

THE JOURNEY

This Week's Bible Study Reading Schedule

January 18	Genesis 42, 43	Matthew 13:33-58
January 19	Genesis 44, 45	Matthew 14:3-21
January 20	Genesis 46, 47, 48	Matthew 14:22-36
January 21	Genesis 49, 50	Matthew 15:1-20
January 22	Exodus 1, 2, 3	Matthew 15:21-39
January 23	Exodus 4, 5, 6	Matthew 16
January 24	Exodus 7, 8	Matthew 17
January 25	Exodus 9, 10	Matthew 18:1-20

Parable of the Sower

What are the thorns and rocks in your life which tend to choke out your Spiritual Growth?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pressure from friends or family | <input type="checkbox"/> Desire for material things |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Influence of TV / movies / music | <input type="checkbox"/> Worry about the future |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of commitment or discipline | <input type="checkbox"/> A "rocky" home life |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Suffering makes it hard to trust God | <input type="checkbox"/> financial worry |

How would you describe the root system of your spiritual life right now?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pretty shallow | <input type="checkbox"/> Really dry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fragile but Growing | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting tangled in weeds |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strong and deep | <input type="checkbox"/> Thirsty for more |

What in your life nurtures your spiritual growth?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christian parents / spouse | <input type="checkbox"/> Christian friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other Christian relatives | <input type="checkbox"/> Christian music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Group Bible study | <input type="checkbox"/> Regular worship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal devotions | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Activities |

What steps could you take to improve the growth of your spiritual life?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> plow it up and start over | <input type="checkbox"/> uproot the thorns and weeds |
| <input type="checkbox"/> start a refreshing devotional time | <input type="checkbox"/> enjoy the good soil of worship |

How does this parable reflect your own spiritual journey?



The Unopened Gift

Summarize your life in six words or less

HURRY – Wow, is that really the time? *or* Was never able to finish my...

MATERIALISM – Only six words? I want more! *or* Want it. Got it. Regret it.

APPROVAL – Potential yet to be fully realized.

REGRET – Certainly not what I had planned *or* Never meant to cause such harm

➤ **The gift of WHY** [preached good news to the poor]

“God so love the world that He gave His only Son ...” John 3:16

Fact #1 – You were made by God and for God [see Isaiah 64:8]

How much of your life has a reason? How much of that reason is God?

➤ **The gift of PURPOSE** [recovery of sight for the blind]

“This is true joy in life: being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one.” George Bernard Shaw

Fact #2 – Your life is not a mistake. [see Jeremiah 29:11]

How much of your future is guided by God's purpose for your life?

➤ **The gift of FREEDOM** [proclaimed freedom for the prisoners]

Conformity is the jailer of freedom and the enemy of growth. J. Kennedy

Fact #3 – Freedom invites change.

How much of your life is enslaved by the prison of standards?

Share your six-word summary and see Pastor Steve's: <http://steve4040.wordpress.com/>

John 1:29-37

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him. John said, "Look, the Lamb of God,^[a] who takes away the sin of the world!**30** This is the One I was talking about when I said, 'A man will come after me, but he is greater than I am, because he was living before me.'**31** Even I did not know who he was, although I came baptizing with water so that the people of Israel would know who he is."

32-33 Then John said, "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven in the form of a dove and rest on him. Until then I did not know who the Christ was. But the God who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'You will see the Spirit come down and rest on a man; he is the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'**34** I have seen this happen, and I tell you the truth: This man is the Son of God."^[b]

The First Followers of Jesus

35 The next day John^[c] was there again with two of his followers.**36** When he saw Jesus walking by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"^[d]

37 The two followers heard John say this, so they followed Jesus.

I have come to give life

"... did God's will during his lifetime" (Acts 13:36, NCV).

There's an old legend that claims Ernest Hemingway was once challenged in a bar to write a story in only six words, a novel that would tell the whole story, and he wrote, 'For sale: baby shoes, never worn.'

That legend, believe it or not, still lives on. An online magazine challenged people to do the same. As simple as it sounds, can you describe your life in six words?

I forged these chains in life

Without God, life makes no sense

Does this make me look fat?

Christmas is what life's all about.