

## “Intending to Do Good, But Doing Wrong”

Judges 17; Galatians 5:16–23

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My wife and I went to South Africa as Briarwood supported missionaries in 1980 and we knew we would experience some culture shock, some things we knew would be different. We had been warned of a few but weren't aware of all the things, of course. Early on in our time there after we had been there a few months we went on a vacation to Kruger National Park which is this gigantic game reserve that is literally the size of the state of Massachusetts. We were trying to get to a certain gate where we had reservations and we got lost. Back then there was no Google maps, it was only paper maps. We saw this African man walking alongside the road hoping he spoke English for most Africans spoke multiple languages and he did. We asked him for directions but we ended up more lost. Ask a second man who gave us directions but we were still lost and finally the third man we asked gave us the directions that got us to the gate we needed to be at before it closed.

We couldn't figure out why we had been given so many different directions from various people and we later found out that people in Africa want to help you but if you ask for directions they feel obligated to give you directions, even if they have no idea where you are going. I realize that's a trivial thing but our missionaries that we send out from Briarwood have trouble communicating the Gospel because people in different culture do life, they have values and they think differently.

One of my all-time favorite books was Peace Child written by Don Richardson. He and his wife went to Papua New Guinea somewhere around the 1960s and he learned the language of this tribal group he was working amongst. Once he learned it he began to tell them the story of Jesus and they sat listening respectfully until he got to the part about Judas Iscariot betraying Jesus which is when they kind of went berserk clapping and cheering. That really puzzled Don and he thought maybe he hadn't said things the right way. The next day he asked his language helper what went wrong and what he said. The helper said 'Oh no you didn't say anything wrong for the highest virtue in our tribe is treachery so Judas was the hero of your story and not Jesus.' So how do you get the Gospel across to a group of people who see Jesus as the pig fattened for slaughter and Judas as the hero? If you want to find out read the book Peace Child.

Here in the United States the missionary challenge in relating to people who are different is also our challenge. We face this all the time as we increasingly encounter people who think differently than us as evangelicals. Many people call this time period a post Christian time here in America. Post Christian would be the idea that Christian values once were held dominant but are not anymore. That means as Christians, rather than others seeing us as positive offer to the culture, we're often seen as the problems and that's not good but it wasn't always that way. There was a time even in the US that even people who were not Christians respected Christians, felt they were people of integrity and that they had something of value to offer to our culture.

We will be looking at a passage in Judges 17 which talks about the nation of Israel which had a similar reversal in their history. To see this we'll start in the last few verses of Joshua 24 because that will give us the context of what we'll see about the nation of Israel in Judges.

Joshua 24:31 says [31] *Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the LORD did for Israel.* Here we see that Joshua did what God expected him to do, he was faithful in taking the leadership

from Moses and leading the people into the Promised Land. Eventually Joshua died but those elders who had been close to Joshua during that time continued that work of following the Lord until they died out. Unfortunately it didn't stay that way because in a few generations the nation had forgotten the ways of the Lord and that brings us the whole book of Judges but we'll focus on Judges 17.

Judges 17:1–6 says [1] *There was a man of the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Micah. [2] And he said to his mother, "The 1,100 pieces of silver that were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse, and also spoke it in my ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it." And his mother said, "Blessed be my son by the LORD." [3] And he restored the 1,100 pieces of silver to his mother. And his mother said, "I dedicate the silver to the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a carved image and a metal image. Now therefore I will restore it to you." [4] So when he restored the money to his mother, his mother took 200 pieces of silver and gave it to the silversmith, who made it into a carved image and a metal image. And it was in the house of Micah. [5] And the man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and household gods, and ordained one of his sons, who became his priest. [6] In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*

The name Micah mean one who is like Yahweh, like the Lord. So even though this was a very dark time there was still an outward following of the Lord as children were still given names related to the Lord. So why would Micah's mother utter a curse about the silver? In those days a year's wage was ten shekels so 1100 shekels was a fortune. She had a lot of money stolen from her so she uttered this curse on whoever did it and he did a good thing by admitting his wrongdoing. Then he took the next step which is the appropriate thing to do but if she would have stopped after saying she was going to dedicate the money to the Lord that would have been okay. Sadly, they were going to use the silver to create a carved image, an idol which is a direct contradiction to the Ten Commandments which tells us not to do that, yet they're still talking about the Lord.

In verse 5 again it seems like he is wanting to do something that would be to worship God but yet he makes his own place of worship and makes his own son a priest. In Israel only certain people could be priests. Here he thinks he is doing something good but it is actually forbidden by God. He has a carved image, a shrine which is an unauthorized place of worship, made his own son his personal priest and it's not really unlike what we have done in our own country where people misuse the Bible to justify all kinds of sins.

For example, the Church of England clergy recently received a memo after the nation had legalized same sex marriage and it said in part; "that the proper place for sex is only in marriage between a man and a woman. Sexual relations outside of heterosexual marriage are regarded as falling short of God's purposes for human beings." That's a Biblically sound statement but almost immediately there was an outcry over that from the LGBT community so the arch bishops then came forward and apologized for the statement. So imagine being a head of a church and apologizing for making a Biblical statement?! That's pretty shocking and that's pretty much what was happening in Israel at the time of this Judges passage. People were in positions of spiritual leadership but they were not really following the Word.

We have also had American politicians and leaders misquoting Scripture to suit their own platforms. In our ministry we have seen health care students living together before marriage and some of them are very blatant about it. In one particular situation where there was a couple living together one of our staff confronted the couple about it and the answer was 'we're not actually having sex we're just living in the same house.' I wasn't sure I should believe them or

not but still when they were further asked about the Scripture that says ‘we should give no appearance of evil’ they said ‘we just interpret the Bible differently than you do’ which seems to be a fall back a lot of people have about a lot of things.

As a side note, one of the things I would encourage you to do if you’re not already doing it, is to listen to Today in Perspective by Pastor Harry Reeder which airs five times a week and only ten minutes long. I find it one of the best sources that tackle the big issues facing our country and getting a Biblical perspective on those issues and it doesn’t take long to hear it. You can hear it on the radio but you can also get it on a podcast which means you can listen to it at the time convenient for you. If you are one who is struggling with any of these sexual sins that I have alluded to here, I’m not trying to condemn you because I know you’re struggling so we’re here to help you but my concern is with so called religious leaders who are teaching falsehood in the name of Christ. Now back to the passage.

In Judges 17:6 we see that the problem they are having in those times is that everyone is doing what seems right in their own eyes. They are following their own truth and being true to themselves. Am I talking about then or now? Yes, it’s both. This is going on today as it was back then and this statement is so important that the author repeats this three times in Judges. It’s also the last statement in the book of Judges as well.

So why does the author mention even having a king at this point? What was the role of the king of Israel when they did get one? We find the role in Deuteronomy 17:14–20 which says [14] *“When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,’* [15] *you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. [16] Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall never return that way again.’ [17] And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.*

[18] *“And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. [19] And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, [20] that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.*

So the king had a responsibility to know God’s Word, to follow it and be involved in leading other people to follow God’s truth. Truth is important. That’s why our recent theme for the mission’s conference was fellow workers for the truth. We are concerned about truth. Now let’s go back to Judges.

Judges 17:7–13 says [7] *Now there was a young man of Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there. [8] And the man departed from the town of Bethlehem in Judah to sojourn where he could find a place. And as he journeyed, he came to the hill country of Ephraim to the house of Micah. [9] And Micah said to him, “Where do you come from?” And he said to him, “I am a Levite of Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to sojourn where I may find a place.” [10] And Micah said to him, “Stay with me, and be to me a father and a priest, and I will give you ten pieces of silver a year and a suit of clothes and your living.” And the Levite went in. [11] And the Levite was content to dwell with the man, and the young man became to him like one of his sons. [12] And Micah ordained the Levite, and the young man*

*became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. [13] Then Micah said, "Now I know that the LORD will prosper me, because I have a Levite as priest."*

The point here is that this man was a Levite. Levites were people who assisted the priests in the temple worship, but only the Levites who were descended from the line of Aaron could become priests. This man was not from the line of Aaron because it tells us that in Judges 18:30 so in other words he could not be a legitimate priest. Being a Levite this man should have known that he could not be ordained as a priest. Micah also had no authority to ordain him as a priest as well. So we have an especially bad situation here for we not only have Micah and his family going astray but now you have a person who is a Levite who should have known better as a spiritual leader not being able to follow God's Word.

I read recently about a man named Don Cupitt who is an Anglican priest in England. He is also a devout atheist and yes you heard me right. He is also a University Professor at Cambridge. I was listening to a podcast from one of his former students who said 'we never knew what he was going to say from day to day because it seemed like he changed his beliefs every day.' One thing he didn't believe in was God yet he is serving as a priest. This sort of thing should not be happening, my friends.

Now let's look at this closing verse of this chapter, Judges 17:13. At best we could say Micah has been misguided but I think it's worse than that. I think he was presumptuous not knowing God's Word to think that he was going to have God's blessing when he is actually violating God's commands. No one today would think like that, right?! Sadly, I think a lot of people think like this where because they have a little bit of religion that God is going to bless them when they are clearly disobeying God.

That's what happens when an individual, a church or a nation does not have God's Word or doesn't understand it as God intended. Ephesians 4 tells us why God gave us pastors of the truth. It's [14] *so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes* (Ephesians 4:14). This is what pastors and leaders are supposed to be doing.

Our missionaries face these kinds of challenges all the time especially in many of the countries that were recently represented at our Global Ministries Conference—Turkey, India, New Zealand, Malaysia, Portugal, Thailand, France, Japan, Russia and all those in the 10/40 window. All these are places where the Gospel has never taken root and where people don't really know God's truth or His Word. In fact, even our missionaries in Manchester England and Scotland where Christianity was once so strong, powerful and produced many great Bible teachers, those places have fallen into ignorance and pagan ways.

One of our missionaries from Scotland spoke to our Sunday school class and told us when his family moved to Scotland about 18 months ago his daughter went to the local high school. The students immediately noticed her American accent and asked her why she was there. She told them her father was a pastor and their response was 'What's a pastor?' Could you imagine a response like that from a teenager in Birmingham, Alabama? It could happen in a very short time because it only take one generation for this sort of thing to happen.

This sort of ignorance of God's Word is already a major problem in our country. Examples of this would be entire churches teaching that sex between men is okay as well as same sex marriage or that a person could be whatever they identify they want to be. I remember after the Obergefell decision some said the next step polygamy but others said "no you're just using the slippery slope argument there.' Yet Utah is in the process right now of making

polygamy no longer a felony and just make it a misdemeanor but the next step will be that they approve it completely. Those are the things that are happening right now in our country.

These are examples of what I have used in my title of intending to good but doing wrong. In the text the example is that everyone did right in his own eyes. I'm really concerned about those who should know better as leaders not teaching the truth. Knowing right from wrong is not a simple thing. The way to know right from wrong is God's Word but a lot of people have not had God's Word. Now let's look at Galatians 5. Many of the places the Apostle Paul went to plant churches in his day were pagan areas. A few places he went had Jewish synagogues but they were generally the minority. Most places he went didn't have God's Word and didn't know the truth so Paul had to tell them and teach them what was right and wrong.

Galatians 5:19–21 says [19] *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, [20] idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, [21] envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

This of course is not a comprehensive list because he makes the statement 'things like these.' We are very creative in finding ways to sin but these are examples of some of the things he was trying to get across to them that are wrong. That is what we have to do. We have to teach what is right and what is wrong for we can no longer just assume that people know what is right. We need to start in our own families and that our children/grandchildren know what is right and what is wrong. We also need to come up with creative and effective ways of convincing people in our culture that God's Word and God's ways are the best ways so that they would know what is right and wrong.

Some secular researchers are now admitting that pornography is harmful to society. We already knew that from God's Word but now people outside the church are figuring it out. So we shouldn't be hesitant to teach what God's Word says because they will eventually figure out that God's way is right and true. In fact, we always need to remember that God's laws were given for our good. He is our Creator. He designed human life. He knows how it works best and He wants what is best for us as well as His glory so we need to realize that following God's ways is always best.

One of the things we need to make as a determined effort in our lives is to live Christ-centered lives of holiness. Living a lifestyle of holiness, living according to God's truth as is in His Word, often causes our missionaries to stand out in the cultures where they go and increasingly it will be true in our culture as we live God's Word that people will say 'What's different about you?' For something as simple as a husband treating his wife with love and a wife respecting her husband that is radical in some cultures. We take it for granted because we have grown up in a country that was influenced by Christian values, but it's not always that way in every place. It's not normal in every country of the world.

I want to read an excerpt from an article written by a secular person who was a peace Corp worker in a Muslim country. This is what she said; *'What I did witness every day was that women were worked half to death. Wives raised the food and fed their own children, did the heavy labor of walking miles to gather wood for the fire, drew water from the well or public faucet, pounded grain with heavy hand-held pestles, lived in their own huts, and had conjugal visits from their husbands on a rotating basis with their co-wives. Their husbands lazed in the shade of the trees. Yet family was crucial to people there in a way Americans cannot comprehend. The Ten Commandments were not disobeyed—they were unknown. The value*

*system was the exact opposite. Love and friendship in marriage were Western ideas. Fidelity was not a thing. Married women would have sex for a few cents to have cash for the market. Americans think it is a universal human instinct to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. It's not. It seems natural to us because we live in a Bible-based Judeo-Christian culture. We think the Protestant work ethic is universal. It's not.'*

That's the kind of world that is out there that we're living in and unfortunately it's where our world right here in Alabama is moving at a rapid pace. But in this passage in Galatians 5 Paul tells us how we can live a life that is pleasing to God.

Galatians 5:16–18 says [16] *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.* [17] *For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.* [18] *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

In the Greek 'walk by the Spirit' is a command and using the word walk implies activity. It is not something passive that Paul is talking about here. This means there is effort. Thomas Brooks who is Puritan pastor wrote this; 'A lazy Christian shall always want four things, viz., comfort, content, confidence, and assurance. God hath made separation between joy and idleness, between assurance of salvation and laziness, and therefore it is impossible for thee to bring these together that God has put so far asunder.' The whole idea of walking is we have to choose actively to submit to the leading and empowering of God's Holy Spirit and that takes intentionally seeking the strength that He gives us all the time. He is willing to give us strength to live His way but we need to ask for it.

In Galatians 5:16 it says there will be a result if we walk by the Spirit and that is we'll not gratify the desires of the flesh. All those things from Galatians 5:19–21 we'll not do if we walk by the Spirit and that's good news. So what else will be the result from walking by the Spirit?

Galatians 5:22–23 says [22] *But (in contrast to the flesh) the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* Why is there no law against those things? It is because those are good things. You don't have to make a law to tell people to be loving. People want you to be loving, peaceful and self-controlled because those are good things. And that's what the Holy Spirit leads us into, good things.

It says here that these things are the fruit of the Spirit which means these traits come from the Holy Spirit. They don't come from us for what comes from us is the works of the flesh but they also don't come from our circumstances. We would like to say 'I could be peaceful if only...' and whatever comes after that shows what we think determines whether we could have peace. It could be our difficult boss, neighbor, spouse, low pay or whatever the issue is. So we think there is something out there that can influence us to where we don't have love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, but this passage says those things are the fruit of the Spirit. They aren't the fruit of our circumstances. They come from God's Spirit which is good news because that implies that living as Christian has a supernatural aspect to it.

If you don't have peace you ask God for peace and He will give it. If you have a hard time loving someone and most of us have someone in this category, ask God to give you love for them. He can do that. Do you need more self-control? Ask God for it because He can give it to you. There is nothing anyone can do to keep you from having these kinds of qualities in your life because they don't come from other people but from the Holy Spirit.

So how do we walk in the Spirit? I have three things to give you about this. First, walk is the idea of living or moving or conducting our daily business. It's kind of as you go, living life. J.C. Ryle, a great Bible teacher from England, said this in his book Holiness, 'Many true believers hold dangerous and unscriptural views. They appear to think that once converted they have little more to attend to and that a state of salvation is a kind of easy chair in which they must sit still, lie back, and be happy.' That's not the way it is. He is not talking about earning our salvation here but he is talking about true believers, those who are already in the Kingdom because of God's free grace. He is saying there is more to living as a Christian than sitting back and doing nothing. Walking in the Spirit is not passive but active.

Secondly, walking in the Spirit is supernatural. It is Christ in you and that's a blessing. I don't think there is any other religion in the world that teaches their deity lives in the people, but Christianity does. It teaches that Jesus actually comes to live in us. Colossians 1:27 says [27] *To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.* When we say we have Christ living in us we say we have the Holy Spirit which is the power that raised Christ from the dead. That is awesome power living in us. This is not just some theological or theoretical hyper concept but it's a beneficial truth. The fact that Christ lives in us means that He can live through us. He can enable us to do things that we could not do on our own like loving those unlovely people, having peace in the midst of difficulties, etc. God the Holy Spirit who lives in us does wonderful things in our lives when we ask Him.

Thirdly, walking in the Spirit is also mundane. It involves using the means of grace to form holy habits that the Holy Spirit enables us to develop. I want to give you an example of this from a true life story. In Rankin Wilbourne's book Union With Christ he has a chapter titled the Art of Abiding and he tells a story in that chapter about going sailing on Lake Michigan which reminded me of an experience I had about 45 years ago.

I was visiting an ex college roommate and he was living with his parents at their home in Jackson, Mississippi which was on a reservoir right outside Jackson. He had shown me that he had just bought a two-man sailboat and that he had been given a lesson on how to sail. The key was one lesson. He asked if I would go sailing with him and I foolishly agreed. So we got into the boat and seemingly for the first few minutes as we were sailing he seemed to know what he was doing and I was impressed as we were zig zagging on this lake. I had never been on a sailboat before. We got a ways away from the house and we noticed that the wind was picking up a lot. He was so focused on what he was doing and I was trying my best not to fall out of the boat. We looked back toward his house and behind the house the sky was completely black. There was a big storm moving toward us.

That was not good news and within about five minutes we were engulfed in rain, the wind was blowing really hard and the boat was being pushed whether we liked it or not towards the other side of the lake which was a very inhospitable looking area. He eventually had to let the sail go limp in order to keep the boat from capsizing so now we were just going with the waves toward the other side. It was not a nice experience at that point but it reminded me of the Bible story of Jesus and His Disciples being in the boat when there was a storm.

So I said to Steve 'This reminds me of the story of Jesus being in the boat with His Disciples during a storm' and Steve said 'Yes, I wish He was in the boat with us right now.' Then it dawned on me 'Well He is! He is not here physically but He is here with us.' It's a supernatural thing but He is in us and He's here. Steve and I prayed one of those real prayers at that moment because we were in trouble. A minute later we looked back toward the house and

we saw this ski boat coming right for us. Turns out his dad had been watching us with his binoculars knowing that Steve was an inexperienced sailor and when he saw we were in trouble he came out to us rescue us and we were very glad to see him. He tied the sailboat onto the ski boat as we got into the ski boat and we listened to a bit of a lecture on the way back to the house, as you can imagine. We survived that.

Think about what makes a sailboat move. Is it the skill of the sailor? Certainly, skill makes a difference but no matter how knowledgeable or how determined the sailor might be, he needs something that he has no control over and that's wind. Without wind the boat just sits but also when there is too much wind it can be very dangerous for you are moving but you tend not be moving where you want to be as we experienced that day on the lake. So in order for you to move in a sailboat you have to have the wind but you also have to have certain skills that you have learned in order to use the wind for your good and to get to where you want to go.

You will not be able to enjoy the experience of sailing until those skills have become internalized that you're not really thinking about them as you do it, for they become instinctive because they have been practiced. So you're not thinking about sailing, you're sailing because it's part of your everyday life now.

Wilbourne uses this summary when he talks about sailing in his book; 'Though sailing might be unfamiliar to many of us, it's a good metaphor of our life with God. No matter how determined we might be we can't change our hearts at the deepest level nor move ourselves forward for no amount of knowledge or hard work with avail. We are always dependent on a power outside of ourselves. (Actually this power is inside of ourselves because we have Christ in us, right?) There is another power for we need the wind because without the wind there is no sailing. In the Christian life we need the Holy Spirit, for without Him we are weak, yet at the same time we are not passive observers. We can't control the wind but we can catch it and in order to catch the wind certain God given time honored skills need to be learned and put into practice, just as a sailor needs skills and habits, we need holy habits as Christians, because we work in tandem with God's Holy Spirit. He gives us strength and we form Godly, Biblical habits until they become internalized to where it's just part of life.'

In my life, for example, I don't get up on Monday mornings and ask the Holy Spirit to give me some word of revelation as to whether I need to pray or read my Bible or tell people about Jesus that week, because He has already told me that in His Word. Those things just need to be a part of my life so I have tried to develop habits in life to do the things that God has already told me in His Word to do.

Some years ago I was feeling a bit overwhelmed because I would hear people talk about prayer and how much we should pray and I thought 'I have so many things I need to pray about I don't where to start and where to stop.' Someone gave me a prayer plan that I think they got from Stephen Olford and I tweaked it so I have what I call my simple prayer plan that I want to share with you as an example.

The first point on my prayer plan is 'M' and that stands for Monday and missionaries so on Monday I pray for missionaries. I have a whole list of missionaries with some I know and support that I want to pray for. Our mission's office here at Briarwood also has a booklet of missionaries if you don't have some you can pray for. 'T' is for Tuesday and it's also for task which is my job. I'm in ministry so I have a lot of ministry type things to pray for but if you're not in ministry you can still pray about things that are related to your job. For example you can pray that you will do your work as unto the Lord and that therefore you will glorify Him in your



work. You can pray God will give you opportunities to engage in spiritual conversations with co-workers and there are all kinds of things you can pray for regarding your work/job.

‘W’ is for Wednesday and for workers and I think of, not foreign workers, but those who are here in the US and on the top of my list is the executive team of pastors here at Briarwood and Pastor Reeder. I want to pray for my leaders, those who are above me in the ministry here and their well-being and for God to work in and through them. I pray for deacons and elders as well. I also pray for the National missionaries that Briarwood supports.

‘Th’ is for Thursday and thanksgiving. In other words, that is just a day to give thanks, no asking for anything. It is just a day of praising God and giving Him thanks. A member of my Sunday school class encouraged me some years ago not to just give thanks regularly but to write down things that I’m thankful for so I do that every Thursday. There are many pages in my book now because of that and it’s encouraging sometimes to go back and read some of those things that I have forgotten about in what God has been doing in my life or in my family.

‘F’ is for Friday and family. This doesn’t mean I don’t pray for my family on other days but especially I make sure on Friday I’m praying for my immediate family and my extended family with some who don’t know the Lord so I pray for their salvation. ‘Sa’ is for Saturday and saints. Saints are Christian friends of mine so I pray for their growth and the issues in their lives that they have asked me to pray for.

‘S’ is for Sunday and for sinners which are those who are not Christians so I pray that they become Christians. I pray that God would put people in their lives to witness to them or that He would let me have the opportunity to witness to them. This is a list I like and keep their names on my list until I completely lose touch with them and what is fun is to go back through that list and see where I have put ‘praise the Lord’ and the date when they became a Christian. Some of them took years of praying for them before they came to know the Lord but it’s an encouragement to see that.

It doesn’t really matter if I have my daytimer with me or not because I can pretty much remember the days of the week and what I am to pray for on that day. This acronym always helps me remember what I need to be praying about each day. This helps me have a habit of this and we need habits in other areas like reading the Word as well.

If some of this sounds like it takes a bit of planning and effort, that’s exactly what I’m saying. Yes there is a supernatural aspect to walking in/with the Spirit but there is also the mundane which is the effort we have to do to cooperate with God’s Spirit. Psalm 112:1 says [1] *Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who **greatly delights** in his commandments!* So I have to ask myself ‘what is the condition of my heart in relation to obedience? Do I find great delight in God’s commands?’ Are you delighting in that?

The conclusion application is whatever you are struggling with in your Christian life this week assume that some of our missionaries have the same struggles and pray for them as you pray for yourself. They are people like us and they go through the same things we do. Sometimes they have even more stress because they are in another culture but they are just like us. I was a missionary in another country and when I came back I was still the same person with the same struggles. Then make sure you’re not deceived by the world or the devil into living in a way that is out of accord with God’s Word, which implies that you need to be reading and studying it. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for loving us and giving us Your Word. Thank You for the warnings we see as we read stories like the one in the book of Judges and many others for very few people seem to end well that we read about in the Scriptures. Lord, we want to be people who end well and to finish out our life walking with You, glorifying You, so that when we step into Your presence we hear the words ‘well done good and faithful servant.’ So help us to walk in step with the Spirit, trusting Him to empower us in forming holy habits and especially being committed to spending time in Your Word that we might know it and live it. I pray this in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

### Power Point

#### A Simple Weekly Prayer Plan

- M – Monday – Missionaries
- T – Tuesday – Task
- W – Wednesday – Workers
- Th– Thursday – Thanksgiving
- F – Friday – Family
- Sa – Saturday – Saints
- S – Sunday – Sinners

#### Conclusions and Applications

- Whatever you are struggling with in your Christian life this week, assume some of our missionaries have the same struggles and pray for them as you pray for yourself.
- Make sure you are not deceived by the world or the devil into living in a way that is out of accord with God’s Word—which implies you need to read and study it regularly.