

“Life for Service” (Genesis 12:2-3)

We’ve just started a new series “The Tree of Life.” This is the second message.

Last one month I’ve spent so many hours on the computer. I don’t play games, and I don’t watch YouTube so much. But, as you know, just because so many things became online, so I need to be online.

In the morning, I turned on my laptop and started work. Do this and do that. Just continue for some hours. And, suddenly I heard a funny sound, a kind of beep sound. Do you know what was that? My laptop’s battery was almost empty. So, she is crying, “I’m starving to death.”

I just looked at the extension cord, and the plug was connected. But, no light was on, which means the power switch was off. You know that, right? It looked like connected to the power source, but it wasn’t actually. If I use the PC like this continuously, sooner or later it will shut down, it will die.

It’s the same for our life. We think we are connected to the source of life, it looks like that from the outside, but it is possible that we are not actually. Even if you’re connected, the power switch could be on or off. And, the danger is we don’t know if it’s off or not, but we continue working. And, we get tired, frustrated, depressed, and burned out. Or, we may survive, but not growing, not bearing fruit. Haven’t you felt like that? Is it only me?

Proverbs 3:13-14, 18

Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, ¹⁴ for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold.

¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed.

Who is she? It’s wisdom. And, for Jews, it particularly refers to Torah. A Jew Rabbi says, “Torah is as accessible as the fruit of a tree, and as mysterious as the most inscrutable Divine decree.”¹

Through the Pentateuch, or the first five books of the Old Testament, God guides us how we can have a fullness of life, taking the fruit from the tree of life, living in Jesus.

¹ Ari Kahn, *A River Flowed from Eden: Torah for the Shabbat Table*, (Kindle, 2015), 148.

Last time, I gave you the overview of the Pentateuch and talked about only Genesis. Today, I'll cover the other four books; Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. We'll look at a very simple outline for each book, and take the essential lessons for our Christian life. As I introduced last time, I've taken many from a book, "Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts."² This is a great resource.

Ex. 1-15	Egypt	430 years	
Ex. 15-18	wilderness	2 months	
Ex. 19-40	Mount Sinai	10 months	
Levi. 1-27	Mount Sinai	1 month	
Num. 1-10	Mount Sinai	20 days	Old generation
Num. 10-25	wilderness	38 years	
Num. 26-36	plains of Moab	5 months	New generation
Deut. 1-34	plains of Moab	1 month	

1. Genesis

We saw Genesis last time. So, let's make a quick review.

Genesis is the first chapter in the history of the redemption of man. It starts with four events; Creation, Fall, Flood, and Nations. And, after that, Chapters 12 - 50 deal with four generations, Abraham and his descendants, through whom God will bless the nations.

By the way, Rebekah is Laban's sister actually. I'm sorry I said something wrong last time. This is the correct one. Okay, Rebekah is Laban's sister.

God spoke to Abraham and gave him a covenant. "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:2-3). This is the key scripture for today.

The Christian essential (1)

² "Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts," (Tomas Nelson, Inc. 1993).

Because God has reached out to man and wants us to have fellowship with Him, we can each know Him personally. It is important for each of us to know how to "hear God's voice."

2. Exodus

What is central to the book of Exodus? It's redemption. Israel was redeemed from bondage in Egypt into a covenant relationship with God.

On Mt. Sinai, Moses received God's moral, civil, and ceremonial laws. And, he also received the blueprint for the tabernacle which was to be built in the wilderness.

The laws are lifeguards. They are good for people's life. The laws guard their personal lives, specifically in their relationship with God (20:1-26). And they protect their social lives, specifically in their relationship with one another (21:1-24:11). And, they guard their religious lives so that the people would know how to approach God in the ways God taught (24:12-31:18).

Exodus	Protection	
20:1 - :26	Personal lives	The relationship with God
21:1 - 24:11	Social lives	Their relationship with one another
24:12 - 31:18	Religious lives	How to approach God

The Christian Essential (2)

Because God has revealed Himself to us through the Bible, we should have a deep appreciation and love for God's Word.

The Bible consists of 66 books, the Old and New testaments. If you read 4 chapters every day, you can read through the Bible once a year. It takes about 20 minutes.

If we have the right relationship with God, we love his word. And we don't just listen to it and forget about it, but we will keep it in our heart and mind, and act on it in our daily life.

Actually, we all know these things very well. We know, you know, I know that it is important to read the Bible every day. And we should not just

read it, but practice the words in our daily life. You know that, I know that. But in reality, it doesn't go so easily, as we know.

So, what is our problem then? Our habit. We need to develop a habit, a daily routine, which will be established by setting aside some time to read the Bible. Put Jesus at the center throughout the whole day. We need to craft a new rhythm for our day.

My life used to be like; God, work, work, work, work, work, break, work, work, work, work, work, and down. And the next day, about the same... But now, I'm developing a new rhythm. God, work, work. God, work, work. God, work, work. It's like you're dancing waltz with God all through the day. It's so good!

Crafting the rhythm of your day. It must be done intentionally. Because we are usually too busy to maintain our inner world or soul, which is "the central point of a life in touch with God."³ And "the only place from which we can gain the strength to be brave, or even beat, any outer turbulence," Gordon MacDonald says.⁴

How can you make the new rhythm of your day? This is my suggestion, which is very simple but works well for me. Besides your daily devotion, or quiet time, make four appointments with God daily, and write them down on your schedule. Or, you can set alarms on your phone. And look at them in the same way as other business appointments.

Just example, the first appointment for 5 minutes; it's after your breakfast, but before you start your work. The second appointment for 3 minutes; it's after lunch and before your afternoon starts. The third appointment for 3 minutes; it's sometime in the afternoon, after one work is done and before you move to the next. And the fourth one for 5 minutes; it's immediately after you finish your work and before you move back to your private life, which can be before you check your personal messages, before you talk to kids, before you turn on the TV, before you have a dinner, before you go for a walk, so on.

Once this becomes your habit, it's very normal for you to live with the new rhythm. The point is to put Jesus at the center throughout the whole day.

³ Gordon MacDonald. *Ordering Your Private World*, (Kindle edition, Thomas Nelson, 2017), Location 516-7

⁴ *Ibid.*, 604

3. Leviticus

In Exodus, Israel is redeemed and established as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation; and in Leviticus, Israel is taught how to fulfill their priestly call. They have been led out from the land of bondage in Exodus and led into the sanctuary of God in Leviticus. Leviticus shows they moved from redemption to service, from deliverance to dedication.

Leviticus' central message is the holiness of God. And it talks about how an unholy people can acceptably approach Him and then remain in continued fellowship. It's about the relationship with God.

The first part, cp1-17, focus on sacrifice and talks about the way to God, while the second part, cp18-27, focus on sanctification and describes the walk with God.

Leviticus	Focus	
1 – 17	Sacrifice	The way to God
18 – 27	Sanctification	The walk with God

For the people of Israel to give offerings, they brought it to the tabernacle, and the priests conducted the ceremony.

The tabernacle was called “the tent of meeting (Lev 1:1).” God said, “There I will meet you and speak to you; there also I will meet with the Israelites, and the place will be consecrated by my glory” (Ex 29:42-43).

The Christian Essential (3)

Because we can each have direct access to God, it's important to understand how to pray.

Prayer is the very distinguishing characteristic of the people of God. The prayer is like a conversation with God. It's not chanting or channeling. It's also not listing Church terms. It is a conversation with your beloved. If you know how to talk to your friend, you know how to pray. You must know that God wants to hear from you because he loves you. He is waiting to hear from you because he paid the cost of reconciliation.

Prayer is the process of aligning our mind with God's will, not the other way around. Prayer is to connect with God so that you may have access

to His peace, power and joy, and it helps you to cope with what's happening in your life. Through prayer, we can access God so that we can have the strength to live and accept the fact that we don't get what we want.

Some Christians find the ACTS prayer helpful. It takes four steps: A. C. T. S. (A) Adoration: "God, you're great." Praise God for who he is. Worship him and acknowledge his greatness. (C) Confession: "Oh Lord, I'm sorry." Tell God you're sorry for where you've done wrong, where your actions haven't done in God's will. Then, ask God's forgiveness. (T) Thanksgiving: "Thank you, Jesus." Tell God "thank you" for his work in your life. Give thanks for all the blessings of this life. And (S) Supplication: "Father, please..." Ask God for your specific requests for yourself and others. Share what's on your heart and where you need God's help, guidance, and healing. Pray for others, and come alongside them in prayer. This is the time to hand over all to God and fully open your heart before him.

4. Numbers

Numbers is the book of wanderings. No wonder why we become wandering when we read Numbers. It stretches over almost thirty-nine years. It refers to Israel's movement from the last twenty days at Mt. Sinai, the wanderings around Kadesh Barnea in the wilderness, and finally the arrival in the plains of Moab in the fortieth year.

In Numbers, there are two times the number of people was counted. They are different. Please don't be confused. The first one was "in the Desert of Sinai on the first day of the second month of the second year after the Israelites came out of Egypt" (Num 1:1). There, the old generation who were rescued from the slavery of Egypt were counted. And none of them could enter Canaan, except Joshua and Caleb.

And the second one was "on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho (Num 26:3)." At around the end of their forty-year journey, facing the land of Canaan, the Promised Land, the number of the new generation was counted.

The Christian Essential (4)

Because God has reconciled us to Himself, we can be reconciled to each other. This is called fellowship.

Numbers clearly shows it's about community, where you belong to. "All the people were registered according to their ancestry by their clans and families" (1:18). And, "Each clan and family set up camp and marched under their banners exactly as the LORD had instructed them" (2:34).

They gathered as a community, moved as a community, and stayed as a community.

Christians are added to God's family. We are connected with one another and knitted together to build up a local church. Church doesn't mean a building, but it is the assembly of believers. If you don't commit to one local church, you cannot build up a close relationship with people.

This is a big challenge for our generation of individualism and consumerism. While it's good for you, you stay. When it becomes inconvenient, just leave and find the next one. Relationship becomes like consumer goods. It affects our understanding of church as well.

Numbers is the record of the failure of Israel to believe in the promise of God. And the result of their unbelief and complaint to God caused wandering in the wilderness for forty years.

At the same time, through the whole, it testifies to the grace and mercy of God. The divine presence and guidance is evident in the pillar of fire and cloud (10:11). God's care for His people is seen in the daily provision of manna for food and in the rock which provided water for people to drink.

Numbers shows very clear contrast: Israel's failure and God's grace and mercy.

Sometimes we just think about what is the truth, talk about the truth, truth and truth. Well, if you want the truth, the truth is you and I are sinners, we should go straight to hell. But Jesus brought grace and truth (John 1:14). If you don't know the truth, you cannot understand grace. Only when you see what you did was wrong, you are a sinner, you deserve hell, and you can't save yourself, then you can understand grace. We need both grace and truth.

Which part of me does he give grace to? God loves me, including the most broken part of myself. God forgives me, including the darkest time of my life. If the grace of God has not touched you at the deepest point of shame in

your life, it'll be very difficult for you to ever love yourself, and if you can't love yourself, it'll be very difficult for you to ever love other people. You will try. You will try harder. But you can't. You may feel you are a failure. You don't want to feel you are a failure, so you begin to blame others. All are their fault. You are always right and do good.

The secret of loving others is in loving yourself. The secret of loving yourself is in understanding that God loves the most broken part of you, and in experiencing this again and again and again.

Numbers clearly shows that God loves you, including the most broken part of you. You can't achieve more of God's love by what you do, because he loves you with his perfect love. God forgives you, including the darkest time of your life. Your sin doesn't change your value in God's eyes. You can't increase your value in God's eyes no matter what you do, because he already says "You are precious in my sight. I love you." And he proved it by sending his only son to redeem you.

5. Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy focuses on the last one month of the forty-year period in the wilderness when the new generation was on the border of entering Canaan.

Moses' first sermon (1:1-4:43) talks about what God has done, which provides the background of the covenant.

The second message (4:44-26:19) covers what God expects of Israel, adapting the laws of Exodus to the new situation which they would face after they entered the Promised Land.

The third (27:1-34:12) shows what God will do. He told what would happen to Israel. If they follow the Word of God, life and blessings will come after them, if not then death and cursing (30:19).

And this blessing is not only for Israel but also for all nations. Through Israel, the faithfulness and greatness of God will be testified to all nations so that they will come to him.

And this is the fulfillment for the covenant God gave Abraham. "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses

you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen 12:2-3). In other words, this is the call for Israel, the call for people of God.

Deuteronomy		
1:1-4:43	what God has done	the background of the covenant
4:44-26:19	what God expects	adapting the laws of Exodus to the new situation
27:1-34:12	what God will do	Life or death; blessings or cursing

The Christian Essential (5)

Because God has saved us, we can tell others the good things God has done for us. This is our witness.

You don't want to talk about the relationship in which you have a guilty feeling, or of which you are ashamed of. But if you have a good and close relationship with someone who you respect and you are proud of, then you would want to talk about that relationship with others.

You may naturally start to talk about how you developed such a close relationship with that person, what he has done for you, and how great he is, and so on. If you don't want to talk about Jesus with others, there may be problems in your relationship with Jesus.

And being a witness of Jesus is not just talking about him. Our everyday life must integrate with our faith in Jesus.

It is said, "Meaning revealed in life."⁵ So, witnessing and serving for the Gospel is more than just joining activities of churches or projects of organizations, but it is about "being", or "our existence as God's redeemed people living in the world."⁶

We are sent to the world, bringing God's kingdom culture to the society, and demonstrate the truth and mercy, justice and peace (Psalm 85:10). That's how we win the world to Christ, and build the kingdom of heaven on this earth.

⁵ Bernard T. Adeney, *Strange Virtues – Ethics in a Multicultural World* –, (Inter Varsity Press, 1995), 52.

⁶ Goldsworthy, Graeme, *According to Plan*, (Inter-Varsity Press, 1991), 29.

For self-reflection

1. How is your daily rhythm like currently? Is Jesus the center of your day? How do you spend time with the Word? How would you craft a new rhythm?
2. In which part of you do you need the grace of Jesus? Make it specific. How would you receive his grace? Is there anything that is keeping you from his grace?
3. The ACTS prayer is the four steps guideline for prayer; (A) Adoration, (C) Confession, (T) Thanksgiving, and (S) Supplication. In which area do you usually pray most and least? Try to follow the ACTS prayer this week.
4. Is there any person you often talk to others about? Who is the person for you? How did you develop the relationship? How are you enjoying the relationship? Now, what about your relationship with Jesus?