping in my backyard. But, I disagree with the law that stops people from feeding more than 25 homeless people without a permit. I think that this should not be a law because the government should not stop churches or groups from serving homeless people.

Sincerely,
____ *Stiles*

After reading my son's letter I re-read Paul's four letters.

I didn't see a date, or the words "Dear" or "Sincerely", but I did notice some distinct sections, or common elements, in each of the letters.

Letter Writing

As I identified each distinct section, I tried to describe these common elements on my yellow notepad and wrote these words:

- **Greeting**
- **Introductory Blessing**
- **Giving Thanks**
- **Prayer**
- **Conclusion**

The first section in the letters contained what I called a **Greeting**.

All four of the letters, I noticed, had a greeting (or introduction), that identified who the letters were written *by* and who the letters were written *to*:

- “***Paul***, an apostle—sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead — and all the brothers with me, ***To*** the churches in Galatia” (Gal. 1:1-2)
- “***Paul***, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, ***To*** the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: (Eph. 1:1)
- “***Paul and Timothy***, servants of Christ Jesus, ***To*** all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons” (Phil. 1:1)
- “***Paul***, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and ***Timothy*** our brother, ***To*** the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse” (Col. 1:1-2)

I noticed that in each letter this “Greeting” section contained Paul’s name (and Timothy’s in the case of Philippians and Colossians) indicating that he was the author of the letter.

The Greeting also contained the word “to” indicating who the letters were written to; the recipients at the churches in each of the four locations.

A second section that I noticed was what I called the **Introductory Blessing**.

In all four of the letters Paul included a short introductory blessing to his readers immediately following the greeting. In this section, Paul used the phrase, “*grace and peace to you from God our Father*”:

- “***Grace and peace*** to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” (Gal. 1:3-5)
- “***Grace and peace*** to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (Eph. 1:2-3)
- “***Grace and peace*** to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Phil. 1:2)
- “***Grace and peace*** to you from God our Father” (Col. 1:2)

Letter Writing

A third section, I noticed could be found in three of the four letters. I called this third section **Giving Thanks**, which as the name suggests, was a section where Paul give thanks for his readers:

- “For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have ***not stopped giving thanks*** for you, remembering you in my prayers.”(Eph. 1:15-16)
- “I ***thank*** my God every time I remember you” (Phil. 1:3)
- “We always ***thank*** God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints” (Col. 1:3-4)

A fourth common section that I noticed in three of the four letters was a **Prayer**:

- “For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I ***pray*** that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I ***pray*** that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:14-19)

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- “And this is my **prayer**: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.” (Phil. 1:9-11)

- “For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped **praying** for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we **pray** this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully (Col. 1:9-11)

Letter Writing

A fifth feature that I found in Paul's letters was similar to modern letters and something that I called the "**Conclusion**".

I noticed that all four of Paul's letters contained a concluding section with final thoughts to his readers. Even though I had initially only written the word **Conclusion** on my yellow notepad, after reading through Paul's letters to learn more about the Conclusion, I added three sub-sections that seemed to be common elements within the Conclusion. I added these words:

-Conclusion

- **Prayer for Paul**
- "**Finally**"
- **Concluding Blessing**

I noticed that at the conclusion of two of the letters Paul asked his readers to pray for him and those he was with. I called this section the **Prayer for Paul**:

- "***Pray also for me***, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should." (Eph. 6:19-20)
- And ***pray for us***, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. (Col. 4:3-4)

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At the end of three of the letters I noticed that Paul used the word “**Finally**” to indicate the conclusion of the letter:

- “**Finally**, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.”(Gal. 6:17-18)
- “**Finally**, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.” (Eph. 6:10-11)
- “**Finally**, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.” (Phil. 3:1)
- “**Finally**, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” (Phil. 4:8)

I noticed also that just as all four of the letters had an “Introductory Blessing” (which used the phrase “*grace and peace to you from God our Father*”), Paul ended each of the four letters with a **Concluding Blessing** (with similar blessings of grace):

- “The **grace** of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.” (Gal. 6:18)
- “**Peace** to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **Grace** to all who

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love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.”
(Eph. 6:23-24)

- “The **grace** of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.” (Phil. 4:23)
- “**Grace** be with you.” (Col. 4:18)

On my yellow legal pad I made a chart tracking these common elements in Paul’s letters:

Common Elements to Paul’s Letters				
Section	Gal.	Eph.	Phil.	Col.
Greeting	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Initial Blessing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Giving Thanks	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prayer (for Recipients)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Conclusion – Prayer for Paul (Paul asking for prayer)	No	Yes	No	Yes
Conclusion – Use of the word “Finally”	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Concluding Blessing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

I spent some time reviewing my chart and found that one of the letters (Ephesians) had all seven of the sections, while the letters to the Colossians and Philippians lacked just one, while the letter to the Galatians lacked three.

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While looking at my chart, I noticed that the conclusion of letter to the Philippians was missing a request for prayer, something which I had called the “*Prayer for Paul*.”

“Why didn’t Paul ask the Philippians to pray for him?” I wondered.

To learn more, I re-read the letter to the Philippians.

After reading the letter, I came across an interesting passage (early in Paul’s letter), which seemed to show why he may not have specifically asked them to pray for him at the end of the letter. Paul wrote:

“for I know that *through your prayers* and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance (Phil. 1:19)

“It’s likely that Paul didn’t specifically ask the Philippians to pray for him at the end of the letter,” I reasoned, “because he knew that they were already praying for him.”

I saw too that Paul had written that the Philippians were “sharing in his trouble” (Phil. 4:14).

In the letter to the Colossians, I had noticed that its conclusion was missing the word “*finally*”, an element that could be found in each of the other letters. Compared with the other “common elements”, however, this did not seem like a significant element to me.

Next, I decided to look at the letter that was missing the most of all of the “common elements” of Paul’s letters: the letter to the Galatians. As I looked at my chart, I saw that the letter to the Galatians differed greatly from the other letters. Galatians, I noticed, lacked three important elements that were common to the other letters:

Letter Writing

- Giving Thanks
- Prayer for the recipients
- Conclusion (asking for prayer)

Those differences seemed very significant to me.

“In the other letters,” I thought, “Paul devoted space to *Giving Thanks* for his readers.”

I remembered Paul’s comment to the Philippians,

- “I ***thank*** my God every time I remember you”
(Phil. 1:3)

“The letter to Galatians has nothing like that.” I observed. “Galatians is also missing a prayer for Paul’s readers at the beginning of the letter and a request for prayer at the conclusion of the letter,” I added. “I didn’t notice any mention of the word ‘*prayer*’ anywhere in the letter. That seems pretty significant too.”

To learn more, I re-read the letter to the Galatians again.

After finishing, I thought about Paul’s omission.

“I think I know why Paul might have written this letter differently,” I concluded.

“It’s because he was concerned about them,” I thought. “He called them ‘*foolish*’ (Gal. 3:1, 3:3) and ‘*bewitched*’, and wrote that they were turning to a ‘*different gospel*’. Because of their actions, I don’t think he really wanted to give thanks or ask them to pray for him.”

After reading Paul’s letters, I decided to see what some scholars of the New Testament had written about Paul’s letters.

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As I read the scholars, I found that I was not alone in identifying these “common elements” (or sections) in Paul’s writing. New Testament scholars, I learned, had identified these elements as early as 1939, with the publication of a book called, *The Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgiving*, which was written by Paul Schubert.

In my reading of Paul’s letters, I had identified seven common elements. In reading some of the New Testament scholars, I found that some of their descriptions were similar, but in many ways very different than mine.

At the beginning of Paul’s letters, I had identified two sections which I had called the *Greeting* and the *Initial Blessing*. Many New Testament scholars, I learned, simply combined these two elements into one bigger section which they called the *Salutation*.

For the section that I had called *Giving Thanks*, New Testament scholars simply called this the *Thanksgiving*.

“That’s probably a better way of describing it,” I thought.

The scholars had also noted that all of Paul’s letters contained a Thanksgiving section except for the letter to the Galatians.

Many scholars had also identified a *Prayer* section (as I had) and a *Conclusion* section, which they referred to as the *Farewell*.¹⁶

As I was wrapping up for the evening, I noticed that one of the scholars had included a letter from the early Roman period to use as a comparison between Paul and his (non-Christian) contemporaries.

In some ways, I noticed, the early Roman letter was similar to Paul’s letter. Like Paul’s letter, the letter from the early Roman period had the “common elements” of a:

Letter Writing

- Greeting
- Prayer
- Thanksgiving
- Farewell

Unlike Paul's letters, however, the early Roman letter contained no spiritual teaching (which seemed to be the reason that Paul wrote his letters).

The writer of this early Roman letter is also quite unlike Paul in his relationship to those who he was writing to. Instead of being a spiritual leader, the writer of this ancient letter was a follower. His letter was written to someone named Saraphion, who we learn was the author's "patron":

"To Saraphion, greetings, and that you may always remain in good health in your whole person for long years to come, since your good genius allowed us to greet you with respect and salute you. For as you also make mention of us on each occasion by letter, so I here make an act of worship for you in the presence of the lords Dioskouroi and the presence of the lord Sarapis, and I pray for your safekeeping during your entire life and for the health of your children and all your household. Farewell in everything, I beg, my patron and fosterer. Greet all your folk, men and women. All the gods here, male and female, greet you. Farewell." ¹⁷

Day Nineteen - Wednesday
(February 28, 2007 – 11:39pm)

Today is the last day of February and I had one recurring thought throughout the day: “Only one more day until March, and that means *March Madness* will be starting soon.”

“*March Madness*” is the term used for the NCAA men’s and women’s college basketball tournament; a tournament that is also known as “The Road to the Final Four” and the “Big Dance”. Around this time of year, there begins a great amount of speculation (sometimes called “*Bracket-ology*”) as to which college teams will be selected for the tournament.

Tonight I switched between five basketball games on television.

ESPN, on Channel 30, had the Big East rivalry between Villanova and the University of Connecticut. During the game, one UCONN student held up a sign that used a phrase from an insurance commercial that read: “**BEATING NOVA...SO EASY A CAVEMAN COULD DO IT.**”

But there was nothing “easy” for the players in the game.

Villanova led Connecticut by six points at halftime, but in the second half, “Nova” got into foul trouble, committing a total of thirty-one fouls in the game. First, Will Sheridan fouled out with nine minutes remaining in the second half. Then Dante Cunningham fouled out with three minutes remaining. Next, Scottie Reynolds, one of the many talented college freshmen playing the game this year, fouled out with less than a minute remaining (after scoring 40 points in this game). With so many fouls, it would seem that Connecticut would win easily, but UConn had problems of their own, and made only twenty-four of forty-four attempts from the foul line.

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As Larry Brown, the former NBA coach and current executive with the Philadelphia Seventy-Sixers, watched from the stands, the UConn Huskies came within one point of tying the game at sixty-five with two minutes and twenty seven seconds remaining. But the Huskies but could not capitalize on Villanova's foul trouble to take the lead. (Final Score: Villanova 78, Connecticut 74).

The conventional wisdom, spoken by the analysts after the game, was that the win by Villaova would give them a spot in the NCAA tournament.

ESPN2, on Channel 31, had the Big Ten conference match-up between Northwestern and Indiana Universities. Northwestern was able to get within two points of Indiana with less than ten minutes remaining, before Indiana took a large lead. Clawing their way back, Northwestern came within five points with one minute and forty seconds remaining in the game. Then, with less than a minute remaining, Northwestern came within four points: 61 to 65. After an inbound play, an Indiana player with an open basket in front of him thought he heard a whistle and stopped and so turned the ball over to Northwestern. In the end, though, Indiana was able to retain their lead and win the game. (Final Score: Indiana 69, Northwestern 65).

The third game I watched, on Channel 43, was between Xavier University and St. Joseph, both of the Atlantic Ten conference. As Jerry Springer, the TV personality, provided play-by-play commentary, Xavier retained a solid lead throughout the game. (Final Score: Xavier 72, St. Joe's 62).

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The fourth game, on Channel 11, was between the University of Kentucky and the University of Georgia, both teams in the South Eastern Conference (SEC).

“We’re sitting here 19 and 9, and I’m not going to defend my record.” Tubby Smith, the head coach of Kentucky, had said earlier, responding to criticism of his team’s season.

For Kentucky, the game against Georgia was their second-to-last regular season game (their last game will be on Sunday against Florida).

At half-time, Kentucky had the lead, 36-28, a lead which they were able to maintain throughout the rest of the game. 24,000 fans cheered for the Wildcats at Rupp Arena in Lexington, Kentucky as UK won. (Final Score: Kentucky 78, Georgia 70).

The fifth game of the evening was a match-up between Maryland and the fourteenth ranked Duke University men’s basketball team.

Duke trailed for most of the game, but then came back to tie the game with five minutes and twenty-eight seconds remaining.

Unfortunately, near the end of the game, with about two minutes remaining, ESPN had a problem with its video feed. At first the image was jumping on the screen and then it disappeared completely. So, Billy Packer and the other announcers began giving radio-like “play by play” descriptions of the team’s moves on the court as the Maryland Terrapins handily defeated the Duke Blue Devils. (Final Score: Maryland 85, Duke 77).

For the *Go Eat Popcorn* project I found myself still thinking about the “*Big Picture*”.

Letter Writing

Yesterday, I had looked at the very obvious “big picture” idea which was that Paul’s words were communicated through *letters*. Today, I thought of another very obvious “big picture” idea: that Paul’s writing could be described as **TEACHING** or **TRAINING**.

“Paul’s letters are so different from the letters that I send,” I thought. “My written letters (the few that there are) are mostly thank-you notes to just one person.”

“My emails for work,” I continued, “are nothing like what Paul wrote. They might be addressed to more than one person, but they are more related to tasks that need to be done or attempts at scheduling meetings. Paul’s letters are *instructions* to many people.”

I thought about the times when I’ve given instructions to the boys, telling them, “You should help Mom.” or “Remember, don’t hit girls.”

As I thought more about Paul’s letters, I was reminded of the training manuals that I have written over the years where I would write phrases like,

- “I recommend that you do this...”
- “Avoid this...”
- “Watch out for that...”

And even though I did not specifically write the phrase in the training manuals, I thought about how the implicit phrase or theme in all of my training manuals has been:

“I want you to know that...”

“In Paul’s letters, he wanted his readers to know and to do certain things,” I thought.

Week Three

As I read through Paul's letters again, I saw that Paul used words that would let his readers clearly know that he was teaching and training.

In the letter to the Galatians I saw these phrases indicating Paul's desire to teach and train his readers:

- "I want you to know, brothers" (Gal. 1:11)
- "Consider" (Gal. 3:6)
- "Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life" (Gal. 3:16)
- "What I mean is this..." (Gal. 3:17)
- "What I am saying is that..." (Gal. 4:1)
- "So I say.." (Gal. 5:16)
- "I plead with you, brothers, become like me" (Gal. 4:12)

In the letter to the Ephesians I read these words and phrases:

- "remember" (Eph. 2:12)
- "For this reason..." (Eph. 3:1)
- "Surely you have heard about" (Eph. 3:2)

Letter Writing

- “In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ” (Eph. 3:4)
- “I ask you, therefore...” (Eph. 3:13)
- “For this reason...” (Eph. 3:14)
- “I urge you” (Eph. 4:1)
- “So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord” (Eph. 4:17)
- “Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus” (Eph. 4:21)
- I also read many specific instructions to “wives”, “husbands”, “children” (in Eph. 5 and 6)

In the letter to the Philippians I read these phrases where Paul was clearly teaching and training:

- “Now I want you to know, brothers...” (Phil. 1:12)
- “It is true that...” (Phil. 1:15)
- “conduct yourselves...” (Phil. 1:27)
- “make my joy complete by being...” (Phil. 2:2)
- “your attitude should be...” (Phil. 2:5)

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- “So you too should...” (Phil. 2:18)
- “Welcome...” (Phil. 2:29)
- “Watch out...” (Phil. 3:2)
- “I plead with...” (Phil. 4:2)
- “Yes, and I ask you...help these women...” (Phil. 4:3)
- “Do not be...” (Phil. 4:6)
- “think about such things” (Phil. 4:8)

In the letter to the Colossians I read these words that indicated that Paul was teaching and training:

- “I want you to know...” (Col. 2:1)
- “I tell you this so that...” (Col. 2:4)
- “continue to...” (Col. 2:6)
- “continue to...” (Col. 2:7)
- “See to it that...” (Col. 2:8)
- “Therefore do not let anyone...” (Col. 2:16)
- “Do not let anyone...” (Col. 2:18)

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- “set your hearts on...” (Col. 3:1)
- “Set your minds on...” (Col. 3:2)
- “Put to death...” (Col. 3:5)
- “But now you must rid...” (Col. 3:8)
- “Do not...” (Col. 3:9)
- “clothe yourselves with...” (Col. 3:12)
- “put on...” (Col. 3:14)
- “devote yourselves to...” (Col. 4:2)
- “Pray that...” (Col. 4:4)
- “Be wise in the way that...” (Col. 4:5)
- “Let your conversation be...” (Col. 4:6)
- “After this letter has been read to you...”
(Col. 4:16)
- “Tell...” (Col. 4:17)
- “Remember...” (Col. 4:18)
- And many more specific instructions to wives,
husbands, children and slaves (in Col. 3)

Week Three

As I finished reading the letters it was clear to me that Paul was using words that indicated that he was training and instructing his readers.

As I thought about this further I wrote the following assumptions that were clear to me about Paul's teaching and training.

Paul felt that:

1. he needed to write these letters to help his readers do specific things.
2. he had the authority and knowledge of his subject to write the letters.
3. his letters should be read and acted upon.

"There's a lot that I still need to learn about these letters," I thought. "Like, what was the point of Paul's teaching or training?"

"He obviously cared deeply for those that he was writing to and wanted to help them," I concluded.

I could see too in the letters that Paul was not writing to non-Christians (or "seekers" as they have recently been labeled). He was not *'making a case for Christ'* in trying to persuade non-believers to become Christians.

Instead, in all four of the letters, Paul assumed that his readers were *Christians*.

Paul reminded his readers that they had **already** put their faith in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins.

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I had noticed that in many of his letters, Paul's words were translated into English in the past tense, indicating to his readers that they had already received the Gospel and should continue the Christian way of life:

- "before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly *portrayed* as crucified" (Gal. 3:1)
- "*formerly* you did not know God...but now you know God" (Gal. 4:8-9)
- "you *heard* of him" (Eph. 4:21)
- "you *were taught*" (Eph. 4:22)
- God "*began* a good work in you" (Phil. 1:6)

In addition to the past tense, Paul used other phrases to indicate that his readers had *already* received the gift of salvation from God:

- "if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ" (Phil. 2:1)
- "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12)
- "we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:4)

"So Paul's letter writing was not necessarily calling his readers to something totally new or different," I concluded.

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“Rather, he was encouraging them to continue on in what he originally taught them.”

“For Paul,” I thought, “one of his goals in writing the letters was to have his readers grow in *maturity* as Christians. He encouraged, persuaded and reasoned with them to grow in their knowledge and understanding of Christ; whom they had already accepted as their Savior.”

The word *mature*, I noticed appeared five times in three of the four letters. In Colossians, Paul explained that a co-worker was always “wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, *mature* and fully assured.” (Col. 4:12). In Ephesians, Paul explained that Jesus gave gifts “to prepare God’s people for works of service...until we all...become *mature*, attaining the full measure of Jesus Christ.” (Eph. 4:12-13)

To learn more, I turned to some reference books.

One New Testament scholar summarized Paul’s care for his readers by noting that “undoubtedly the chief impulse that governed Paul’s letter writing practice was *pastoral*.”¹⁸

The scholars also noted that ancient letters (especially those from a master to a subordinate), used rhetoric in their writing, which would frequently include a “moral teaching.”

This “moral teaching” I learned, was what scholars called *paraenesis*, which in the Greek and Roman world generally meant “advice and exhortation to *continue* in a certain way of life.”¹⁹

One scholar explained it this way:

“The whole paraenetic tradition of rhetoric developed in antiquity. Paraenesis includes not only precepts but also such things as advice, supporting argumentation,

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various modes of encouragement and dissuasion, the use of examples, modes of conduct, and so on.”²⁰

“Paul’s writing,” I thought, “definitely falls within the paraenetic tradition, as he assumed that his readers already knew certain truths and should *continue* living in the light of that truth. He wasn’t teaching them something new or radically different in his letters, he was encouraging them to *continue* in the faith that they had already received.”

As I was concluding my reading tonight of New Testament scholars, it was interesting to learn that writers in the ancient Greek and Roman world also frequently used “*admonition*” (like Paul did), to encourage the recipients of their letters. According to one scholar,

“Writers frequently said that admonition produces *sophrosune*, which means ‘sound understanding’, but is usually translated by such words as temperance, self-control, moderation, modesty, and sober-mindedness. Furthermore, the moralist used admonition in order to bring about *metanoia*, i.e. repentance, a change of mind.”²¹

“That description definitely describes Paul’s letters.” I thought. “He encouraged his readers to grow in their understanding of Christ – which would lead to repentance and a change of mind.”

Day Twenty - Thursday
(March 1, 2007 – 10:52pm)

I still felt crummy today.

On my way to work I received a call on my cell phone from the elementary school nurse who told me that our oldest son had a fever, so, I turned around and drove to his school and brought him home. After Sue arrived, I left again for work.

I worked downtown today and when I arrived at the office I was greeted by a spiritual question from my co-worker.

“Are you a Calvinist or an Arminian?” my co-worker asked. He and his wife have been attending a class at their church and the pastor had brought up the issue the night before.

I told him about my beliefs, shaped for many years by Calvinists in the Reform tradition.

Later, our nice weather changed to rain and high winds, and I was stuck in traffic for an hour and a half for my commute home.

As my car crawled slowing over the interstate, I listened to the car radio and a news story about a shortage of chaplains in the Army Reserve and National Guard.

“Maybe I should do that,” I said to myself.

Lately, I’ve been thinking of ways to get more involved in Christian ministry, but to my annoyance, I am still not sure how “ministry” might look for me.

When I arrived home I knocked over two snow shovels in the garage, alerting Sue and the kids (who were inside the house) of my arrival.

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“Go see if that’s Dad or a burglar,” Sue asked our oldest son with a smile.

When I opened the door leading to the house our oldest son was standing in the doorway holding a large folder high above his head, looking as if he was going to bring it down on me.

“Arrrrrrr,” he yelled.

“What the heck!” I said, startled stepping backwards.

He put the folder down and ran back to the table.

“It wasn’t a burglar, it was Dad,” he told Sue.

“Why would you do that?” I asked angrily once I entered the house, “you almost got hit in the face.”

“Just like on the funny show,” our youngest son said – referring to the television program called *America’s Funniest Home Videos* that captures people being startled and falling down.

“I’m serious,” I said to our oldest son. “If you keep doing that there’s a good chance you’ll get punched, not on purpose but as a reaction.”

“Sorry, Dad,” he said remorsefully.

After dinner, I took some sinus and cold medicine, read a magazine then took a long bath. My head was throbbing and my sinuses remained congested.

Afterwards, I did some work on my laptop as the kids were going to sleep.

After the family had gone to bed, I laid down on our living room couch and tried to read more of the magazine.

Soon, still experiencing a headache, I turned off the lights.

I was surprised that I did not fall immediately to sleep; the medicine I was taking for my cold seemed to be making me more awake than tired.

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Laying in the dark, my thoughts turned to the many overnight visits that I had taken to my Grandparent's old farmhouse when I was a child.

My grandparents lived about twenty minutes from the city where I grew up and it was always an exciting time for me to visit them and to stay the night.

I remembered lying on their brown couch in the darkness, listening to the sounds of the night, just before falling to sleep.

Tonight, resting in the darkness of my living room, I could almost hear the slow, loud ticking of my grandparent's alarm clock.

I could almost see my grandparent's wooden Ten Commandments hanging on the wall above the couch where I lay.

I could almost smell the Vicks coming from the wrap that my Grandfather wore around his throat at night. I could almost hear his labored breathing and his nightly coughing bouts. I could almost see him walking with labored steps from his bedroom across their hardwood floors to the bathroom, then passing me on the couch to get a drink of cold water in the nearby kitchen.

I could almost smell the cigar that he had put out earlier in the night, resting in an ash tray on a small wooden table next to the rocking chair where he sat in the evening to read his *U.S. News and World Report* magazine.

I could almost hear the barking of their black collie named *Lady*, and the sounds beyond the house of the farm animals, the sheep, the steer, the dairy cows and chicken.

I could almost smell the dust and hay of the barn and the dark, rich tilled earth of the fields that lay just beyond the barn; earth that was lumpy, rough and difficult to walk upon, soon to be filled with corn and beans and alfalfa.

I could remember all of those things tonight.

Day Twenty One - Friday
(March 2, 2007 – 11:02pm)

Okay, so I probably took too much medicine last night to get rid of my cold...

Today I was still fighting my illness, and after work I came home and took a nap.

After a brief rest, I met my parents for dinner.

My parents (whom the boys call Mimi Betty and Papa John) had driven three hours from their house to be with the boys for their weekend activities.

They had also reserved a room at a nearby hotel and (fortunately for the boys) it had an indoor pool. After dinner, the little boys swam, while our oldest son, still also feeling somewhat sick, sat on the side of the pool with the adults.

And for another day in a row I failed to do any work on the *Go Eat Popcorn* project.

Day Twenty Two - Saturday
(March 3, 2007 - 10:51pm)

Youth sports can be difficult sometimes.

It can be hard to communicate to young children the importance of sportsmanship and fairness when they don't see it demonstrated by adults.

Today, at noon, our middle son had his second basketball game of the day (his first was at eight o'clock). During the second game, our middle son felt like the "deck was stacked" against his team. When they took to the court, he and the other eight year olds on his team were dwarfed by the players on the opposing team.

The parents with children on my son's team kept saying, "Those kids look like they are two or three years older than our boys."

They were in fact all eight year olds. Our middle son's team lost, and he shed some tears on the way home.

I explained to him how I had discovered that the other coach had in fact "stacked the deck" by recruiting players and then making many of their fathers "Assistant Coaches" so that he wouldn't have to pick players in the "player draft" at the beginning of the season like the other teams had to do.

It was a difficult morning for him.

In the afternoon the boys and I watched some basketball on television.

I was reminded that for the teams in the bigger conferences, this weekend would mark the end of their regular season. For teams in smaller conferences, this weekend would bring an end to their conference tournaments, which meant

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that each of the tournament winners would get an automatic bid to the NCAA tournament.

The first game that we watched this afternoon was the last game in the regular season for two Big Ten Conference teams - a match up between the Number Four nationally ranked Wisconsin Badgers and the Michigan State Spartans.

Wisconsin, down by two points at the end of the game, was able to score a three point shot with only four seconds remaining. (Final Score: Wisconsin 52, Michigan State 50).

Next, we watched UCLA, the Number Two ranked team in the nation, play the University of Washington for their regular season finale. Our middle son, who really enjoys math, figured out that because they were on the west coast, they had started their game at eleven o'clock in the morning.

I really enjoyed seeing the Washington Huskies take the early lead against the UCLA Bruins; as winning against UCLA can be difficult. Even though they had struggled this season, and were ranked seventh in their PAC Ten conference, Washington got an early lead of 23-20 with eight minutes remaining in the first half.

While I watched, I enjoyed seeing the large purple "W" at center court and hearing the cheers of "Let's go Huskies" from the fans. I thought of my Dad's second cousin, a wonderful man by the name of Marv Harshman, who had for many years been the head basketball coach at the University of Washington. Prior to his coaching the Huskies, he had coached the men's basketball teams first at Pacific Lutheran University and then at Washington State. Unfortunately, Cousin Marv coached during the same time that Coach John Wooden was coaching at UCLA. So, for many, many years, it was common for Marv's teams to come in second place in the PAC-Ten Division to Coach Wooden's national champions. And in

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those days, only the conference winners advanced to the NCAA Tournament.

Marv, like my Grandmother Stiles, was born on the northwestern plains (Marv in western Wisconsin, my grandmother in eastern Minnesota) in the early part of the 20th century. Marv's parents moved west for job opportunities and settled in Washington state, while my Grandmother as a teenager moved west as well, going first to North Dakota, then Montana, then Wyoming.

As a kid, it was always fun for me to see Marv and his family at family reunions and cookouts when we'd visit relatives in Washington. I remembered too that my Dad had told me recently that Marv would be celebrating his ninetieth birthday this year.

Mike Krzyzewski (or "Coach K" as he's known), the head basketball coach at Duke University, wrote this about Cousin Marv in the introduction to a book called *Last Dance* by John Feinstein:

"As I was leaving the brunch, I ran into Marv Harshman. Like Bill Foster, Harshman is retired now, but years ago he was a great coach at the University of Washington. In fact, the first NCAA Tournament game I coached was against a Marv Harshman-coached Washington team in 1984. We lost. Marv and I joked about the fact that he had started me on the road to having the most NCAA Tournament wins of any coach -- with a loss. I walked out of the brunch with a big smile on my face. Being in that room with so many of my colleagues from so many years and so many games was great. But to run into Foster and Harshman, two men who played a role in my life and were great coaches long before anyone thought to ask

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me to do a commercial for anything, was a great reminder to me of what the Final Four is all about. It is much bigger than the four teams and coaches who have the honor of playing in it in a given year. It has far more scope than three basketball games. It is about much more than wins and losses—although the wins and losses that occur will be remembered forever by the participants. The Final Four is about understanding how lucky we all are to be part of college basketball.”²²

Today, before the Washington-UCLA game concluded, we had to leave to take our oldest son to a four o'clock basketball game about an hour away from our house. I was pleased to hear the score of the basketball game on the car radio, as the Washington Huskies upset the highly favored UCLA Bruins. (Final Score: Washington 61, UCLA 51).

My parents drove with me to watch our oldest son's game. His team struggled, but my parents didn't care, and my Mom cheered loudly for his team.

“Great job!” she said to him afterwards. “You've improved since the last time we saw you.”

In the evening we attended the annual *Blue and Gold Banquet* - an annual awards ceremony for our sons' Cub Scout Pack. The meeting was great, and both our seven year old and our eight year old, along with all the other boys in the Pack were called to the stage and presented with their badges and awards to advance to their next rank. Sue did a lot of planning for the event and many people commented on how nice it was.

Later in the evening my parents took the kids back to their hotel to swim.

Week Three

For the *Go Eat Popcorn* project, like last Saturday and the Saturday before that, I decided to summarize what I'd learned this week.

Overall, I felt pretty discouraged because I had not done as much as I had in the previous weeks.

In reviewing my notes I saw that I had tried to learn about the “big picture” of Paul’s writing. First, I had identified that one of the most obvious things was that Paul was writing *letters*. I had also identified the following pattern in Paul’s letters:

- **Greeting**
- **Blessing**
- **Giving Thanks**
- **Prayer**
- **Conclusion**

I had seen that most of the letters contained each of these elements, with the exception of Galatians (which omitted the Thanksgiving, a prayer for the recipients and a request of prayer for Paul).

Another “big picture” item that I had identified this week was that Paul’s letters could be described as *teaching* or *training*. In doing some reading by New Testament scholars I found that Paul’s letters were part of a tradition in ancient writing of rhetoric, called *paraenetic teaching*, which meant that he was calling his readers to *continue* what he had originally taught them, instead of doing something different or new.

Even in the midst of my discouragement though, as I thought about the *Go Eat Popcorn* project, it was exciting to think about learning even more about Paul’s letters in the weeks to come.

Week Four – The Big Idea

Day Twenty Two - Sunday
(March 4, 2007 - 11:48pm)

Today is Sunday, and we went to our church's eleven o'clock service. The church service was focused on celebrating the conclusion of the "Luke 4 Challenge"; the financial campaign for the *Healing Center* and the funds to drill water wells in Nigeria.

At the end of the sermon, church members were asked to make their financial commitments for the *Healing Center* and the other projects. It was inspiring to watch as hundreds of people came forward with pledge cards and drop them in large containers at the front of the church's auditorium.

Afterwards, I went with my parents and the boys to a restaurant near our house called *Rafferty's*.

Rafferty's is one of my favorite local restaurants, serving a large variety of Southern favorites including: sweet iced tea, potato soup and fried chicken salad.

When we first arrived at the restaurant, we had to wait for a table and from the waiting area we were able to watch a few minutes of the basketball game displayed on a television above the bar in the restaurant.

The game was between Florida (ranked number five in the nation) and a struggling University of Kentucky team. The game appeared close for awhile, but Florida was victorious. (Final Score: Florida 85, Kentucky 72).

Many people, we had heard, were predicting the immediate departure of Tubby Smith, Kentucky's head basketball coach. It was unfortunate, because I had enjoyed his coaching over the years at Kentucky.

The Big Idea

After we were seated, our conversation turned as it usually does this time of year to our picks in the NCAA Tournament's *Final Four*.

Our eight year old picked Ohio State, Wisconsin, UCLA and "UNC if they beat Duke", he told us.

Our seven year old picked Ohio State, Wisconsin, UCLA and Kansas.

My mother added, "I think Michigan State will do well."

After we ordered and waited for our food, my Dad quizzed the boys on the location of lesser known colleges.

"Where's Creighton?" he asked.

"South Carolina?" someone guessed.

"Somewhere down south?" I wondered.

"It's actually in Omaha, Nebraska." Dad answered.

"How about Auburn?" he asked next.

We guessed again and one of the boys knew it was in Alabama.

"How about Gonzaga?" he asked.

"Come on Papa," our oldest son said. "Everyone knows it's in Washington, they've been the Tournament for years."

"Yep, it's in Spokane." Dad said. "How about Weber State?"

We all guessed several different states...all incorrect.

"It's actually in Ogden, Utah." Dad told us. "They're in the Big Sky conference."

How my Dad remembered these places was mind-boggling to me.

Because of his love of history, geography and other trivia, a cousin from Seattle once said that his nickname should be:

Week Four

the “Great Oracle of Findlay” (the city where my parents live). But, then she laughed and added, “No, we can’t call him that because everyone would use the acronym and call him: *“the G.O.O.F.”*”

After lunch we returned home and watched more basketball.

The first game of the afternoon happened to be the finals of the Missouri Conference tournament, between Creighton from Omaha, Nebraska (as Dad had reminded us) and the Number Eleven ranked Southern Illinois University.

The winner of this small conference, along with the other winners of the Conference tournaments today, would get “automatic bids” into the NCAA tournament.

The Southern Illinois Salukis, from Carbondale, Illinois and the Creighton “Jay’s” played a very close game. Creighton, however, was able to win against the higher ranked Salukis. (Final Score: Creighton 67, Southern Illinois 61).

At the end of the game the television commentators announced the winners of other smaller conferences that were finishing their tournaments this weekend.

First they announced the winners of the Atlantic Sun League. In that game, the Belmont Bruins earned their second trip to the “Big Dance” with a big win over East Tennessee State on Saturday. (Final Score: Belmont 94, East Tennessee 67).

Next was the Big South League, where the Winthrop Eagles defeated the Virginia Military Institute “Keydets” in their seventh conference tournament win in nine years. (Final Score: Winthrop 84, VMI 81).

In the Ohio Valley conference, Eastern Kentucky University - the conference number two team, upset the

The Big Idea

number one ranked Austin Peay. (Final Score: ECU 63, Austin Peay 62).

The announcers also reported that on Friday, in the Southern Conference, Davidson College defeated the College of Charleston (Final Score: Davidson 72, College of Charleston 65).

Later in the afternoon I watched part of the game between Number Fourteen ranked Duke and the eighth ranked University of North Carolina. The game was very good with Duke's Greg Paulus scoring 21 points and Carolina's Tyler Hansborough scoring 26. Hansborough, however, had to leave the game with fourteen seconds remaining because of a hard foul to the nose. (Final Score: UNC 86, Duke 72).

In addition to the games, the television coverage also featured multiple commercials for the Tournament Selection Show scheduled to take place in seven days, on March 11th as well as the NCAA Tournament which will begin on March 15th.

At 5:30 I took our oldest son to another try out for a spring and summer basketball team. I read a magazine, while his coach, a former NBA player named Ronnie Grandison put the boys through drills of lay-ups, jump shots and dribbling.

Over the years, all of our sons have had Ronnie as a coach in summer clinics, camps and leagues. I was hopeful that our oldest son would make his team again.

When we returned home at seven o'clock, Sue had a great dinner ready for us. And after dinner I read to the boys a few pages of C.S. Lewis' book called *The Magician's Nephew* before they went to sleep.

Later in the evening, I spent some time in worship and prayer and eventually had a chance to think about the *Go Eat Popcorn* project.

Week Four

“What’s the big idea in Paul’s four letters?” I wondered. “That’s what I really need to focus on this week.”

After thinking for a few minutes, I wrote one word on my yellow legal pad:

Jesus

After all of my reading of Paul’s letters to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, it was clear to me that each letter was about one person: *Jesus*.

“The letters are about who Jesus was, what he did, how to follow him and how to live a life in Him,” I concluded.

To confirm that I was on the right track, I read the letters again and made a chart noting every time the name of Jesus appeared in Paul’s four letters.

Number of times the name Jesus appears				
Ch.	Galatians	Ephesians	Philippians	Colossians
1	3	7	8	3
2	3	5	5	1
3	5	4	5	1
4	1	1	4	1
5	2	1		
6	3	2		
Total:	17	20	22	6

What I found was that in every chapter of Paul’s four letters, the name of Jesus is mentioned.

I remembered that chapter numbers were not added until later, but looking at the letters by chapters let me see that Jesus was a major topic throughout Paul’s writing.

The Big Idea

I saw that:

- Galatians had seventeen appearances of Jesus' name
- Ephesians had twenty
- Philippians had twenty-two
- Colossians had six

The total for all four letters, I calculated was sixty-five.

It was interesting to note that Paul often used the name *Jesus* with the name *Christ*. It was typical to see in his writing the name *Christ Jesus* or *Jesus Christ*. In fact, of the sixty-five times where the name *Jesus* was mentioned in Paul's letters, sixty-one of those times the name *Christ* appeared before or after it.

I found only four cases where the name *Jesus* appeared by itself (without the name *Christ*). This occurred, interestingly, once in each of the four letters:

- "I bear on my body the marks of *Jesus*"
(Gal. 6:17)
- "Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in *Jesus*"
(Eph. 4:21)
- "at the name of *Jesus* every knee should bow"
(Phil. 2:10)
- "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord *Jesus*"
(Col. 3:17)

Week Four

As I read the letters, I also found that on many occasions Paul used the name *Christ* alone (without the corresponding name *Jesus* before or after it). One example I noticed was Galatians 2:17, where Paul wrote,

“does that mean that *Christ* promotes sin?”

Because the name *Christ* appeared so frequently, I made another chart, listing the times that the name appeared by itself (and not with the word *Jesus*).

Number of times the name “Christ” appears by itself				
Ch.	Galatians	Ephesians	Philippians	Colossians
1	4	6	10	6
2	6	4	3	9
3	6	4	5	7
4	1	6	0	1
5	3	9		
6	2	2		
Total:	22	31	18	23

I noticed that in all but one chapter in the four letters, the name of Christ appeared by itself. The total for all four letters, I calculated was ninety-four.

“That seems like a lot.” I thought.

The Big Idea

“I should add the two charts together.” I concluded. “Clearly, Paul’s references to *Jesus*, *Christ*, *Jesus Christ*, or *Christ Jesus* were all in reference to the same person.”

So, I soon made a chart summing up the number of times the name Jesus or Christ appeared.

(So as not to double-count, I counted only as one instance where the name *Jesus Christ* or *Christ Jesus* appeared together).

Number of times the names “Jesus” or “Christ” appear				
Ch.	Galatians	Ephesians	Philippians	Colossians
1	7	13	18	9
2	9	9	8	10
3	11	8	10	8
4	2	7	4	2
5	5	10		
6	5	4		
Total:	39	51	40	29

I looked at the totals:

- Galatians had 39 instances of the name Jesus or Christ
- Ephesians had the name listed 51 times
- Philippians had the name listed 40 times
- in Colossians the name appeared 29 times

Next I calculated the *total* number of times that the name was used in the four letters.

“His name appears a total of 159 times in the letter’s 503 verses. That’s a lot.” I thought.

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“Certainly *Jesus Christ* is the ‘big idea’ of the letters.” I concluded. “But I wonder, what did Paul believe about Jesus?”

To learn more, I read the letters again looking to gain a better understanding of Paul’s description of who Jesus was.

As I read the letters again, one of the first things that I noticed was that Paul believed that Jesus was **God’s Son**:

- “God...was pleased to reveal his *Son* in me” (Gal. 1:15-16)
- “I live by faith in the *Son* of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20)
- “But when the time had fully come, God sent his *son*” (Gal. 4:4)
- “until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the *Son* of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13)
- “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the *Son* he loves” (Col. 1:13)

Not only did Paul describe Jesus as God’s Son, he also explained that those who believe in Christ are made to be God’s sons.

I was amazed at the number of times Paul used the word “son” to describe both Jesus and His followers in only a few verses in Galatians:

The Big Idea

“But when the time had fully come, God sent his *Son*, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of *sons*. Because you are *sons*, God sent the Spirit of his *Son* into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, *Abba, Father*. So you are no longer a slave, but a *son*; and since you are a *son*, God has made you also an heir.” (Gal. 4:4-7)

Paul explained that because God sent his Son, those who believed in Him have been made sons of God.

In addition to being God’s Son, Paul also believed that Jesus was the ***Lord***.

In Galatians, the title “Lord Jesus” appeared in three places:

- “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the *Lord* Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:3)
- “May I never boast except in the cross of our *Lord* Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14)
- “The grace of our *Lord* Jesus Christ be with your spirit” (Gal. 6:18)

In Ephesians, Paul used the title “Lord Jesus” or “Lord Jesus Christ” seven times:

- “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the *Lord* Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:2)

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- “Praise be to the God and Father of our *Lord* Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:3)
- “For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the *Lord* Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you” (Eph. 1:15)
- “I keep asking that the God of our *Lord* Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation” (Eph. 1:17)
- “always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our *Lord* Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:20)
- “Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the *Lord* Jesus Christ” (Eph. 6:23)
- “Grace to all who love our *Lord* Jesus Christ with an undying love” (Eph. 6:24)

In the letter to the Philippians there were six references to Jesus as Lord, where Paul either used the phrases “Lord Jesus”, “Jesus Christ is Lord” or “Jesus my Lord”:

- “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the *Lord* Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:2)
- “and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is *Lord*, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:11)

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- “I hope in the *Lord* Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you” (Phil. 2:19)
- “What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my *Lord*” (Phil. 3:8)
- “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the *Lord* Jesus Christ,” (Phil. 3:20)
- “The grace of the *Lord* Jesus Christ be with your spirit” (Phil. 4:23)

The letter to the Colossians had four instances of the title “Lord Jesus” or “Jesus as Lord”:

- “We always thank God, the Father of our *Lord* Jesus Christ” (Col. 1:3)
- “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as *Lord*, continue to live in him” (Col. 2:6)
- “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the *Lord* Jesus” (Col. 3:17)
- “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (Col. 3:23-24)

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“In the four letters,” I summarized, “Paul described Jesus as *Lord* twenty times.”

And not only did Paul describe Jesus as simply *the Lord*, he often used the phrase *our Lord* in describing Christ.

“So, it’s obvious that he saw Jesus as *his Lord* and the Lord of the churches he was writing to.”

As I thought about this concept, I remembered a phrase from the *Book of Common Prayer* (used by the Church of England and other Anglicans in their worship services).

After a passage from the Gospels is read, the reader says the words: “The Gospel of the Lord.” Then, the congregation responds with the phrase,

“Praise to you Lord Christ.”

“That phrase really captures Paul’s thinking of Jesus in these letters,” I thought. “Not only did he call Jesus the *Son of God*, but he called Jesus his *Lord*.”

I paused.

“Because he believed that Jesus was *his Lord*, he therefore saw himself as Christ’s servant and follower.”

“It would be good to learn more about how Paul saw himself as a servant of Christ,” I concluded.

Day Twenty Three - Monday
(March 5, 2007 - 9:33pm)

Today is Monday, and the beginning of college basketball's *Championship Week*.

For most of the larger schools, this is the week that follows their regular season with today marking the beginning of their conference tournaments. For the smaller schools, who have already been playing their conference tournaments for several days, today marks the end of many of their conference tournaments.

Tonight the boys and I watched as three teams received automatic bids into the NCAA Tournament.

The first game was a match-up between Virginia Commonwealth University (the conference number one ranked team) and the conference number five ranked George Mason University. They played in the finals of the Colonial Athletic Association. George Mason had been the "Cinderella Team" in last year's NCAA tournament; starting the tournament with a very low ranking but reaching the *Final Four*. This year, however, they were unable to win their conference championship. (Final Score: VCU 65, George Mason 59).

The second game of the evening was in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference, where Siena, the conference number four team, played the number two ranked Niagara. (Final Score: Niagara 83, Siena 79).

The third conference championship game was in the West Coast Conference, where Gonzaga, the conference number one ranked team, played the number two ranked Santa Clara. Gonzaga, as my Dad had reminded us on Sunday, is a school

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located in Spokane, Washington, which surprisingly, for a school with a student body of only 6,000 has played very well against larger schools in the NCAA Tournament in recent years. (Final Score: Gonzaga 77, Santa Clara 68).

Tonight for the *Go Eat Popcorn* project, my thoughts turned again to the *Big Idea* of Paul's letters.

I thought first about what I had learned the night before.

"The letters are about following Jesus." I said to myself.

I thought too about a documentary that I had seen earlier in the evening, called *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* that was produced by the director of the movie *Titanic*. The documentary showed a number of stone boxes, called ossuaries, which claimed to contain the bones of Jesus and his followers.

"I don't buy it." I said to myself as I watched.

With all of the media hype around the documentary, it was funny to read a cartoon in *Newsweek* magazine earlier in the day that showed an archeologist surrounded by ossuaries who said,

"We are certain this is the crypt of Jesus. We found a bracelet that says, ***What Would I Do?***"

As I was discounting the claims in the documentary, I thought about how for Christians, if they were true, it would be "T.E.O.T.W.A.W.K.I." as a friend of mine would say. That's my friend's abbreviation for the phrase, "The End Of The World As We Know It."

Why would it be the "end of the world as I know it"?

Because I, like Paul and other Christians, believe in a *risen* Christ.

The Big Idea

If the bones of Christ were really found, then my beliefs and those of most Christians would be false.

As I watched part of the documentary, I had to wonder, “Why would Jesus’ followers be so vocal about his being raised from the dead? They were tortured and suffered and were even killed for their beliefs.”

“If the faith of the early Christians was all a hoax, wouldn’t they have told their torturers?” I wondered. “Wouldn’t they have wanted to stop their suffering and avoid persecution? That is the reaction most people would have.”

My guess was that the real hoax was the information presented in the documentary.

“Perhaps,” I thought, “the boxes were really first century ossuaries, but the names of Jesus and the others were added later. It could have easily been done.”

Soon my thoughts returned to what I had learned the night before. I had found it encouraging to look at all of the instances where the names “Jesus” and “Christ” appeared in Paul’s letters.

“Clearly Paul saw Jesus as God’s Son,” I had concluded. “And he saw himself as a servant to Christ.”

Tonight, I decided to ask a few questions about Paul’s belief in Jesus.

“How did Paul come to his knowledge of Christ?” I wondered.

As I read the letters tonight, I looked for information about Paul’s history and how he might have learned about Jesus. In Philippians I saw that Paul wrote about his Jewish roots, saying that he was,

“circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, in

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regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.” (Phil. 3:5-6)

In Galatians, Paul informed his readers,

“For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.”(Gal. 1:13-14)

In these passages Paul said that he was full of zeal for his Jewish faith, “advancing in Judaism”, and “faultless” for legalistic righteousness. He also noted that he “formerly” and “intensely” persecuted the church.

“But why did he change?” I wondered.

To learn more, I read the letters again.

As I was reading, I noticed that in several of the letters, Paul wrote about a *revelation* that he received.

- “I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by *revelation* from Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:12)
- “God...was pleased to *reveal* his Son in me...I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was...” (Gal. 1:15-17)

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- “I went in response to a *revelation* and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles” (Gal. 2:2)
- “Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by *revelation*, as I have already written briefly” (Eph. 3:2-3)

“So Paul learned about Christ through a *revelation* from God,” I concluded.

I remembered the account given in the Book of Acts that described Paul encountering Christ on the road to Damascus as he was on his way to persecute members of the church.

“Saul, Saul.” Jesus said (Saul was Paul’s name before he encountered Christ). “Why do you persecute me?”

As I continued reading, it was interesting to see in the letters that Paul felt this revelation was closely related to his *mission*.

In many of the letters Paul made it clear that he felt called by God to go the Gentiles (those who are non-Jews):

- “God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might *preach him among the Gentiles* (Gal. 1:15-16)
- “I went up again to Jerusalem...and set before them the gospel *that I preach among the Gentiles* (Gal. 2:1-2)
- “On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of *preaching the gospel to the Gentiles*, just as Peter had been to the Jews. For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was

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also at work in my ministry as *an apostle to the Gentiles.*"
(Gal. 2:7-8)

- "For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus *for the sake of you Gentiles*" (Eph. 3:1)
- "Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: *to preach to the Gentiles* the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8)
- "To them God has chosen *to make known among the Gentiles* the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory...To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me. (Col. 1:27 and 29)

"So Paul made it clear in his letters that he felt called by God to go to non-Jewish people," I concluded. "And he knew this from a *revelation* from God."

"But what specifically did Paul believe about Christ?" I wondered.

I thought about this for awhile.

Then, suddenly it hit me.

"For Paul," I thought, "his concept of Christ was not of an uninvolved and disinterested god who passively watched people live their lives. Rather, Paul described Jesus as being *active*, one who had done things in the past, is doing something now and will do things in the future."

"Paul," I continued, "frequently referred to Jesus' *actions.*"

I paused for a moment.

"Why don't I write down the actions of Christ that Paul described?" I thought. "Doing that could give me a sense of

The Big Idea

Paul's concept of Christ, or his *Christology*, as the theologians would call it."

Next, I wrote down all of Jesus' actions as Paul described them in his four letters, starting first with the letter to the Galatians:

Action of Jesus (in Galatians)	Verse
sent Paul	Gal. 1:1
gives peace	Gal. 1:3
gave himself for sins to rescue from the present evil age	Gal. 1:4
gives grace	Gal. 1:6
provides revelation	Gal. 1:12
gives freedom	Gal. 2:4
justifies	Gal. 2:15, 2:17
was crucified	Gal. 3:1
redeemed people from the curse of the law	Gal. 3:13
redeemed people so the blessing could come to Gentiles	Gal. 3:14
gives what is promised because of faith	Gal. 3:22
enables people to be "sons of God"	Gal. 3:26
enables those "in Christ" to be "Abraham's seed" and "heirs according to the promise"	Gal. 3:29
redeemed those under the law to receive "full rights of sons"	Gal. 4:4
will "form" in His people	Gal. 4:19
sets people free	Gal. 5:1
crucifies "the world" in people	Gal. 6:14
gives grace	Gal. 6:18

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Next, I looked at the actions of Jesus in the letter to the Ephesians. In reading this letter, I noticed that Paul not only identified the actions of Jesus, but also identified the many actions of God the “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”. So in addition to listing the actions of Jesus, I added the actions of God the Father to my chart:

Action of Jesus and His Father (in Ephesians)	Verse
gives grace and peace	Eph. 1:2
blessed “us” in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing	Eph. 1:3
chose “us”	Eph. 1:4, 1:11
predestined “us”	Eph. 1:5, 1:11
provides redemption and forgiveness of sins	Eph. 1:7
made known to us his will	Eph. 1:9
marks those who believe with the Holy Spirit	Eph. 1:13
gives a Spirit of wisdom and revelation, to know him better	Eph. 1:17
God raised Christ from the dead, seated him at his right hand and placed all things at his feet	Eph. 1:20-22
God made “us” alive in Christ	Eph. 2:5
God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus	Eph. 2:6
God created “us” in Christ to do “good works”	Eph. 2:10
Christ’s blood, brings near those who “once were far away”	Eph. 2:13

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Action of Jesus and His Father (in Ephesians)	Verse
is “our peace”	Eph. 2:14
Jesus “destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility”	Eph. 2:14
abolished the law, through his flesh	Eph. 2:15
He “preached peace”	Eph. 2:17
Jesus provides access to the Father	Eph. 2:18
helps people become “fellow citizens with God’s people” and “members of God’s household”	Eph. 2:19
is the chief cornerstone of God’s household	Eph. 2:20
is working to build people to “become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit”	Eph. 2:22
gives grace, through his power	Eph. 3:2, 3:7, 3:8
provides revelation	Eph. 3:3
gives “unsearchable riches”	Eph. 3:8
created “all things”	Eph. 3:9
through Christ we can approach God	Eph. 3:12
will dwell in “your” hearts by faith	Eph. 3:17
offers love that is wide, long, high and deep	Eph. 3:18
is able to do “immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine”	Eph. 3:20
ascended to heaven and descended	Eph. 4:9
gave “gifts to men”, some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers	Eph. 4:8, 4:11

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Action of Jesus and His Father (in Ephesians)	Verse
grows and builds up the Church	Eph. 4:16
contains truth	Eph. 4:21
forgives	Eph. 4:32
loved “us” and “gave himself up for us” as an offering to God	Eph. 5:2
provides an inheritance	Eph. 5:5
makes people “light” in the Lord	Eph. 5:8
Head of the church	Eph. 5:23
Savior of the church	Eph. 5:23
gave himself up for the church to “make her holy”	Eph. 5:25-26
has power	Eph. 6:10
provides the full armor	Eph. 6:13
gives peace	Eph. 6:23

Next I looked at the actions of Jesus in the letter to the Philippians. Like the letter to the Ephesians, I saw that Paul also added some actions by God the Father, so I included those in my chart as well.

Action of Jesus and His Father (in Philippians)	Verse
gives grace and peace	Phil. 1:2
began a “good work” in “you”	Phil. 1:6
has affection	Phil. 1:8
fills “you” with the fruit of righteousness	Phil. 1:11
gives help	Phil. 1:19
will make what has happened to Paul “turn out for his deliverance”	Phil. 1:19

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Action of Jesus and His Father (in Philippians)	Verse
will be exalted in Paul (in life and death)	Phil. 1:20
will be with Paul in death	Phil. 1:23
unites	Phil. 2:1
loves	Phil. 2:1
took the nature of a servant	Phil. 2:7
in appearance as a man	Phil. 2:8
humbled himself	Phil. 2:8
died on a cross	Phil. 2:8
is Lord and exalted by God	Phil. 2:9-11
will work in “you” to “act according to his good purposes”	Phil. 2:13
has mercy	Phil. 2:27
makes men righteousness	Phil. 3:9
provides resurrection from the dead	Phil. 3:11
is near	Phil. 4:5
answers prayers	Phil. 4:6
gives peace	Phil. 4:7
guards hearts and minds	Phil. 4:7
will be with “you”	Phil. 4:9
gives grace	Phil. 4:23

Lastly, I made a list of the actions of Jesus in the letter to the Colossians.

Action of Jesus (in Colossians)	Verse
gives grace and peace	Col. 1:1
fills with knowledge of His will	Col. 1:9

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Action of Jesus (in Colossians)	Verse
qualified “you” to share in the inheritance of the saints	Col. 1:12
has rescued “us” from the dominion of darkness	Col. 1:13
brought “us” into the kingdom of the Son	Col. 1:13
offers redemption and forgiveness of sins	Col. 1:14
by the son all things were created	Col. 1:15
in him all things hold together	Col. 1:17
is the head of the Church	Col. 1:18
has supremacy	Col. 1:19
reconciles all things to himself	Col. 1:20
makes peace through his blood shed on the cross	Col. 1:21
has reconciled “you” by Christ’s death	Col. 1:22
makes the mystery of Christ known to the Gentiles	Col. 1:27
contains the treasures of wisdom and knowledge	Col. 1:3
in Christ “all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form”	Col. 2:9
Christ is the “head over every power and authority”	Col. 2:10
made “you” alive in Christ	Col. 2:13
forgave “us” of all “our” sins	Col. 2:13
“canceled the written code” that was against “us”	Col. 2:14

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Action of Jesus (in Colossians)	Verse
disarmed “powers and authorities” by the cross	Col. 2:15
raises up people	Col. 3:1
is seated at God’s “right hand”	Col. 3:1
is life	Col. 3:3
makes people holy	Col. 3:12
dearly loves people	Col. 3:12
forgives	Col. 3:13
offers peace	Col. 3:15
provides an inheritance	Col. 3:24

“Wow,” was the only word that I could say after reviewing Paul’s description of the work of Christ. I was amazed to read all of the things that Paul described Jesus doing:

- forgiving
- reconciling
- sending
- giving grace and freedom
- offering peace
- setting free
- providing wisdom
- rescuing from the
dominion of darkness

These actions, as described by Paul, I noticed, referred to Jesus’ actions not only in the *past*, but also in the *present* and in the *future*. These awesome, all powerful actions, I thought were aptly described by Paul in Ephesians, where Paul explained that:

Jesus is “able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine” (Eph. 3:20)

“That’s so much.” I concluded, “more than I could *ask* or *imagine*.”

As I concluded for the night, I was encouraged by what I had learned and had an incredibly strong sense of thankfulness for the things that Jesus had done in the past, in the present and in the future.

“More than I could ask or imagine,” I said to myself again.

Day Twenty Four - Tuesday
(March 6, 2007 - 11:55pm)

Today is Tuesday, and in the evening I heard the results of more conference basketball championship games.

In the Horizon League, Wright State University met Butler University who was ranked nineteenth in the nation. Unranked Wright State, however, was able to get the win and the upset. (Final Score: Wright State 60, Butler 55).

In the Mid-Continent Conference, Oral Roberts University, located in Tulsa, Oklahoma played Oakland University, a school located outside of Detroit, Michigan. The game was close, with Oakland almost taking the lead with less than a minute remaining. (Final Score: Oral Roberts 71, Oakland 67).

In the Sun Belt Conference, North Texas faced Arkansas State. Calvin Watson, a guard for the North Texas *Green* sunk an amazing six three-point shots to ensure the *Green* with a win over the Arkansas State Indians (Final Score, North Texas 83, Arkansas State 75).

Each of the winners of tonight's games, I remembered, would receive automatic bids to the NCAA Tournament.

Tonight, however, I didn't watch much basketball, but instead read to the kids. We've been slogging our way through *The Magician's Nephew* by C.S. Lewis. It seems like it's taken us weeks just to knock out the remaining few chapters.

After our reading was over and the kids were asleep I found a movie called *The Big Sleep* on TV. It is a great "film noir" detective movie, and one of my favorites, starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall.

Week Four

The lines from the movie are great, with Bogie playing detective Philip Marlowe and Bacall playing a character named Vivian:

Philip Marlowe: You wanna tell me now?

Vivian: Tell you what?

Philip Marlowe: What it is you're trying to find out. You know, it's a funny thing. You're trying to find out what your father hired me to find out, and I'm trying to find out why you want to find out.

Vivian: You could go on forever, couldn't you? Anyway it'll give us something to talk about next time we meet.

Philip Marlowe: Among other things.

For the *Go Eat Popcorn* project, I felt good about the progress that I had made this week. On Sunday, I had looked at how Paul had used the name of “Jesus”, “Christ”, “Jesus Christ” or “Christ Jesus” 159 times in the letters’ 503 verses. I had also observed that Paul identified Jesus as God’s Son and his Lord.

Yesterday, on Monday, I looked at how Paul had written about a *revelation* that he had received from God that not only revealed God in him, but also commissioned him to go to the Gentiles. Next, I had read about the many things that Paul described Jesus doing: forgiving, reconciling, giving grace and freedom, offering peace, setting people free, providing wisdom, rescuing people from the dominion of darkness.

It was great to read.

Tonight, I wanted to consider Paul’s ideas about people.

“How should people respond to what God has done?” I wondered.

The Big Idea

I read through the letters again seeking to learn about Paul's ideas about people their responses to God.

As I was re-reading the letters and looking for clues, I saw quickly that Paul presented four important concepts about people's relationship with Jesus:

- 1. People are sinful, separated from God and under the obligation of the Law.**
- 2. Because of His grace and great love, Christ died to fulfill the Law and forgive sin.**
- 3. People can receive Christ through faith.**
- 4. Those that are in Christ are God's children, forgiven, reconciled and blessed.**

During my reading of Paul's letters, I noticed a number of passages that described life *before* Paul's recipients had Christ as their Lord and had received Christ by faith. Paul frequently used one word to describe people in this state before knowing Christ, explaining that they were *sinful*.

In Galatians 1:17, Paul noted that "it becomes evident that we ourselves are *sinner*s", while in Ephesians he explained:

"You used to...follow the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air...All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our *sinful* nature and following its desires and thoughts." (Eph. 2:2-3)

Week Four

Instead of experiencing happiness or freedom by “gratifying the cravings of the sinful nature”, Paul explained that sinfulness was characterized by slavery, prison and death:

- “Scripture declares that the whole world is a *prisoner* of sin” (Gal. 3:22)
- “formerly, when you did not know God, you were *slaves* to those who by nature are not gods” (Gal. 4:8)
- “you were *dead* in your transgressions and sins” (Eph. 2:1)
- “you were *dead* in your sins” (Col. 2:13)

In addition to being enslaved by sin, Paul explained that sin also separated and alienated people from God. Paul frequently used the words: “excluded”, “foreigners”, “separated”, “alienated” and “enemies” to describe this separation from God. I read in Ephesians and Colossians:

- “Remember that formerly you who are Gentiles...you were *separate* from Christ, *excluded* from citizenship in Israel and *foreigners* to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.” (Eph. 2:11-12)
- “darkened in their understanding and *separated* from the life of God” (Eph. 4:18)
- “you were *alienated* from God and were *enemies* in your minds because of your evil behavior. (Col. 1:21)

The Big Idea

Paul described those in sin as being “*in darkness*” (Eph. 5:8) and ruled by another kingdom called the “*dominion of darkness*” (Col. 1:12).

In addition, Paul explained that there were standards and requirements under God’s Law (found in the Old Testament) that people were obligated to follow. But because people could not meet these requirements on their own, Paul explained, “we were held prisoners by the law” (Gal. 3:23).

“So, if people are in this terrible state, prisoners to sin and the law, separated and alienated from God, what is the remedy?” I wondered.

“It is the work of Jesus Christ.” I remembered. “In each of his letters, Paul described a “*way out*” of this state of sin and separation through Jesus Christ, who was sent by God the Father. Paul explained that Jesus humbled himself, by becoming a human for the sake of humans.”

I read in Galatians:

“But when the time had fully come, *God sent his Son*, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights as sons” (Gal. 4:4-5)

In his letters, Paul explained that because of Christ’s great grace and love, Jesus chose to die for the sins of others and fulfill the requirements of the Law. Paul explained that:

- Jesus was crucified (Gal. 3:1)

Week Four

- “Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (Eph. 5:1)
- Christ “made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!” (Phil. 2:8)

Through his death, Jesus redeemed people from sin and alienation by taking their sins and fulfilling the obligations of the Law. I noticed how Paul made frequent use of the words “redeemed” and “reconciled”:

- “Christ *redeemed* us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13)
- “He *redeemed* us” (Gal. 3:14)
- “God sent his Son...to *redeem* those under law, that we might receive the full rights as sons (Gal. 4:4-5)
- “But now he has *reconciled* you by Christ’s physical body through death” (Col. 1:22)
- “God made you *alive* in Christ” (Col. 2:13)

Paul explained that after Christ’s death, God raised Jesus and exalted Him. According to Paul, God raised Christ “from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the *heavenly realms*” and “placed all things *under his feet*” (Eph. 1:20 and 1:22).

Paul explained in Philippians,

The Big Idea

“Therefore God *exalted him to the highest place* and gave him the *name that is above every name*, that at the name of Jesus *every knee should bow*, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and *every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord*” (Phil. 2:9-11)

“If Christ has offered forgiveness, reconciliation and redemption, what did Paul think people should do to receive it?” I wondered.

In reading the letters, I noticed that Paul wrote that people could be redeemed and “justified” (made right with God) *through faith*. In many passages Paul referred to faith as *the means* of receiving Christ’s redemption:

Passages about Faith	Verse
“we too have put our <i>faith</i> in Christ Jesus that we may be justified”	Gal. 1:16
“you <i>believe</i> what you heard”	Gal. 3:2, 3:5
God justifies people “by <i>faith</i> ”	Gal. 3:8
“those who have <i>faith</i> are blessed”	Gal. 3:9
“by <i>faith</i> we might receive the promise of the Spirit”	Gal. 3:14
“what is given through <i>faith</i> in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe”	Gal. 3:22
“you all are sons of God through <i>faith</i> in Christ Jesus”	Gal. 3:26
“For in Christ Jesus...the only thing that counts is <i>faith</i> expressing itself through love.”	Gal. 5:6

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Passages about Faith	Verse
“Having <i>believed</i> , you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit”	Eph. 1:13
“it is by grace you have been saved, through <i>faith</i> – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God”	Eph. 2:8
Christ “dwells in your hearts through <i>faith</i> ”	Eph. 3:17
“having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your <i>faith</i> in the power of God”	Col. 2:12

“So it is through *faith*,” I concluded, “that people can receive Jesus Christ as Lord.”

Lastly, I noticed that Paul taught that many blessings would follow when someone placed their faith in Christ. Paul frequently focused on how people who have placed their faith in Christ become, in his words, “children” or “sons of God”, adopted into God’s household who have received (and will continue to receive) an *inheritance* from God:

- “you are all *sons of God*” (Gal. 3:26)
- “God sent his Son...to redeem those under law, that we might receive the *full rights as sons* (Gal. 4:4-5)
- “because you are *sons*, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts” (Gal. 4:6)
- “*since you are a son*, God has made you also an heir” (Gal. 4:7)

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- God “predestined us for adoption to *sonship*” (Eph. 1:5)
- “I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened...that you may know...*the riches of his glorious inheritance*” (Eph. 1:18)
- “*you who once were far away* have been *brought near* through the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:13)
- “*you are no longer foreigners or aliens, but fellow citizens* with God’s people and *member’s of God’s household* built on the foundation of apostles and prophets” (Eph. 2:19-20)
- “you are light in the Lord. Live as *children of light*” (Eph. 5:8)

Paul explained that the Holy Spirit would be “a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance” (Eph. 1:14) as God’s children, until “the day of the Lord”, that is, when Christ returns.

Throughout Paul’s letters, he mentioned the many blessings and benefits that come with putting one’s faith in Christ.

I re-read the letters again and on my yellow legal pad made a chart listing these many blessings:

God’s Blessing to Believers	Verse
“you...are known by God”	Gal. 4:9
“set free” by Christ	Gal. 5:1
you become “a new creation”	Gal. 5:15
“you are led by the Spirit”	Gal. 5:18

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God's Blessing to Believers	Verse
“not under law”	Gal. 5:18
“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires”	Gal. 5:24
blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing	Eph. 1:3
redeemed through his blood and forgiven of sins	Eph. 1:7
“alive in Christ”	Eph. 2:5
“raised us up with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus”	Eph. 2:6
“become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit”	Eph. 2:22
can go to God “with freedom and confidence”	Eph. 3:12
forgiven	Eph. 4:32
“filled with the Spirit”	Eph. 5:18
can stand “against the Devil’s schemes”	Eph. 6:11
can know Christ	Phil. 3:7
filled with the peace of God	Phil. 4:7
forgiven	Col. 3:13
“raised with Christ”	Col. 3:1

“Wow,” was my initial response as I read the many blessings and promises that Paul listed.

I was encouraged to see how Paul explained that Gentiles (non-Jewish people) like me were part of God’s plan. In

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Ephesians, and in several other passages, Paul noted that because of Christ,

“Gentiles are *sharers in the promise* in Christ Jesus”
(Eph. 3:6)

As I was reviewing the many blessings that Paul listed, I was particularly moved by several passages in the letter to the Colossians that described being *in Christ*. Paul wrote that because of Christ, His followers are forgiven and made holy before God and free from receiving the judgment of the Law.

Paul noted that:

- The Father “has *qualified you* to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the *forgiveness* of sins.” (Col. 1: 12-14)
- “But now he has *reconciled you* by Christ’s physical body through death *to present you holy in his sight*, without blemish and free from accusation” (Col. 1:22)
- “He *forgave us* all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” (Col. 2:13-15)

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I was also struck by the passages that related the death and resurrection of Jesus and to the new life that Christ's followers have.

Just as Christ was *crucified*, Paul explained that the sinful nature within Christ's followers was also *crucified* and killed (Gal. 5:24). And just as Christ was *raised* by God the Father and seated in heaven, Paul noted that "you have been *raised* with Christ" (Col. 3:1).

One of my favorite passages was in Ephesians, where Paul explained that,

"God raised us up with Christ and seated ***us with him*** in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6).

"This is so incredible." I said to myself. "The phrase was not written in the future tense about something that *will* happen sometime in the future, rather, Christ's followers *are seated* with Him in the heavenly realms. In the passage, Paul was speaking about something that has already happened, God *seated us* (not will seat us) *with Christ* in the heavenly realms."

"That's pretty cool," I concluded.

Day Twenty Five - Wednesday
(March 7, 2007 - 10:31pm)

Today is Wednesday and I woke up at 5:30am and left our house a little before six o'clock in order to get to the airport in time for an 8:00am flight. To my surprise, I was able to park my car, check my bag, go through security and arrive at the gate by 7:00am. I couldn't think of a time that I've ever gotten to an airport gate so quickly.

I was leaving today to work in Toronto, Canada. And because I had booked my flight just a few days earlier, I could not get a direct flight, so I had to stop in Detroit first then catch a flight to Toronto.

I arrived in Detroit at 9:30am and then in Toronto a little before noon.

Before today I had never been in the city of Toronto.

Growing up in northern Ohio, I had traveled to Canada several times, and had even traveled near Toronto but had never been into the city.

I was curious to see what Canada's largest metropolis, of two and a half million people, looked like. And I was hoping that I could get away from work long enough to see the large CN Tower that rose high above the city's downtown and perhaps even visit the Ontario Museum of Art. I had to be careful on this trip, however, as the television news had recently reported that large chunks of ice had been falling off of the CN Tower to the cold streets 1,815 feet below.

After arriving at the office, in an area called North York, I worked until a little after six o'clock in the evening. When I was done with work, I walked to a nearby subway stop and took the Yonge Street line south.

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Yonge Street, my colleagues at work had told me was in the Guinness Book of World Records as the longest city street in the world.

The subway ride took about twenty minutes and eventually I arrived at a station near my hotel in downtown Toronto. Not knowing my way to the hotel, I took the wrong exit out of the subway station (going east on Gerrard Street, instead of west). So, instead of simply walking across the street from the subway station to the hotel, I lugged my luggage and my computer bag over four long city blocks, walking all the way around Ryerson University, my shoes covered with snow and slush, as I walked over the icy, slushy sidewalks until I finally reached the hotel.

When I entered the busy hotel lobby, I was reminded that even though Canadians and Americans share a common language, we still use it differently - like the sign in the hotel lobby that directed people to the next available clerk stating, *Next Wicket Please*.

I enjoyed seeing the clocks on the wall behind the check-in counter that displayed the times of the Canadian cities of St. John's, Halifax, Vancouver and Edmonton.

After dropping off my luggage in my hotel room I went to dinner along Elm Street, near the hotel with a colleague from work, having a nice meal of pasta at a restaurant called *Thirty Five Elm Street Bistro*.

Around nine o'clock I returned to the hotel.

Flipping on the television, I saw some channels that I hadn't seen in quite a while, like the CBC (Canadian Broadcast Company) with *NewsWorld* and the CBC News channel with *The National* (a Canadian national news program) and *The Fifth Estate* a hard-hitting, opinion news program.

Growing up in northern Ohio, one of the few channels we received on my parent's black and white TV (prior to cable

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television), was the CBC from Windsor, Canada. As a child, I loved watching the CBC programs of *Mr. Dress-up* and *The Friendly Giant*, in addition to the programs of *Sesame Street* on PBS and *Captain Kangaroo* on CBS.

At the hotel I noticed that there were also some specialized channels that I had never seen before, like *APTN* (“Aboriginal People TV”) and “Radio Canada” with *Telejournal*, a news program in French.

After some delay, I found a sports channel on the TV, but to my amazement there was no basketball. I was hoping to see some of the college conference tournament games and hear about the two teams that would receive automatic bids to the NCAA Tournament today, but instead the sports channel covered only hockey and curling (the sport where players push polished stones across ice, then, after the initial push, other players with brooms run in front of the stone helping guide the stone to a target). I enjoyed being in Canada, but I really wanted to see some basketball. (Final Score: Canadian sports 1, me 0).

I spent a few moments looking out the window amazed at the many buildings outside of my hotel along the cold streets below. Flashing lights illuminated a store called *Sam the Record Man* with a large black circle in the shape of an old LP. Next to it, a place called *Zanzabar*, had a brightly illuminated sign that read, “99 of Canada’s Most Beautiful Women.” By the look of the sign and the guys standing outside on this freezing cold night, it looked like a place that I should avoid. Beyond those buildings, I was told was the “Times Square” of Toronto, called Dundas Square, at the corner of Yonge and Dundas Streets with large video screens above a shopping center, fountain and a large open area for concerts.

For the *Go Eat Popcorn* project, my thoughts turned to my reading the night before. I had learned much about what Paul

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thought about Jesus Christ and how people should respond to His grace and offer of forgiveness and salvation.

I reviewed my outline from yesterday, remembering that Paul presented four important concepts in terms of people's relationship with Jesus Christ:

- 1. People are sinful, separated from God and under the obligation of the Law.**
- 2. Because of His grace and great love, Christ died to fulfill the Law and forgive sin.**
- 3. People can receive Christ through faith.**
- 4. Those that are in Christ are God's children, forgiven, reconciled and blessed.**

Tonight, I decided that I needed to look at another "Big Idea" in Paul's letters: Paul's *opponents*.

"In reading the letters, it was clear that there were some people who did not believe Paul's ideas about Christ." I thought. "And their opposition affected Paul's life in several ways."

As I thought about Paul's opponents, I wrote on my yellow notepad two important ways that it seemed like his opponents affected him:

-Persecution

-Delivering a Different Teaching to the Church

As I re-read the letters tonight, I looked first for passages that referred to Paul's persecution by others.

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I had learned earlier that Paul frequently referred to his persecution by saying that he was “*in chains*”. I had seen the phrase seven different times in three of the letters (Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians), where Paul stated that:

- he was “an ambassador in chains” (Eph. 6:20)
- “in chains” (Phil. 1:7)
- “in chains for Christ” (Phil. 1:13)
- “because of my chains” (Phil. 1:14)
- “while I am in chains” (Phil. 1:17)
- “for which I am in chains” (Col. 4:3)
- “remember my chains” (Col. 4:18)

“Since Paul was once a very active, zealous leader in the Jewish community, who then began saying that his work prior knowing Christ was *rubbish*, he was probably not very well received by the Jewish leaders,” I thought.

“Because of his faith in Christ,” I concluded, “Paul was persecuted.” I remembered Paul’s final words to the Galatians, “I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.” (Gal. 6:17)

In addition to this persecution, in many of the letters, I saw statements that Paul’s opponents were presenting a *different teaching to the Churches*.

In the letter to the Galatians the issue of “opponents” was more pronounced than in the other letters. In that letter, Paul told the church that they were “foolish” for listening to these opponents who were presenting a “different gospel”:

- “You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?” (Gal. 3:1)

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- “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting...and are turning to a different gospel.” (Gal. 1:6)
- “Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:7)
- “a gospel different from what you accepted.” (Gal. 1:8)
- “You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?” (Gal. 5:7)

Paul, I noticed seemed quite upset with those who were “trying to pervert the gospel” and twice said that these opponents of his message should “be eternally condemned.” (Gal. 1:8, 1:9).

“What were these different ideas that Paul’s opponents in Galatia teaching?” I wondered.

After reading Paul’s letters, a few things about the opponents seemed clear to me. First, it was clear that the opponents were not disputing the *deity of Christ*. Although Paul spent a lot of time focusing on Christ in his letters, he did not specifically address this issue.

“So these opponents in Galatia probably would have considered themselves Christians.” I told myself. “It seems like Paul’s opponents were more interested in how people should *receive* Christ as Lord, and what people must *do* as Christians instead of challenging the deity of Christ.”

It was also clear that Paul’s opponents in Galatia focused their teaching on gaining righteousness “*through the law*” and by

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“*observing the law*” (Gal. 2:21 and 3:2). These Old Testament requirements were specifically about following dietary codes (Gal. 2:12) and following the custom of men being circumcised as a sign of obedience to God (Gal. 5:2, 6:12, 6:13).

Paul described Peter, Barnabas and others who “drew back” from the Gentiles when certain men arrived in the city, because of a fear of these “men from James” (who were described as part of the “*the circumcision group*”):

“...Peter used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to *the circumcision group*. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.” (Gal. 2:12-13)

By looking at Paul’s responses and the areas of emphasis of his letters, it seemed that the opponents questioned:

- Paul’s authority (Gal. 1:1)
- the truth of Paul’s teaching, perhaps saying that it was something that “*he made up*” (Gal. 1:11 and 1:20)
- Paul’s contention that people are made right with God through faith alone and not by observing the law (Gal. 2:18)

Paul seemed quite upset by these opponents, writing that, “As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!” (Gal. 5:12)

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He warned the Philippians, “Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh.” (Phil. 3:2) and “I now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ” (Phil. 3:18)

“So, how did Paul respond to the criticism of these opponents?” I wondered.

I paused to consider the answer.

“I’ll need to learn more about how Paul responded to his opponents and why he felt the churches should follow his teaching instead of theirs.”

“This will be an interesting journey,” I thought.

Day Twenty Six - Thursday
(March 8, 2007 - 11:14pm)

This morning I left my hotel and walked across Toronto's slush and snow covered streets to a large limestone and granite building called *College Park*. In the basement of the building was the subway station (and now that I knew how to get there, it took only a few minutes).

"College Park", I discovered was a seven storey shopping mall and office building. On the first floor I found a wonderful café called the *Richtree Market* that was filled with fruits and breads, where I bought a cup of coffee and some sweat rolls for breakfast. Next, I walked through the College Park food court to the station and caught the Yonge Street subway line north to work.

It was great not having to worry about finding a parking spot or waiting in traffic, as I usually do when I drive to work. Instead I just sat in the subway's red plastic seat talking to a colleague from work while knocking the snow off my shoes and onto the grey floor of the long grey train car.

I was amazed at the incredible diversity of the city. As I walked around Toronto and sat on the subway this morning, I heard a variety of languages: English, French, Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, and Russian. As we passed shops along the subway line, I saw signs too, in a variety of languages.

After arriving at the office building north of downtown, my colleagues and I did some planning for the project and concluded that I would need to conduct a number of training sessions in Canada throughout the spring and summer.

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Initially, I thought it would be quite fun to travel to the Canadian cities of London, Montreal, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, and Halifax for a number of weeks. But after thinking about it, I soon thought about how difficult it would be to be away from home for so long. I would miss Sue and the kids...and they would miss my driving them from one activity to another.

After work I went with some colleagues and some of their friends to a Chinese restaurant that specialized in Szechwan food. We shared the dishes by spinning a circular glass Lazy Susan on top the table containing duck, cashew chicken, green beans and pork dishes.

It was interesting to learn that nearly twenty of the Chinese men and women that my co-worker had worked with in southern China several years ago had all moved to Toronto. They put human faces to the numbers that I had seen on the news just a day before that reported that 400,000 new immigrants had arrived in Toronto between 1995 and 2000.

After dinner, I returned to the hotel, and again turned on the television to the local sports channel.

Again, no college basketball on television.

But there was hockey...and curling.

The curling was broadcast live from the *Tim Horton Brier* in Hamilton, Ontario. (Final Score: Newfoundland and Labrador 11, British Columbia 10).

The hockey game I watched was between the Ottawa Senators and the local Toronto Maple Leafs (Final Score: Ottawa 5, Toronto 1).

... I missed college basketball.

After watching a little bit of a Canadian sports show, I changed into shorts and a t-shirt and went to the top of the

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hotel, on the 27th floor, where the hotel had an exercise room and pool.

The view was amazing. The exercise area was surrounded almost entirely by glass windows that overlooked the tall buildings of downtown Toronto. As I ran on a treadmill machine, I could look up and to my left to see the tall CN Tower above me, high in the night sky.

Running tonight I thought about how I liked Canada.

I was amazed at how friendly the people seemed.

At different times, like when I was looking at the directions on the map at the subway station or looking at menus outside of restaurants, it would never fail that someone would stop and provide some assistance. A common word I heard throughout my stay was the word “sorry”, pronounced “So-ree”; people seemed quick to say the word when they brushed against me or got in my way.

I liked hearing how the Canadians spoke English. They used words that I didn’t; like the word “Zed”, for the letter “z” and “serverie” for their break rooms in the office. They called their one dollar coins “Loonies” for the loon that was on one side of the coin. Their two dollar coins they called “Toonies”, a combination of the words *two* and *loonie*.

It was fun to hear how their pronunciation was different, with emphasis on different syllables. The word *project* was pronounced “pro-ject”. *Process*, was pronounced “pro-cess”. The word *organization* was pronounced “organ-eye-zation”.

Their spelling of words was different too: “centre” for the word center, “programme” for program, and “catalogue” for the word catalog.

I had to keep reminding myself that their unit of measures were different too.

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On a family trip to Canada when I was younger, one of the first things I noticed was the price of gas at an Esso gas station (the Canadian brand for Exxon).

“Wow, Dad, look at how cheap the gas prices are here.” I said, noticing how the numbers seemed to be about half as much as our prices in Ohio.

“It does seem less,” Dad replied, “but they sell their gas in liters here.”

Even as an adult, I’ve found trying to convert metric to US measurements difficult. Tonight on the television news, the announcer said that weather tomorrow would be “minus six degrees.”

“Minus six seems pretty cold,” I thought.

But then I realized, “I don’t even know what that means.

I was unable to remember the calculation from Celsius to Fahrenheit.

On the treadmill in the exercise room, I thought more about the *Go Eat Popcorn* Project.

Yesterday, I had focused my attention on Paul’s opponents, some of whom brought him persecution, others who brought a different teaching to the churches, focusing instead on food purity laws and male circumcision.

“Circumcision is not really an issue any more,” I thought, as my feet hit the treadmill with a loud thud, thud, thud.

“I don’t know anyone today who would claim that circumcised is a requirement for becoming a Christian, or even claim that circumcision is something that must be done immediately after becoming a believer in Christ.”

“Just thinking about that procedure makes me queasy,” I thought to myself as I continued running looking out at the tall buildings of downtown Toronto, rising high in the cold night sky, some brightly lit, others dark and shadowy.

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I also looked down at the red digital display on the treadmill, seeing the distances pass by: one tenth of a mile, then one quarter of a mile, then half a mile. While I ran my mind kept turning over the issue, wondering, “What is the relevance of this issue today? Is it even applicable?”

“Circumcision, or uncircumcision, that’s not really relevant.” I quickly concluded.

As I continued running, three-fourths of a mile, then one mile done, I was stuck with another thought.

“Maybe, I need to think about it from a little different angle. Sure, people aren’t arguing over dietary laws or about circumcision or uncircumcision today, but there are a lot of people looking for peace and freedom and salvation.”

“Maybe that’s the relevance for today,” I thought. “Even back in Paul’s day the questions were: ‘How can I find freedom and salvation?’ and ‘How can I be right with God?’ Paul’s opponents were answering these questions one way, Paul was answering them in quite another way.”

“Freedom, salvation, being right with God, that’s what people are looking for today,” I said to myself.

“Looking at it that way,” I thought, “Paul’s letters really are applicable. His reasons against following his opponents should be interesting to see.”

“I can’t wait to get into the details.”

After running several miles, I was tired and made my way back to my hotel room, ready to face tomorrow’s “minus six degree temperatures.”

Day Twenty Seven - Friday
(March 9, 2007 - 11:14pm)

Today is Friday, and my last day in Toronto (at least for this week).

Like yesterday, I walked over to the subway station in the morning. Today, though, I noticed an incredibly long line at the *Tim Horton's* store. I could not believe how long the line was; nearly thirty people queued up, waiting for coffee and donuts. Not wanting to wait in that line, a colleague from work and I stopped again at the little café called the *Richtree Market*, where I got a cup of coffee and a croissant topped with strawberries, peaches and cheese. It was really good.

I had meetings in the morning again, and found out that I would need to return to the city in another week or two.

Early in the afternoon I left for the airport. The office where I worked is only about fifteen miles away from the Toronto airport, but as today is the start of *March Break* for all of the schools in Ontario, I left early to ensure that I could catch my flight and avoid the long lines of vacationers that were expected later in the day at the airport.

I flew home again through Detroit and arrived home at ten thirty.

Day Twenty Eight - Saturday
(March 10, 2007 - 11:45pm)

Today is Saturday and our oldest son had another session of the Boy Scouts' *Merit Badge Challenge* at a local High School.

"I got two merit badges done," he told me when I picked him up.

"That's awesome." I replied.

After getting him, I took our younger boys to a nearby Church for a practice session for their Cub Scout's pinewood derby race. The race will be run next Saturday at the church, so today's practice session gives the kids (and their parents) an opportunity to make any necessary changes to the small wooden cars.

At the practice session I worked on getting their pinewood derby cars as close as possible to the maximum weight of five ounces and added and subtracted weights throughout the session.

To be honest, I'm not very good with mechanical things. The Cub Scout fathers at the practice session (who all seemed to be engineers) talked a lot about "axel and wheel pre-work", "car aerodynamics", and the process of grinding down the rough edges of the wheels and the axel. They spoke of their research on the internet and the books that they had acquired to help increase the speed of their son's cars.

I have been pretty oblivious to the cottage industry that the Pinewood Derby has inspired, and have acquired no books, nor spent any time on the internet researching the necessary "axel and wheel pre-work."

This year Sue and I asked a friend who works in a woodworking shop to cut the boys' cars based on a pattern we

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bought at the local Cub Scout shop, and the cars turned out great. When I was in Canada, the boys painted their cars; our middle son painted his car yellow, while our youngest painted his car green.

After an hour or so of adding and subtracting weights, and running the cars on the track a few times, the boys gave their cars to their Scoutmaster to hold until next Saturday's race.

We went home in the afternoon and I asked the boys to take "personal time" in their rooms, as each of them had been coughing throughout the Pinewood Derby practice. While the young boys rested, they put on a CD of *Adventures in Odyssey*, which is one of their favorite programs. "Odyssey" is an audio program produced by *Focus on the Family* and has a number of excellent stories about Christianity, character, and choices that kids face.

While the boys rested I was able to watch some basketball on television; the semi-final game in the Big Ten Conference tournament between the Ohio State Buckeyes, ranked number one in the nation and the Purdue "Boilermakers." (Final Score: Ohio State 63, Purdue 52).

After "personal time" Sue and I went for a walk with the boys and Scruffy our dog. The walk was fun, as our middle son put the dog's leash on his wooden scooter and Scruffy pulled him for part of our walk around the neighborhood.

In the evening we went to church, and afterwards went to dinner at a Mexican restaurant near our house called *Salsarita's*.

While sitting on tall stools at one of the restaurant's high tables, we ate our tacos and quesadillas while watching basketball on one the restaurant's large television screens.

The basketball game on the restaurant's TV was the final game of the Mid-American Conference tournament -- between

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Miami University of Ohio (where Sue and I had attended college) and Akron University.

I reminded the boys that the winner of tonight's game would get an automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament.

Miami, a team that has struggled this season, trailed most of the game, but near the end of the second half, the Miami Redhawks were able to gain on the Akron Zip's lead.

Near the end of the game, however, Miami was still behind.

"Okay, let's go." I said as I grabbed my car keys and jacket, "it looks like Miami is done for this season."

"Dad, let's wait to the very end," someone said.

With less than a minute remaining, Miami attempted to tie the game, but missed the basket and soon fouled an Akron player with six point six seconds remaining.

Akron, with a two point lead, then went to the foul line.

"Come on, it's pretty much over," I told the boys. "Let's get going."

"Please Dad, let's stay," someone replied.

"Okay," I said, "But, it's too bad that Miami won't be going to the Tournament this year."

But just then, to our amazement, the Akron player missed his foul shot and a Miami player miraculously got the rebound and quickly pushed the ball down the court.

The dribbler passed it to another Miami player, named Doug Penno, a walk-on player from Kettering, Ohio, who shot the ball from beyond the three point line in a "buzzer beating" shot that banked off the glass of the backboard and into the basket.

"Yeah!!!!!" we yelled as we watched the shot go in. Fortunately, the restaurant was nearly empty, except for its workers, so we were not much of a distraction for them.

"That was amazing!" one of the boys said.

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“Awesome!” another said.

“Incredible.” I replied. “Absolutely incredible.”

We watched as the Miami bench cleared and the team ran onto the court and piled onto Penno.

“They’re dancing in Oxford, Ohio” the announcer said.

The game, however, was not over.

For ten minutes, the game’s officials watched the replay of the last few seconds on small monitors as both coaches and team’s looked on.

While they reviewed the television footage, we got in our car and drove home.

“They’re checking to see if both of his feet were beyond the three-point line.” The announcer said.

In the replay, he told us, it was clear that both feet were indeed beyond the three-point line.

“Now they’re looking to see if the clock started late.” the announcer said.

In a replay, he said that it appeared as if the clock started a second or so after the missed foul shot when it was rebounded by the Miami player.

“Now, they’re looking to see how much time is left on the clock.” The announcer explained.

“This is crazy.” I said to Sue as she and the boys listened.

Eventually the officials put .6 seconds on the clock, which was time enough for Akron to inbound the basketball and attempt a quick shot.

Akron, however, was not able to score and the game soon ended.

“Miami won for a second time,” a radio announcer said as we were taking our oldest son’s friend home. (Final Score: Miami 53, Akron 52).

This evening, I made it a point to watch ESPN’s *Sports Center* to see the last few seconds of the Miami-Akron game.

The Big Idea

They showed the replay of the final shot several times and had also noticed that the clock did not start immediately after the foul shot was missed. But by their calculations, however, the shot was in fact made with just barely enough time remaining on the clock. The amount of time remaining when the shot was made?

According to the ESPN announcer, “.1 seconds left in the game.”

So, the Miami last-second shot was good, even though the clock was wrong.

In a segment called *Tickets Punched*, the *Sports Center* announcers listed those teams that had won their conference tournaments today and received automatic bids into the NCAA Tournament.

In addition to Miami University winning the MAC Tournament, they also noted that Albany defeated the Vermont Catamounts, Florida A&M won against Delaware State in a last second tip in, Georgetown University dominated Pittsburgh in the Big East Championship game (which gave Georgetown their first automatic bid since 1989) and the Oregon Ducks won the PAC Ten Championship against USC (where Bruce Taylor, of Oregon scored 32 points, not missing any shots).

The announcers also noted that Memphis beat Houston in the Conference USA tournament game breaking Houston's 22-game winning streak.

They also spoke of wins by the UNLV *Runnin' Rebels* in the Mountain West Conference, George Washington University's win in the Atlantic Ten Conference Championship, Jackson State's win in the Southwest Athletic Conference and New Mexico State's win in the Western Athletic Conference.

Week Four

Soon the discussion among the announcers turned to the *Bubble Teams* - those teams who played well during the regular season and in their conference tournaments, but did not receive automatic bids to the NCAA tournament because they did not win their conference tournament. The announcers discussed how the wins and losses today impacted those teams “on the bubble”. According to the analysts there were perhaps six or seven top “bubble” teams contending for spots including: Drexel, Old Dominion, Air Force, Kansas State, Purdue, Stanford, Appalachian State and Texas Tech.

For *Go Eat Popcorn*, like last Saturday and the Saturday before that, I spent some time thinking about what I’d learned this week.

Overall, I felt encouraged at the work that I had done and what I’d learned.

In reviewing my notes I saw that I had first tried to identify the “big idea” of Paul’s writing, and had identified it in one word: *Jesus*.

On Sunday I learned that the name “Jesus” or “Christ” appeared 159 times in the letter’s 503 verses and had seen that Paul referred frequently to Jesus as the *Son of God* and as *Lord*.

On Monday I read passages about Paul’s zeal for his Jewish faith, learning that he was “advancing in Judaism”, “faultless” for legalistic righteousness, and I had wondered, “Why did Paul change?” The answer I learned in my reading was that Paul received a *revelation*. To learn more about what had been revealed to Paul, I made a list of the words Paul used to describe the actions that Jesus Christ had done in the past, is doing, or will do in the future.

On Tuesday I looked at four important concepts that Paul identified regarding people’s relationship with Jesus Christ and learned that Paul believed that:

The Big Idea

- 1. People are sinful, separated from God and under the obligation of the Law.**
- 2. Because of His grace and great love, Christ died to fulfill the Law and forgive sin.**
- 3. People can receive Christ through faith.**
- 4. Those that are in Christ are God's children, forgiven, reconciled and blessed.**

On Wednesday I took a closer look at Paul's opponents, who brought persecution to Paul and a different teaching to the churches.

As I thought about the *Go Eat Popcorn* project, I was excited to think about learning more about each of Paul's letters in more detail, seeing how he addressed his critics, and how he taught the churches about who Jesus was, what Christ did for them and how they could discover new life in Christ.

Week Five

Week Five – Galatians

Day Twenty Nine - Sunday
(March 11, 2007 - 11:12pm)

Today is Sunday and when I woke up, I remembered that today is what the sports announcers call *Selection Sunday*, the day when all 65 teams in the NCAA men's basketball tournament are announced. The announcement, I learned, would be made at six o'clock tonight.

In the afternoon I did some reading while the boys did their homework. We also watched parts of four basketball games; all championship games in the remaining conference tournaments:

- In the Southeast (SEC) Conference final, Florida, the returning national champions, played Arkansas.
- in the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) championship game, North Carolina State played the University of North Carolina.
- Texas faced Kansas in the Big Twelve championship game.
- And in the last game of the afternoon, Ohio State played Wisconsin in the Big Ten tournament finals.

All four of the games were good, and some were very close, but as expected, all of the higher ranked teams (Florida, North Carolina, Kansas and Ohio State) won their conference titles.

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As six o'clock neared, I thought more about the NCAA tournament.

"In a sense," I thought, "there are really four separate tournaments; one tournament in the East, another in the West, another in the South and another in the Midwest."

I thought also about how the *regional names* in the tournament never seem to be very descriptive of identifying where the teams are from or even where the actual games are played. This year, I remembered, some of the games for the Midwest Region will be played in *Spokane, Washington* while games in the West Region will be played in *Buffalo, New York*.

"I don't understand the logic." I thought.

"I guess Buffalo would be *west* if you lived in Massachusetts or England," I conceded.

Because there are four separate regions, I remembered too that the tournament selection committee would select sixteen teams for each region, and rank them from number sixteen to number one -- the team that the committee believes to be the best in the region.

A number one seed is something that all teams in the tournament want.

The reason?

Because the first game for a number one seed is always against the lowest ranked team in their region (and no number one ranked team has ever lost to a sixteenth ranked team).

A few minutes before six o'clock, the announcers noted that there were at least seven teams in contention for the four number one seeds:

- Ohio State (which is currently ranked number one in the nation)

- Kansas (ranked number two in the nation)

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- Wisconsin (ranked number three in the nation this week)
- Florida (the returning champions who are currently ranked number six in the nation)
- North Carolina (ranked number eight in the nation)
- Georgetown (ranked number nine in the nation, who had just clobbered Pittsburgh in yesterday's Big East final)
- and UCLA (ranked fourth in the nation this week, but unlikely to be given a number one seed because of their loss to California in their conference tournament on Thursday).

The selections that the tournament committee would make at six o'clock would be critical, I remembered, not just because of which teams they would place as number one seeds, but also for the "bubble teams" (those teams who have played well this year, but did not receive automatic bids to the NCAA tournament).

Throughout the afternoon, the television coverage frequently cut away to live-broadcasts at college campuses across the country showing students huddled around televisions at their Student Unions or watching Jumbo-tron screens in basketball arenas, anxiously waiting to see where (or even if) their team would be ranked in the tournament.

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At six o'clock the tournament selections were announced. The teams selected as number one seeds were:

- Ohio State, Florida, North Carolina and Kansas.

The number two seeds were:

- Georgetown, UCLA, Memphis and Wisconsin.

And the number three seeds were:

- Oregon, Pittsburgh, Washington State and Texas A&M.

A few minutes after the announcements were made, I went to my computer and printed off three tournament brackets for the boys. As soon as I brought the tournament brackets downstairs, they started discussing their predictions.

"Georgetown's going all the way," one of them said.

"No way, it's Ohio State's to lose."

"I like Kansas," said another.

I quickly realized that the boys needed more copies of the brackets (as they would write down the name of a team, hear the opinion of a brother, cross off a team name then add another name) so I printed off more copies; making sure that each of the boys had several copies to write down their predictions and the results of the games that would begin in just a few more days.

For the *Go Eat Popcorn* project tonight, I began thinking about the letter to the Galatians. For weeks now, I've focused on the "big picture" and have felt like I've been "flying over" the area, looking for major landmarks or themes. Tonight, however, I felt like an adventurer preparing to step into a dense tropical jungle. The area for me, was still relatively uncharted, but I thought that I should still forge ahead, making a path through the dense jungle of words and sentences.

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I thought for a moment about some of the explorers that I'd read about over the years, and my mind quickly turned to Marco Polo, who left his home in Venice at the age of seventeen and explored Mongolia, China and India for twenty-four years before returning home.

I had read about him recently in a book called *The Discoverers* by Daniel Boorstein. In the book, Boorstein noted that Polo's adventures would likely have gone unnoticed had he not been captured by the Genoans, and his history written by a cell-mate.

My mind also turned to a book that I had read last year, called *River of Doubt* (which was one of my favorite books of the year).

"This title sounds like a bad Christian self-help book," I said when I first saw it in a bookstore.

I was surprised to discover, however, that the book actually described an incredible adventure undertaken by President Theodore Roosevelt to explore a river called the *River of Doubt* in Brazil's Amazon rainforest.

Roosevelt, I learned in the book, was in South America for a lecture tour after he had failed to win back the U.S. Presidency in the election of 1912.

At the conclusion of his South American lecture tour, Roosevelt, keen on adventure even at the age of fifty-five, agreed to the Brazilian government's offer to help explore and map the uncharted river. Only the headwaters of the river, I learned, were known to the Brazilian government, but where the river led, or even how long the river was, was not.

"That's sort of where I'm at in this project." I thought. "I know where I'm starting, but I'm not sure where things will lead."

In thinking about going forward with the project, I remembered a funny passage at the beginning of still another

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book - J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. In that book, the main character named Bilbo Baggins was invited on a great adventure and told,

“we shall soon before the break of day start our long journey, a journey of which some of us, perhaps all of us...may never return. It is a solemn moment.”²³

“This is a solemn moment for me too,” I thought, as I pondered the idea of delving into the many details of Paul's letter to the Galatians.

For the main character in *The Hobbit*, however, his initial reaction to being told that he might never return from the adventure was one of fear -- as soon as he heard the invitation he fell to the floor, and yelled, “Struck by lightning, struck by lightning!”²⁴

I had to admit that I was feeling a little nervous about continuing with my adventure as well.

“This is certainly where I'll lose people,” I confessed. “The details of Paul's letters are sure to get them overwhelmed and they'll stop reading – if they haven't stopped already.”

But a voice within encouraged me, “You've got to press on. You've gone this far, you can't stop now with only an overview of the four letters. You need to learn more about why Paul wrote his letters and how his letters can be applied today; and that means getting into the details.”

In thinking about the letter to the *Galatians*, I felt like I still had so much to learn about the letter, but also recalled that I had learned a lot already in my brief study.

In looking at my notes, I remembered that early in the *Go Eat Popcorn* project, I had calculated that the letter to the Galatians had six chapters and 149 verses.

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I had also noticed that the letter to the Galatians seemed very personal, with Paul making frequent use of the pronoun “I” eighty-one times and had referred to “others” such as co-workers and other Christians twenty times.

I remembered too that Galatians, even more than any of the other letters, was focused on Paul’s “opponents” and how they were leading the Christians in Galatia astray.

I also remembered that three components of Paul’s letters were missing in the letter to the Galatians:

- Paul’s “thanksgiving” for his readers
- Paul’s prayer for the letter’s recipients
- and Paul’s request for prayer

In thinking about these “missing components” I had concluded that they were likely missing because of how Paul viewed his readers and his concern for what they were doing. Interestingly, I also had noticed that Paul had twice called the Galatians “foolish”, but nonetheless also referred to them as “brothers”.

In reviewing books by scholars and popular Christian authors, I had read some interesting descriptions about the letter to the Galatians. One scholar had explained that, “Galatians is *spiritual dynamite*, and it is therefore almost impossible to handle it without explosions.”²⁵ Another remarked that,

“Galatians is a virile statement of the central truths of Christianity. The sheer emotional force of the book has captured me again and again over the years. You can’t read the first ten verses without feeling that something utterly important is at stake.”²⁶

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And still another scholar noted that Paul wrote passionately in the letter to the Galatians because “so much was a stake...the very future of the gospel and the church.”²⁷

Reading these statements about Galatians, helped me get a sense of the importance of the letter and increase my interest in learning more about it.

Next, my thoughts turned again to the explorers and how important it was for them to map the area that they are exploring.

I found it interesting to read Daniel Boorstein’s *The Discoverers* and his history of the mapping of North and South America.

The term “America”, according to Boorstein, was first given by a French pastor and map-maker named Martin Waldseemüller.

Boorstein explained that “Waldseemüller’s idiosyncrasy was a penchant for making up names.”²⁸

To accompany a book about Amerigo Vespucci and other explorers in 1507,

“Waldseemüller printed an impressive large map from twelve wood blocks...and when pasted together, the map covered about thirty-six square feet...In this astonishing cartographic prophesy the South American continent on which ‘America’ was inscribed showed a contour remarkably similar to its actual shape. On the inset map the two Americas were actually connected. Farther west appeared a whole new ocean, broader than the Atlantic, separating the New World from Asia.”²⁹

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Boorstein summarized, “Whatever those brave and famous explorers may have done, it took the obscure Martin Waldseemüeller to put America on the map.”³⁰

The map that Waldseemüeller created soon became very popular, but to his annoyance,

“when Waldseemüeller changed his mind and decided that after all Amerigo Vespucci should not be credited as the true discoverer of the New World, it was too late. On all the three later maps that he published showing the New World, he had deleted the name ‘America’. But the printed messages advertising America were already diffused into a thousand places and could not be recalled, and ‘America’ became indelibly imprinted on maps of the world.”³¹

Next, to map out the letter, I read through the letter to the Galatians and made this brief outline (as a map for me to follow) on my yellow legal pad:

- I. Introduction (Gal. 1:1 – 1:5)**
- II. About Paul (Gal. 1:6 – 2:21)**
- III. The Law & Abraham (Gal. 3:1 – 4:31)**
- IV. Freedom and Life (Gal. 5:1 – 5:15)**
- V. Life in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16 – 6:10)**
- VI. Conclusion (Gal. 6:11 – 6:18)**

The first section I called the “*Introduction*” which contained Paul’s greeting to the churches of Galatia and some key information about the letter.

The second section I called “*About Paul*” because it seemed to be, as one could guess, about the author. In this section, I noticed that Paul told his readers how he was

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“astonished” to hear what they were doing. In addition, he explained his life before encountering Christ and his two trips to Jerusalem after Christ had revealed Himself in Paul.

The third section I called, “*The Law and Abraham*”, which described the inadequacy of trusting in the Law for being accepted by God (or being justified as Paul called it). In this section, Paul explained that only through faith in Christ could Gentiles receive the blessing of being God’s “sons”.

The fourth section I called, “*Freedom and Life*”, which was where Paul explained that the Galatians were called to “be free” and not “burdened by the yoke of slavery” found in the Law.

The fifth section I called “*Life in the Spirit*”, where Paul described the “fruit of the Spirit” (such as peace, joy, patience, and kindness) which is the result of being “in Christ”.

The last section I called the “*Conclusion*” where Paul ended the letter and summarized his displeasure with his opponents. In this section he wrote of his opponents,

“Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised...” (Gal. 6:12-13)

“This last section,” I thought, “really gives a clear indication of *why* Paul wrote the letter.”

“They were trying to *compel* the Galatians to be circumcised,” I added.

Paul addressed the subject of circumcision again at the very end of the letter, as he ended with this statement,

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“Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.” (Gal. 6:15)

“This should be interesting,” I thought. “Paul is writing about what I’ve been interested in: being *a new creation* in Christ.”

I was interested to see if my “map” (or outline) was accurate, so I looked through my reference books, hoping to find other outlines. In the *Living Bible* I found this outline:

- I. Paul’s defense of himself and the gospel
(Gal. 1:1-2:21)**
- II. Freedom from the curse of the law
(Gal. 3:1-3:24)**
- III. The superiority of the gospel over law
(Gal. 3:25-4:31)**
- IV. The freedom of the Christian (Gal. 5:1-5:26)**
- V. Practical exhortations (Gal. 6:1-6:18)** ³²

Reading other resources, I found this very simple outline in a commentary on the letter to the Galatians:

- I. The Argument from Experience (Gal. 1:1 – 2:21)**
- II. The Argument from Theology (Gal. 3:1 – 5:1)**
- III. The Argument from Results (Gal. 5:2 – 6:18)** ³³

Another scholar offered this outline of Paul’s Galatian letter:

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- I. Prescript (Gal. 1:1 – 1:5)**
- II. Introduction (Gal. 1:6 – 1:11)**
- III. Narration (Gal. 1:12 – 2:14)**
- IV. Proposition (Gal. 2:15 – 2:21)**
- V. Confirmation (Gal. 3:1 – 4:31)**
- VI. Exhortation (Gal. 5:1 – 6:10)**
- VII. Postscript/Conclusion (Gal. 6:11-18)³⁴**

Still another scholar created this outline:

- Salutation (Gal. 1:1-5)**
 - Rebuke (Gal. 1:6-4:11)**
 - Autobiography (Gal. 1:13-2:21)**
 - Argument from Scripture**
(Gal. 3:6-3:29)
 - Request (Gal. 4:12-6:10)**
 - Autobiography (Gal. 4:12-20)**
 - Allegory from Scripture (4:21-4:31)**
 - Ethical instruction (Gal. 5:1-6:10)**
- Subscription (Gal. 6:11-18)³⁵**

These all seemed like good outlines, or “maps” of the letter, but as I was reading them, I noticed one thing:

they were all different

I paused for a moment to compare the outlines and saw that none were alike.

“To some extent, the sections are a matter of opinion,” I finally concluded. “Some think a section ends at one verse, others see it ending at another.”

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“Even though each of these outlines are different,” I thought, “my outline should help me to focus on one section at a time and serve as my *map* for my adventure through Galatians.”

With little time remaining, I decided to look again at the outline I had written on my yellow legal pad:

- I. **Introduction (Gal. 1:1 – 1:5)**
- II. **About Paul (Gal. 1:6 – 2:21)**
- III. **The Law & Abraham (Gal. 3:1 – 4:31)**
- IV. **Freedom and Life (Gal. 5:1 – 5:15)**
- V. **Life in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16 – 6:10)**
- VI. **Conclusion (Gal. 6:11 – 6:18)**

To conclude for tonight, I decided to look at the details of the letter’s first section – a section I had called the **Introduction** (Galatians 1:1 – 1:5).

Like an explorer, carefully detailing an area of terrain, I re-read the section slowly, noting things of interest. And like an explorer taking one small step and then another into a dense tropical forest, recording anything that was different or unexpected, I tried to capture as much detail as possible.

“This section,” I thought, after I had finished re-reading the five verses, “is an introduction to the whole letter.”

The first verse, I noticed, identified who the letter is *from*. I noticed that not only did Paul identify himself by name, but he also identified his role: *an apostle*. And not only did he identify his role, but he also made it clear to his readers that he had been sent not from, or by men, but: *sent by Jesus Christ and God the Father*.

“That’s a pretty strong start in telling his reader who he was and where he came from,” I thought.

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“Maybe his opponents in the Galatian church had questioned his authority,” I wondered. “So, by starting the letter with an emphasis on his *authority* as an apostle, he was making it clear to his readers that he did in fact have the authority to teach them, based not on his own initiative, or any other human, but by the authority of God and His Son.”

In verse two Paul identified who the letter was *to*: ‘the churches in Galatia’. The word *churches* here was plural, indicating that Paul was addressing the letter to *many* Christians in the area, not just those in one city. Several scholars I read had noted that it was likely that the early Church consisted of many “house churches”, so addressing it to “the churches” may have indicated that it was a letter to many house churches in the region.

In verse three, the *tone* I noticed was quite warm. “*Grace and peace to you*” Paul told his readers.

“It’s interesting that Paul used that tone here,” I thought, “because the mood soon changes to something very different.”

It was also interesting to see Paul’s first use of the word “*grace*” – a word that he focuses on in much more detail later in the letter.

“This verse is so encouraging,” I thought after reflecting on it for a moment. “Even Paul’s simple greeting has such profound ideas behind it. With the words ‘*grace and peace to you from God our Father*’ Paul was making it clear that God was continually offering his help to the Galatians – it wasn’t just a ‘one time thing’ at the moment of salvation – it’s ongoing. They could immediately receive God’s grace and peace.”

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In verse four, Paul again focused on Jesus Christ (a name he had used twice already). Even very early in the letter, Paul wanted to make sure that his readers knew what Christ did for them, explaining that Christ:

“gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of God”

This focus on Jesus Christ, I remembered, carries on throughout the letter of Galatians. Paul noted here, in verse four, at the very beginning of the letter, three important concepts about Christ:

- that Christ *gave himself for our sins* – willingly taking the punishment for the sins that we deserve
- that Christ *rescued us from the present evil age* – delivering us from Satan’s dominion and the grip of sin
- *according to the will of God* – that Christ was obedient to God his Father

“Paul’s view of Christ,” I thought, “was consistent throughout his letters.”

“That’s pretty reassuring.” I concluded.

And with that I was done with the first section in my outline.

I was looking forward to discovering more about Galatians in the next section tomorrow.

Day Thirty - Monday
(March 12, 2007 - 10:24pm)

Today I worked at my office near our house and in the evening met Sue for dinner at the café at our church. A friend of ours was celebrating her 70th birthday today, so we had planned to meet her and her husband for dinner. Unfortunately, the “birthday girl” was unable to join us in time for dinner, but I was able to spend some time with her husband before the *Growth and Healing* groups started at seven o’clock. Sue and I have relied on these friends, who are “prayer warriors” in our church, a number of times since we’ve known them, asking them to pray for us as when we’ve faced difficulty and when we’ve planned significant events. I’ve felt so fortunate to have them as friends.

After returning home, I was able to focus on the *Go Eat Popcorn* project, deciding to keep pushing ahead, through the details of the letter to the Galatians.

My mind thought again of the book I had read last year called *The River of Doubt* that described Theodore Roosevelt’s adventure in Brazil.

Roosevelt, I remembered was actually planning a journey down a different Brazilian river (called the Orinoco River) that was already mapped, that,

“would take the expedition into sparsely populated areas, and promised a fascinating tour of the continent’s wilderness and wildlife, (but) it would not be particularly taxing or dangerous, and was limited to

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well-charted rivers that could be expected to offer adventure without risk.”³⁶

And so, because of the initial assumption that Roosevelt and his friends would encounter little difficulty on the journey, many luxurious items were packed including:

“(three dozen) smoking pipes, two kinds of tobacco, malted milk, twenty-four rolls of Challenge toilet paper. One heavy zinc-lined case included nothing but spices and gourmet condiments: tins of ground mustard, celery salt, poultry seasoning, paprika, cinnamon, nutmeg, chutney, orange and grapefruit marmalade, Tabasco sauce and olive zest.”³⁷

Once Roosevelt was in Brazil, however, he was asked by Brazil’s minister of foreign affairs, “Colonel Roosevelt, why don’t you go down an unknown river?”³⁸

Immediately, Roosevelt changed his plans and decided to explore the River of Doubt, a river that had never been mapped, one whose destination was completely unknown and a river that had nearly wiped out an entire expedition of Brazilian engineers who had attempted to map the river twenty-five years before.

Candice Millard, the author the book entitled *The River of Doubt* noted that,

“So remote was the region (Roosevelt) had agreed to explore, however, that even getting to the River of Doubt would require a journey of at least two more months—first by boat and then on muleback.”³⁹

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After taking boats to reach the area, it took the group of explorers a full month to travel through Brazil's highlands in order to arrive at the headwaters of the river.

“Just to reach the banks of the River of Doubt, Roosevelt and his men had to endure a grueling monthlong journey across the Brazilian Highlands. They lost dozens of pack mules and oxen to starvation and exhaustion and were forced to abandon crates filled with provisions.”⁴⁰

Because the journey to the headwaters of the river was so treacherous, the group had to leave behind many of their supplies, including their large customized boats that they planned to use on the river.

When they arrived at the banks of the River of Doubt, with no boats, Roosevelt's group had to buy seven small dug-out canoes from local tribesmen that they would use to paddle themselves and their remaining items down the river.

Because of the small size of these canoes, Roosevelt faced a difficult challenge. According to Millard:

“At the river's edge, Roosevelt had taken stock of what was left and realized that he and his men would have to cut their provisions in half before they launched a single boat.”⁴¹

In thinking about my adventure, I was thankful that most of the resources that I had been using since the beginning of my journey continued to be helpful as I continued onward in discovering more about “new life in Christ” through Paul's letters.

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The next stage of my journey in Galatians was the second section, which I had called **About Paul** (Gal. 1:6 – 2:21).

“This section,” I thought, “really was used by Paul to tell his readers more about himself, his mission and his reasons for writing the letter.”

Verses six and seven, the first verses in the section, seemed to be one of the most important verses in the entire section, as Paul wrote:

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – which is really no gospel at all.”

Here, I noticed that Paul expressed his concern for his readers, telling them that he was *astonished* that they were *quickly deserting* him and turning to something different.

In explaining this sentence, one scholar noted that it is here that “Paul explodes in a rebuke” in an “angry tone.”⁴²

“These verses,” I thought, “really set the tone and the argument for the entire letter to the Galatians. It is here that Paul explains that the *different gospel* to which they were turning was *really was no gospel at all*.”

“If the gospel means *the Good News about Christ*,” I concluded, “then according to Paul, the Galatians weren’t hearing it from his opponents.”

In verses seven through nine, I noticed that Paul made his feelings about his opponents clearly known.

In verse seven he explained that his opponents were “*perverting the gospel*” and throwing the church “*into confusion*”. He then twice states that these opponents should be “*eternally condemned*.”

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“Those are pretty strong words.” I thought. “But aren’t they contrary to the teaching of Jesus? Weren’t Jesus’ words full of love and encouragement?” I wondered, as I remembered Jesus’ teaching, “*do not judge, lest you be judged.*”

“What’s going on here?” I asked myself. “Why is Paul saying that his opponents should be *eternally condemned*?”

To learn more, I turned to a book called the *Hard Sayings of Paul*. The author, Manfred Brauch, noted that Jesus did love those who opposed Him, but even Jesus spoke strong words to people when,

“there was an absolute rejection of (God’s) redemptive love, where the work of God was identified as demonic, where truth is trampled under foot.”⁴³

In reference to these verses in Galatians, Brauch explained that, “it is clear that Paul is not calling for the condemnation of his opponents because they are opposed to *him*, but rather because they are enemies of the gospel.”⁴⁴ Brauch added that,

“For Paul the conflict between the gospel which he preached and the teaching of (his opponents) is a life-and-death struggle. Why? Because life before God based on religious achievement, does not bring (one) into right relationship with God; because that kind of life leads not to life-giving relationship with God, but to alienation from him, to rejection of God’s grace, to a life of legalistic bondage and to the curse of death.”⁴⁵

“So, Paul was upset with the opponents because they were trying to *subvert the truth* about God and His redemptive purposes.” I summarized. “They rejected the redemption that

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God offered by His grace and unconditional love, so Paul felt compelled to write that they should be ‘eternally condemned.’”

The next three verses (Galatians 1:10-12) I noticed addressed concerns that the Galatians likely had about Paul’s *authority* and the source of his insight.

“*Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men?*” Paul asked them. The answer, obvious to Paul, was that he was trying to please God – that he was Christ’s servant.

Paul explained that “*the gospel I preached is not something that man made up*” adding that he had received this knowledge of the gospel “*by a revelation from Jesus Christ.*”

“Paul’s opponents must have made accusations that another apostle’s teaching was more correct and should be followed,” I reasoned.

Next, Paul explained his “*previous way of life*”; how he had “*persecuted the church*” and “*advanced in Judaism*” (in Gal. 1:13-14). I remembered reading in the Book of Acts, about the death of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, and that Paul (who was known as Saul) had held the cloak of Stephen’s accusers as they killed Stephen. I had also remembered that Saul had been on his way to Damascus to persecute even more Christians before Christ encountered him.

After these verses, Paul described how God had called him “*by his grace*” by revealing “*his Son in me*” so that he could “*preach him to the Gentiles*” (Gal. 1:15-16).

Here, I found it interesting that Paul did not use the phrase “*reveal his Son to me*”, as I might have said, but rather he used the words “*in me.*”

Week Five

Paul wrote,

*“God was pleased to reveal his Son **in** me.”*

During the past few weeks of reading Paul’s letters, I had seen that Paul frequently used the phrase “*in Christ*”. Here, Paul found it important to tell his readers that not only was he *in Christ*, but that Christ was *in Paul*. And because of that, Paul could “preach to the Gentiles.”

I had to stop and ask myself, “Would I describe my experience with Christ that way? Would I say that God has revealed Christ *to* me? Or, would I be like Paul and say that God revealed Christ *in* me?”

It didn’t seem as natural to say the latter phrase.

I decided to say it out loud to hear how it sounded, so I repeated the phrase several times, “God has revealed Christ *in* me. God has revealed Christ *in* me. God has revealed Christ *in* me.”

It was interesting to hear it said, yet it still sounded a little strange, compared to the phrase “God has revealed Christ *to* me.”

“Paul really wanted his readers to know that Christ lives in all believers and all believers are in Christ,” I concluded.

The next few verses (Gal. 1:16-2:10), I noticed, described Paul’s interaction with other apostles (those first disciples of Christ). Here, Paul made it clear that he did not receive the gospel “*from any man*”, but received the revelation from Christ and then went to Arabia and Damascus. Then, after three years, Paul went to Jerusalem where he saw the apostles Peter and James. Paul added that he was “*personally unknown to the churches in Judea*” (the area around Jerusalem).

Galatians

“Perhaps Paul was refuting an argument that his opponents were making,” I wondered. “He was trying to make it clear that he was not known to specific churches, perhaps those that were aligned with his opponents.”

One scholar noted that apparently a different “account of Paul’s movement and contacts...were circulating among his Galatian friends, and he swears that his own account is the true one.”⁴⁶

Another scholar suggested that Paul was making it clear that he had not arrived to Christianity “late” nor was he an “understudy” to the apostles in Jerusalem and thus derive his authority from them. If that were the case, the apostles would have likely put him to work in the “churches in Judea”, near Jerusalem. But as Paul stated, those churches did not even know him.⁴⁷

Next, in verse two (of Chapter 2), Paul explained that he returned to Jerusalem fourteen years later. And he went, he explained, “in response to a revelation” to share with the leaders “*the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles.*”

Paul begins his argument against circumcision in verses three and four noting that while he was in Jerusalem, there were some “*false brothers*” who were attempting to “*make us slaves?*” and “*spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus.*” But Titus, who was with him in Jerusalem, was not “*compelled to be circumcised*” even though he was a Greek.

“So one of the arguments that Paul was making,” I summarized, “was to tell his readers that even in Jerusalem, among the other apostles, the Gentile Christians were not required to follow the Law and get circumcised. For Paul, that would have enslaved them again.”

Week Five

Week Six – Ephesians

Week Six

Week Seven – Philippians

Week Seven

Week Eight – Colossians

Week Eight

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