



MYSTERIES OF GOD

COURSE WORKBOOK

Also used for
Retreat/Small Group Leader Guide

THE MYSTERIES OF GOD

COURSE WORKBOOK

Leader Guide

WORKBOOK

RICHARD T. CASE



To my wife, Linda, with whom it is always quite fun to seek the Mysteries of God. Her curiosity and desire to seek the truth of things that are not known naturally but are available to all of us. We seek God's revelation that will provide the answers to these mysteries which are purposeful—so that we do seek to know from Him, do not try to figure them out ourselves, and enjoy the journey to discover these wonderful truths. As we do, we can live at a higher spiritual level and then help others discover these for themselves—is a wonderful joy to both receive and be part of the process for others to receive. They are quite interesting and remarkable. Her encouragement to continue to learn these mysteries is a positive driver toward moving forward and not quitting on the process when it is complicated and not readily understood in the natural. It is an honor to have such a partner.

We together also wish to honor our family who have learned this and join us in pursuing God's mysteries—always a joy to have open discussion on these.

Acknowledgments

We wish to honor all the leaders of our **Abide Ministries**. As each person and each couple have learned to that God's mysteries are available to us and are important to receive, we serve to build the body of first our leadership, and then others to whom participate in the courses and retreats. We together experience the joy of the "ah ha" moments when discover is known. The leaders are committed to walking with others in this amazing journey of mysteries.

These leaders are:

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LESSON 1:

WHY GOD SPEAKS IN MYSTERIES



**A mystery is truth
that can only
be known by
revelation.**

Welcome to our course on the Mysteries of God. This is a really interesting one, because the Scriptures themselves describe a great deal of God's work as "mysteries"—and yet, almost purposely, we don't naturally understand what they are.

So in this course we're going to learn three things: Why does God set His truth up as mysteries? What are these mysteries? And how do we receive these mysteries and apply them to our personal lives? It's a fun course because we're getting into something most people have basically overlooked—and we have the privilege of doing that together.

DEFINING THE WORD "MYSTERY"

Before we go anywhere, we need to agree on what the word means. People throw it around casually—"a mystery," something unknown, like a secret, hard to figure out on the surface. The Scriptures use the word in a very specific way.

A mystery is truth that can only be known by revelation.

In Scripture, "mystery" means something that is not understood, or beyond our normal understanding. It is an enigma. It is very difficult to interpret. It is a private secret. It is truth that can only be known by revelation—you cannot understand it by logic. It is God's secret thoughts, His plans, His truths—hidden from human reasoning and comprehension.

Hold onto that. Mysteries are not puzzles God is daring you to solve in your own strength. They are truths He has set up so that the only way to receive them is for Him to reveal them—and the only place that happens is in walking relationship with Him.

If you'd like to know more about
Abide Ministries,
please see our pages
at the back of the workbook

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PAUSE AND WRITE

If you're taking this course, this is a great place to pause and write down two things in your workbook: (1) Are there any mysteries you've thought about—places in Scripture or in life where you've said, "I wonder what that really is all about"? Write them down. (2) What are you facing personally right now that feels difficult, complex, or like an enigma? His will for you in the things you're dealing with may itself be a mystery. Naming what you're facing will provide the context for the rest of the course.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. On the left side, there is a faint, light-colored shadow or crease, suggesting the paper might be part of a bound notebook or folder. The overall appearance is that of a clean, unused piece of stationery.

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1. THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S MYSTERIES

Let's start with the foundational question: why does God do it this way? Why not make everything plain so anyone reading the words could grasp them? Jesus answers this directly when His disciples ask Him about the parables.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Why might Jesus speak in stories that aren't easily understood on the surface?**
- **What does it tell you about God that He purposely sets up His truth this way?**
- **When you don't understand something in Scripture, what is your first instinct—to figure it out, or to come to Him?**

Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. ² And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ³ "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. ⁵ Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. ⁶ And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. ⁸ And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." ⁹ And he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." ¹⁰ And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. ¹¹ And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, ¹² so that

"they may indeed see but not perceive,
and may indeed hear but not understand,
lest they should turn and be forgiven."

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³⁰ And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? ³¹ It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³² yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade." ³³ With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. ³⁴ He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

Mark 4:1–12, 30–34 ESV

Jesus says, "I speak in parables"—in stories that are not easily understood. The disciples ask the obvious question: Why? And His answer is striking. He purposely teaches this way so that those outside don't hear it, don't understand it, and don't even repent.

Wait a minute. Isn't the reason He came that none should perish? Doesn't that require repentance? You have to repent from your flesh and say, "I understand what You did, and I receive what You did." Upon repentance you transfer into eternal life. That is His purpose. So why would He purposely speak in a way that prevents that?

THE CLUE IS IN VERSE 34

Look at how He frames it: "With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything."

There is the key. Privately. To His own disciples. He explained everything.

Life with Me is not a system. Life with Me is not law. Life with Me is relationship.

Life with Me is not you deciding how you think you are to operate with Me. The only way it happens in the kingdom—and think about this—is that you have to come to the kingdom. If you come to the kingdom and you spend

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time with Me, I will explain it to you. I will give My revelation to give you the meaning of truth that you can only receive by processing it with Me.

If God left it to logic, it would become a system. You could fully say, “If I do A, B, and C, I’ll get there.” And what would happen? You wouldn’t have the relationship. You’d have religion. Which, by the way, is where most people go. He says, “I’m trying to get to a much finer place. The people who are following religion aren’t getting it. The only way you can do it is to have relationship with Me.”

EVEN THE BEGINNING OF SALVATION REQUIRES TIME WITH HIM

Even the very beginning—when someone starts to process the truth of what He has done for them, that He died on their behalf, took the penalty, and gave them the opportunity to have life with Him through the resurrection—even then, that person has to spend time with Him and the truth. As He processes that truth with them, which is His work and the work of the Holy Spirit, they have their eyes opened, they repent, and they enter the kingdom.

And who leads the kingdom? The King.

Now, if you’re going to receive the truth He wants to reveal in Scripture, you have to beware. You have to be walking with Him. He purposely set it up this way: if you walk away from Him and go back to flesh, back to logic, back to reading the Bible as law, back to reading the Bible intellectually—you have lost the ability to receive what is there. “I purposely did it that way.”

This is why you can’t just look at the Bible and crack it open with your reasoning. People have a tendency to run to a commentary. But a commentary is usually a theologian giving you intellectual information—they’re not giving you the meaning of the parable. They’re not giving you the meaning of the truth, because the meaning is something He has to give you and reveal to you personally. And to receive a personal revelation, you have to be where? In the kingdom—walking with the King.

WHY GOD SET IT UP THIS WAY

There is a second reason—a deeper one—and it’s sweet. He enjoys being with you.

So when you come across enigmas—God’s will that is tricky for you, things in the Scriptures you don’t understand, new things He wants to reveal—what must you do? You have to be with Him. He set it up purposely. If you don’t come, you won’t get it. And He says, very cleverly, you’ll think you can get it on your own—but you can’t. The only way you can get it is to walk with Him. Why? Because He loves being with you. And the design forces you to come and be with Him.

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And what do you learn when you're walking with Him? Revelation. Insight. "Wow, look at this." It's exciting. Which is why, after all this teaching, the disciples come to Him and ask, "Could You help us understand this?" And what does He say? Sure. Why? Because they came to Him. The people around Him who didn't come—they got nothing. The whole life of God is built around the mystery.

PAUSE AND REFLECT:

1. Verse 34 says He explained everything privately to His disciples. What does that single word—privately—tell you about how God intends for you to receive His truth?

2. Rich said religion offers a system; the kingdom offers a relationship. Where in your own walk have you been tempted to substitute a system for time with Him?

3. When you hit something in Scripture you don't understand, what is your default first move—and what does Mark 4 invite you to do instead?

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2. THE WORD CAME INTO THE WORLD

If mysteries are revealed only by God Himself, then we need to know who that Revealer is. John opens his Gospel by telling us: the Word who reveals everything is a Person.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **What does it mean that Jesus is called “the Word”?**
- **If the Word created everything, what does it imply about who has the right to interpret it?**
- **Why does John say the world “did not know him” when the world was made through Him?**

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 1:1–4, 10–13 ESV

Jesus is the Word. The Word came into the world. He is the light. He is the truth. And He says, “I give you the opportunity to know Me—and I grant that to you as you begin to experience the relationship I have offered.” You have to receive that.

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So a mystery, at its core, is Himself. He begins to be known by you because you are receiving who He is, and the truth of who He is, and how it applies to your life. He gives you the privilege of being in that position. It is up to you to stay there and to enjoy it. He is the One who created it all, and He is the One who gives it to you.

PAUSE AND REFLECT:

1. John says of Jesus, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." How does this verse reframe what it means to "seek truth"?

2. What is the difference between knowing about Jesus and receiving Him as the Word?

3. Verse 13 says God's children are born "not of the will of man, but of God." How does that protect you from thinking you can figure mysteries out by your own willpower?

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3. THE WORD THAT STANDS ON ITS OWN

Now Jesus tells us something that should change how we read every page of Scripture: the word He speaks is not altered by us. It stands on its own.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **If something is true whether or not you accept it, how should that change the way you approach it?**
- **Jesus says He has not come to judge—but His word will judge. What is the difference?**
- **What does it mean that He speaks only what the Father has commanded Him to speak?**

⁴² Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. ⁴⁴ And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. ⁴⁵ And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. ⁴⁷ If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. ⁴⁸ The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. ⁴⁹ For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. ⁵⁰ And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me."

John 12:42–50 ESV

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Jesus says, “I haven’t come to judge you. What is going to judge you? What I speak.” The word He discloses, the word He reveals to you, is what will judge—and you have to receive what He says, follow what He says, in order to live. The word stands on its own. It is true, and it is not altered when He speaks it.

The word stands on its own—and it does not exempt you for not knowing it.

A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

Follow this carefully. He says, “I do it purposely, because it requires you to be in relationship with Me. I will disclose to you the truths if you have a heart to receive—and you must stay with Me to receive them. By the way, it’s spiritual revelation. You can’t use your logic to receive it. I am the Word, and I’m giving you the opportunity to receive Me.”

If you start to believe that you cannot know the truth unless you walk with Him—but the word stands on its own—what would you then need to do? You have to receive exactly what it means and then follow it so that you live the life it describes. Because the word is a double-edged sword. It is both blessing and cursing at the same time.

If you walk with Him, you will receive the abundant life—and that life will come through what you discover here in His word, which can only be unlocked by Him revealing the mystery of it. If you reject it, you will not experience the abundant life. You will experience the difficult life. And eventually you could wind up in eternity separated from Him, based on the word—which He does not alter.

IS IGNORANCE AN EXCUSE?

No. The word stands on its own. It does not qualify itself. If you never pursue it—which means if you never have a relationship with Him—does that exempt you? Think about how simple this is. An unbeliever knows nothing per se of the Word of God. The requirement to have eternity with Him would be: I have to understand what He did. Where is that described? In the Word of God. So somebody has to be exposed to that truth.

What about people who never are? Are they excused because the word stands on its own? No. He has said you only can have eternity with Him if you have received Him, repented, and live with Him in the resurrection. Even though they never pursued it, that does not change the truth.

Take it further. Let’s say you have been exposed to the truth and you never followed it—“Yeah, whatever. I know about you Christians. I know Jesus died for me. I know all about that. But I don’t care.” Does He exempt them? No. Why? The word stands on its own.

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AND THE SAME HOLDS FOR BELIEVERS

As a believer, if God says, “If you’re going to live a life with Me, you have to forgive—a hundred percent of the time, every time, with everybody who hurts you”—does He change that and say, “Yeah, I know how deep that wound is. I’ll exempt you”? No.

So what would you have to do? You would have to walk with Him and say, “I have an enigma. In my mind, that person deserves my wrath.” And God would say, “I know. So I can show you a mystery about that. I can show you a truth about that. And by the way, it doesn’t exempt you.” If you don’t process that, you’ll stay in bitterness and you won’t live the abundant life—because you never went after the mystery. Why? The word stands on its own.

The privilege He gives is to come and process everything with Him—and He purposely set it up this way.

PAUSE AND REFLECT:

1. If the word stands on its own—true whether you accept it or not—what does that imply about the danger of leaning on your own interpretation?

2. What is one area in your life where you’ve been hoping God will exempt you from a clear command? What does this passage say about that hope?

3. Rich described forgiveness as an example of a hard mystery. Where is your “hard mystery” right now—the place where you’d rather have an exemption than a revelation?

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4. COMING TO THE LIGHT

If the Word stands on its own and you cannot get the truth without walking with Him, what does that life look like in practice? Jesus tells us in one of the most familiar passages in the Bible—but listen for the part about the light.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **What is the difference between “coming to the light” and “loving the darkness”?**
- **Why might evil works make a person hate the light?**
- **If eternal life starts now (not just in heaven), what changes about today?**

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

John 3:16–21 ESV

He says, “I’ve come to give you salvation—a life with Me. And by the way, eternity starts now. It’s not just a ticket to heaven.” The key question is: do you come to the light?

And what is the light? The truth. “I come to the truth”—which, by the way, stands on its own. Because it stands on its own, and I am not exempt from it, what would I want to do? Pursue the truth. I want to go to the truth.

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Your lifetime is going to be a life of discovering truth.

It will be the truth of revelation—Him helping you understand things in Scripture He wants you to understand. And most of it will be the truth about your own life and His will for your life, which you cannot get on your own. So have a heart to go to truth. Why? Because that is where you live this fantastic life.

He purposely set it up so that unless you pursue the truth by walking with Him, you'll never get the truth. But remember, the truth stands on its own. So that motivates us to say, "I would like to live out and receive these mysteries—because I know the One who can give them."

See how simple this is, and yet how profound. I cannot get there myself, even as a believer. You can read it in the logic, and unless it is spiritually revealed to you, you won't receive it and you won't live it out. So have a heart to come to the truth.

PAUSE AND REFLECT:

1. Verse 19 says the judgment is that light came and people loved the darkness because their works were evil. What does that tell you about what is really at stake when we resist coming to Him with the truth?

2. Rich said your whole lifetime is meant to be a life of discovering truth. Does your week reflect that? What would it look like if it did?

3. What is one truth God is showing you that you'd rather keep in the dark? What would it look like to bring it into the light this week?

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5. HOW JESUS OPERATED

If anyone could have figured things out by raw intelligence, it was Jesus. But watch how He describes His own way of operating—because it is the model for ours.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Jesus says the Son can do nothing of His own accord. Why is that statement so striking?**
- **What does it mean that He sees what the Father is doing?**
- **If Jesus operated by revelation rather than logic, what does that mean for you?**

¹⁶ And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁷ But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.” ¹⁸ This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. ¹⁹ So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. ²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. ²² For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

...

³⁰ “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

John 5:16–23, 30 ESV

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The Father gave the judgment to Christ. Christ says, "I'm the Word, and I speak the truth—that's what is going to judge you, what I speak." And He says He does nothing on His own. He speaks what the Father tells Him to speak.

So how did Jesus operate? What did He pursue? The will of the Father—what the Father was speaking—so that what came through Him was revelation. He didn't say, "I use my logic to determine it," or, "Yeah, I know I'm coming to earth to go to the cross. The Father said, Do the best job You can and hope it works." Every day He asked, "What is the truth of today? What is Your will for today? What do You want Me to understand of how to explain this?"

The Pharisees and the Sabbath

Remember the context—He is among the Pharisees and the Jews. Their operating paradigm is the Old Testament, plus all the laws they had built on top of it that they had decided was the right way to go. A simple example: they said you can do no work on the Sabbath. Jesus said, "Honor the Sabbath"—the Bible says honor the Sabbath, no problem. They said, "You can't do any work on the Sabbath."

This is funny if you've been to Jerusalem. We were staying at the King David Hotel—about 25 floors. On Saturday, which is their Sabbath, you walk up to the elevator and what do you see? Every button lit up. Every floor selected. Why? Because pushing the button is "work," and you cannot do the work of pushing the button on the Sabbath. So the elevator stops on every floor automatically. That's their law. That's what they had built on top of the law.

They told Jesus, "You can't do any work," and He healed people, and they said, "You can't do that." Jesus answered, "Let Me see—so if a sheep of yours falls into a hole on the Sabbath, what would you do?" "Oh, I'd go pull it out." "Isn't that work, technically?" Well, according to them—yes, but they made an exemption.

If you approach truth as law, you're not going to receive what it actually is, because what it actually is is revelation. And He says, "Even I followed revelation and the understanding of mystery from My Father. You are to operate in that same position. That's how life is supposed to go." Let Him reveal His will and His understanding to you. And remember—it stands on its own.

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PAUSE AND REFLECT:

1. Jesus says, "The Son can do nothing on his own." If that was true of Him, what does it mean for the way you make decisions today?

2. How does the Pharisees' system illustrate what religion looks like when it replaces relationship?

3. What is one decision you're carrying right now where you've been operating on logic alone? What would it look like to bring it to Him for revelation?

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6. TRUTH BEFORE PILATE

There may be no more poignant scene in the Gospels for understanding mystery than this one. The Truth Himself stands before a man with the power to kill Him—and the man asks, in essence, “What is truth?”

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **How does Jesus describe the purpose for which He was born?**
- **What does He mean when He says, “Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice”?**
- **Pilate asks, “What is truth?”—but never waits for the answer. What does that reveal about him?**

²⁸ Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor’s headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor’s headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover. ²⁹ So Pilate went outside to them and said, “What accusation do you bring against this man?” ³⁰ They answered him, “If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you.” ³¹ Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.” The Jews said to him, “It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death.” ³² This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die. ³³ So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” ³⁴ Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” ³⁵ Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” ³⁶ Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” ³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” ³⁸ Pilate said to him, “What is truth?” After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him.

John 18:28–38 ESV

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Jesus is before Pilate. Pilate says, “You guys take care of him.” “Well, we can’t—you have to do it.” “Fine. What have You done?” And Jesus answers with a question—“Did somebody say that to you?” Pilate replies, “Am I a Jew? I don’t know anything about what this is all about.”

Then Jesus says it: “My kingdom is here. My kingdom is not of this world. If I so decided to, I could take care of all this whole thing right now and you wouldn’t have anything to do with it. But I have come with My kingdom—and I have come to bear witness to the truth.”

CHRIST HAS COME TO BEAR WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

Then He makes the central statement: “Everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice.”

Do you see the connection between that and the mysteries? In order to receive the truth that stands on its own, I am going to have to hear His voice explaining it to me, directing me, guiding me. The only way that anyone is going to get the truth is to hear His voice. That’s the requirement. And that’s why He set the mysteries up the way He did—so that you can’t get it on your own. The only way you can get it is if you hear His voice. And if you’re going to hear His voice, where are you going to be? With Him. In the kingdom. In relationship with Him. In the kingdom, surrendered to the King.

“WHAT IS TRUTH?”

Then Pilate makes a statement. It comes across as a question, but it is really a statement: “What is truth?”

And Jesus stops. Why did Jesus stop? He had been in dialogue with Pilate. No problem. Why did He stop?

Because of what Pilate had just said. On the surface it sounds like a question, but in essence Pilate said, “There is no truth. Nobody can know it. There isn’t really any truth.”

What Jesus would have liked Pilate to do—after “Everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice”—was to say, “Could You explain what You’re talking about? What truth do You need me to know?” Then Jesus would have kept going. But when you say, in essence, “That’s it—I’m not going to pursue it anymore,” He stops. He doesn’t force you to receive the mystery. You have to have a heart to receive the mystery—the truth He will reveal. And He says, “If you will be with Me, I will tell you the truth. I will explain it.”

LESSON 1:

WHY GOD SPEAKS IN MYSTERIES

PAUSE AND REFLECT:

1. Jesus says, “For this purpose I was born—to bear witness to the truth.” What does it mean for your life that the King of Kings was born for that purpose?

2. What is the difference between asking, “What is truth?” as a real question versus as a closing statement?

3. Where in your own walk have you asked God a “Pilate question”—sounding curious, but really walking away before the answer?

LESSON 1:

WHY GOD SPEAKS IN MYSTERIES

7. PUTTING ON THE NEW MAN

If receiving mysteries requires being in the kingdom, Paul tells the Ephesians exactly how that life is sustained day by day.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **What does Paul mean by “the futility of their minds” and “hardness of heart”?**
- **What is “the old self”—and why does it have to be put off?**
- **How is the new self “created after the likeness of God”?**

¹⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰ But that is not the way you learned Christ!—²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²² to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:17–24 ESV

When you come and walk with Him, you have to replace the old man. What is the old man? The sinful nature. You replace that with the new man.

Now—do you permanently get rid of the old man? No. You still carry that sinful nature. So it is a matter of overcoming it by putting on the new man. When? Every day. All the time.

LESSON 1:

WHY GOD SPEAKS IN MYSTERIES

How do you put on the new man? By surrendering. By listening. By following what He says. By being with Him.

You enter the kingdom and say, "I surrender my will, and I willingly pursue Your will to hear Your voice."

He says, "If you're going to understand this, you're going to hear Me—and I'll reveal it to you, and you'll overcome the consequences of the old man to receive the beauty of the new man." How do you do that? Put it on. How do you put it on? Come and be with Me. When you cross over by surrendering your will to Me—denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Me—I cover you with My righteousness, and now you have the new man.

By the way, you have it at the moment. Can you walk away from it and go back to the old man? Yes. How do you do that? You go to self and say, "I'm going to make my own decisions." He says, "You're back to the old man, and the consequences of the old man."

AND WHEN YOU ARE IN THE OLD MAN

Can you receive the revelation and the understanding of mysteries when you're in the old man? No. The only requirement, the only possibility, is that you must be with Him with the new man covering you. Then you can understand what He is going to reveal to you as truth—because it is spiritually given. It is revelation. And it is the truth.

So the goal is to live that way. And the beautiful thing is—you have the possibility of living that way.

LESSON 1:

WHY GOD SPEAKS IN MYSTERIES

PAUSE AND REFLECT:

1. What does “put off the old self” actually look like in your daily routine—not in theory, but in concrete behavior?

2. Paul says, “Be renewed in the spirit of your minds.” How is that different from simply trying harder to think differently?

3. When was the last time you chose the old man and immediately felt the loss of revelation? What pulled you back?

LESSON 1:

WHY GOD SPEAKS IN MYSTERIES

8. CLEANSED AND SENT

The same pattern God established with His mysteries—relationship over system, revelation over logic, holiness as the prerequisite—runs all the way back through the Old Testament. Isaiah’s vision shows it perfectly.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **What is Isaiah’s first response when he sees the Lord?**
- **Why is cleansing required before sending?**
- **What does it mean that Isaiah accepts the call so quickly after being cleansed?**

¹ In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!”

⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵ And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” ⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”

⁸ And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.” ⁹ And he said, “Go, and say to this people:

“Keep on hearing, but do not understand;
keep on seeing, but do not perceive.”

¹⁰ Make the heart of this people dull,
and their ears heavy,
and blind their eyes;
lest they see with their eyes,

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and hear with their ears,
and understand with their hearts,
and turn and be healed.”

¹¹ Then I said, “How long, O Lord?” And he said:

“Until cities lie waste
without inhabitant,
and houses without people,
and the land is a desolate waste,

¹² and the Lord removes people far away,
and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.

¹³ And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or
an oak,
whose stump remains
when it is felled.”

The holy seed is its stump.

Isaiah 6:1–13 ESV

Receiving mysteries requires holiness, and Isaiah understood this immediately: “Woe is me! For I am lost.” Why? “I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” He understood that he had a sin nature.

And what happened? He was cleansed. By whom? By God—who said, in essence, “All I have to do is touch you, and I cleanse you, and I make you holy. Because now you are with Me, and I do the work.”

All I have to do is touch you—and I cleanse you, and I make you holy.

LESSON 1:

WHY GOD SPEAKS IN MYSTERIES

BORN AGAIN—AND THEN DAILY CLEANSED

This reinforces what we've been seeing. First, you have a sin nature; you have to be born again. You process the truth and say, "I receive Christ as my Lord and Savior." Now you enter into the possibility of living this life with Him—this holy life with Him.

But it doesn't guarantee your holiness. It guarantees where you're going to wind up in eternity. But it doesn't guarantee your holiness, because your holiness has to do with your sin nature being cleansed. When? Every day. All the time. How? By denial of self. Surrendering my will to God. Going back into the kingdom.

Then God says, "Whom shall I send to tell other people about this—who will understand My truth?" And Isaiah says, "Send me." Why could he say that? Because remember, he had just said, "I can't go—I'm unclean." But he was cleansed. He didn't list the things he had done. He simply said, "I'm cleansed. Okay—send me." That is how it works. It is instantaneous when you go into the kingdom of God.

WHY GOD LETS PEOPLE BECOME DULL

Then He says to Isaiah, in essence, "Tell them they're going to get duller, and they're not going to understand any of this in their own logic—unless what?" Unless they are cleansed. They have to be cleansed. He purposely set it up that way, so that you can see this is how He has always done it. You have to be in relationship with Him, cleansed by Him, to receive revelation of the mysteries that need to be resolved by you.

Otherwise people develop a system—which, by the way, the Pharisees did. They developed all the laws and said, "Unless you follow every single one of these laws, you can't be holy." And they decided the only holy people were themselves, because they followed every single law. By the way—not really.

Take the woman caught in adultery. They were going to stone her. Jesus said to the Pharisees standing there, "He who has never sinned, go ahead and throw the stone." What did they all do? They laid the rocks down and walked away. Even they had to admit, "The truth is, I haven't really followed everything correctly." Jesus was showing—nobody can get there on their own. The only way is for Him to cleanse you.

First, be born again. Then live in a cleansed state by being in the kingdom every single day, denying your will. "Then I can use you. And I purposely did it that way so that you walk with Me."

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PAUSE AND REFLECT:

1. Isaiah's first reaction to seeing God was, "Woe is me—I am lost." Why is that response a sign of spiritual health, not weakness?

2. What is the difference between salvation (the once-for-all transfer into eternal life) and daily cleansing (the ongoing work to live in the new man)?

3. Where in your week are you operating uncleansed—not unsaved, but uncleansed—and how is it dulling your hearing?

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9. THE HARDENED HEART OF PHARAOH

Now a hard question: if God designed mysteries this way, doesn't that mean He keeps people from receiving them? Especially Pharaoh—Scripture says God hardened his heart. Did Pharaoh really have a choice? Did God purposely make it so he could not receive any of these mysteries? If that is true, then maybe it is the luck of the draw—maybe God is purposely making sure some people cannot receive Him.

Let's investigate what that really means.

THE STORY BEGINS—ALREADY HARD

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **What is Pharaoh's very first response when Moses arrives?**
- **Did Pharaoh start with a soft heart that God then hardened—or a hard heart that simply got harder?**

¹ Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.'" ² But Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and moreover, I will not let Israel go." ³ Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword." ⁴ But the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? Get back to your burdens." ⁵ And Pharaoh said, "Behold, the people of the land are now many, and you make them rest from their burdens!" ⁶ The same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their foremen, ⁷ "You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as in the past; let them go and gather straw for themselves.

...

¹¹ Go and get your straw yourselves wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced in the least."

Exodus 5:1–7, 11 ESV

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"Let my people go." Pharaoh's response: "No. I'm not even going to consider it." Notice the starting point. Was Pharaoh's heart already hard? Yes—there was no consideration, no, "Let me think about that." He was already starting from a sinful nature with a hard heart. And in verse 11 he says, "Your work will not be reduced in the least"—"I'm not changing even one iota. You know my heart."

The Staff and the Serpent

⁸Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, ⁹"When Pharaoh says to you, 'Prove yourselves by working a miracle,' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.'" ¹⁰ So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the Lord commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent.

¹¹ Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. ¹² For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. ¹³ Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.

Exodus 7:8–13 ESV

He was presented with the supernatural. The magicians could do other things, but God's serpent swallowed theirs—"I am more powerful than you." But still, his heart was hardened.

LESSON 1:

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The Nile Turned to Blood

¹⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is hardened; he refuses to let the people go. ¹⁵ Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is going out to the water, and stand on the bank of the Nile to meet him. Take in your hand the staff that turned into a serpent. ¹⁶ And you shall say to him, 'The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, "Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness." But so far, you have not obeyed. ¹⁷ Thus says the Lord, "By this you shall know that I am the Lord: behold, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood. ¹⁸ The fish in the Nile shall die, and the Nile will stink, and the Egyptians will grow weary of drinking water from the Nile.'"¹⁹ And the Lord said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, their canals, and their ponds, and all their pools of water, so that they may become blood, and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.'"²⁰ Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile turned into blood. ²¹ And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. ²² But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said. ²³ Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this to heart. ²⁴ And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink the water of the Nile.

Exodus 7:14–24 ESV

Pharaoh's response? His heart kept getting harder. Remember—it started hard, and it was getting harder.

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Two Hebrew Words for “Hardened”

In the Hebrew of this story, two different words are translated “hardened.” They alternate every single time:

1. **Resolute/strengthened:** the heart became stronger in what it already believed—already hard, and now more entrenched in being hard.
2. **Dull/insensitive:** the heart became grievous, burdensome, dull, and insensitive to the truth.

So Pharaoh’s heart was already hard at the start, and it was simultaneously becoming more entrenched and more dull as the plagues went on.

The Frogs

¹² So Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried to the Lord about the frogs, as he had agreed with Pharaoh. ¹³ And the Lord did according to the word of Moses. The frogs died out in the houses, the courtyards, and the fields. ¹⁴ And they gathered them together in heaps, and the land stank. ¹⁵ But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.

Exodus 8:12–15 ESV

This one is the second definition—he became dull, and he rejected the truth further.

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The Gnats

¹⁸ The magicians tried by their secret arts to produce gnats, but they could not. So there were gnats on man and beast. ¹⁹ Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.

Exodus 8:18–19 ESV

This one is the first definition—he became more resolute in his original hardness. So you can see he is alternating between the two.

The Flies

30 So Moses went out from Pharaoh and prayed to the Lord. 31 And the Lord did as Moses asked, and removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; not one remained. 32 But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and did not let the people go.

Exodus 8:30–32 ESV

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Here it gets duller and less sensitive to the truth.

The Livestock

⁶ And the next day the Lord did this thing. All the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one of the livestock of the people of Israel died. ⁷ And Pharaoh sent, and behold, not one of the livestock of Israel was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

Exodus 9:6–7 ESV

That one—what he originally had become more resolute, more concrete.

The Hail

²⁰ Then whoever feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh hurried his slaves and his livestock into the houses, ²¹ but whoever did not pay attention to the word of the Lord left his slaves and his livestock in the field. ²² Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, so that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, on man and beast and every plant of the field, in the land of Egypt.” ²³ Then Moses stretched out his staff toward heaven, and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. ²⁴ There was hail and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very heavy hail, such as had never been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. ²⁵ The hail struck down everything that was in the field in all the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And the hail struck down every plant of the field and broke every tree of the field. ²⁶ Only in the land of Goshen, where the people of Israel were, was there no hail. ²⁷ Then Pharaoh sent and called Moses and Aaron and said to them, “This time I have sinned; the Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. ²⁸ Plead with the Lord, for there has been enough of God’s thunder and hail. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer.” ²⁹ Moses said to him, “As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will stretch out my hands to the Lord. The thunder will cease, and there will be

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no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is the Lord's. ³⁰ But as for you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear the Lord God." ³¹ (The flax and the barley were struck down, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in bud. ³² But the wheat and the emmer were not struck down, for they are late in coming up.) ³³ So Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh and stretched out his hands to the Lord, and the thunder and the hail ceased, and the rain no longer poured upon the earth. ³⁴ But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet again and hardened his heart, he and his servants. ³⁵ So the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people of Israel go, just as the Lord had spoken through Moses.

Exodus 9:20–35 ESV

Here again—duller, becoming dull to the truth of God.

The Locusts

¹⁶ Then Pharaoh hastily called Moses and Aaron and said, "I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you. ¹⁷ Now therefore, forgive my sin, please, only this once, and plead with the Lord your God only to remove this death from me." ¹⁸ So he went out from Pharaoh and pleaded with the Lord. ¹⁹ And the Lord turned the wind into a very strong west wind, which lifted the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea. Not a single locust was left in all the country of Egypt. ²⁰ But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go.

Exodus 10:16–20 ESV

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Now here is the verse people stop on: “The Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart.”
“Well—God purposely did it.” No, no. We have to keep reading.

The Firstborn

⁴ So Moses said, “Thus says the Lord: ‘About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, ⁵ and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle. ⁶ There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again. ⁷ But not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.’ ⁸ And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, ‘Get out, you and all the people who follow you.’ And after that I will go out.” And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger. ⁹ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Pharaoh will not listen to you, that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.” ¹⁰ Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land.

Exodus 11:4–10 ESV

SO WHO ACTUALLY HARDENED PHARAOH’S HEART?

Very simple, yet very profound. What hardened Pharaoh’s heart?
Pharaoh did. By rejecting the truth of God.

God did not give Pharaoh a hard heart. He gave him a series of truths—and Pharaoh rejected each one.

His heart was already starting hard. There was no, “Well, maybe I will, maybe I won’t. Let me try to understand it.” His first response to “Let my people go” was already hard. So in other words, it started out hard.

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SOFT HEART VS. HARD HEART

What is the difference between a soft and a hard heart? A hard heart won't listen to anything. You don't even have a desire to consider listening to God. You start out, "I'm not even going to consider it."

In order to have a soft heart, you have to believe you can receive the truth—and because the truth is a mystery you only get by being with God, you have to be willing to listen to God. If He says something, you ponder it, you process it until you understand it.

How would I harden my heart? I could be a believer and harden my heart by refusing to even consider listening. My heart will get harder by becoming more resolute, and it will become more dull. And in the Hebrew, the writer literally alternates between both meanings every single time.

Who hardened the heart? Did God do it? No—"I purposely caused you to do it." How did it get hard? You rejected the opportunity to receive the truth. And believers can be in that spot. Because: my life is hard, and I think God did it, and I don't understand it. And He says, "I'll tell you why. If you have a heart to come—let's go. But your heart can get harder against Me, because the truth stands on its own. If you don't receive the revelation of God, if you don't receive the understanding of the mystery, your heart will get harder, and it will be more difficult for you to do it."

DID PHARAOH EVER REPENT?

Eventually he had a moment where he basically said, "All right, I agree with this—I'm going to let you go." But what did he do next? He went out and said, "I've made a mistake—I'm going after them to kill them." So was his heart really soft? No. He never repented.

Why? There was no desire to receive the mystery of the truth of God, because he wouldn't spend any time with God listening to it. A believer can be in that same spot. He says, "I purposely set it up this way. I do not purposely harden your heart so that you'll never receive Me—but your heart will become hard if you don't receive what I am offering. I am offering you the opportunity. I purposely set it up so that if you stay in the flesh, you're not going to receive it. And by the way, your heart will get harder and harder."

Yet the door is always open. Like the prodigal son in the pigsty: when he finally said, "For heaven's sake, this is stupidity. I repent. I'm going home," God said, "I'm glad you woke up." Did God chase him down and solve it for him along the way? No. He had to go to the pigsty. All along, the Father was saying, "Why don't you come? Why don't you come?" And the prodigal never did—until he did.

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The opportunity is always available. To believers He says, “I know your circumstances are difficult. But if I were you, I would have a heart to come and follow Me. I will give you the mystery of what to do next, which will restore everything you’ve lost.”

PAUSE AND REFLECT:

1. If God said, “The Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart,” but the deeper reading shows Pharaoh hardened his own heart by rejecting truth, what does that tell you about how God respects human will?

2. Rich said a believer can be in the same spot as Pharaoh—life is hard, and we assume God did it. Where might that be quietly happening in your heart?

3. What is the difference between asking God hard questions with a soft heart and refusing to listen with a hard heart?

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10. FROM HOLY TO SATAN IN TWENTY MINUTES

To close the lesson, Jesus shows His disciples—and us—exactly how fast a person can move out of the kingdom and back into the flesh. The same Peter who receives a stunning revelation rebukes the Lord twenty minutes later.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **How does Peter receive the revelation of who Jesus is—by figuring it out, or by some other means?**
- **What does Jesus mean when He calls Peter “Satan”?**
- **What does it look like to “set your mind on the things of God” rather than the things of man?**

²⁰ Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. ²¹ From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” ²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.

Matthew 16:20–27 ESV

Just before this passage, Jesus had asked, “Who do you say that I am?” “Some say Jeremiah, some say Elijah, some say John the Baptist...” And Peter said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Well done, Peter. You received it by revelation. It didn’t come to you because you figured it out

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logically—it was revealed to you, the mystery was revealed to you, by the Father. Way to go.

And on this rock—receiving mysteries—I will build My church.

And then Jesus said, “I’m going to build My church on that truth—receiving mysteries.” See how cool this is? A lot of people say it was built on Peter himself. Interestingly enough, a whole denomination, the Catholic Church, builds it on him as if it were built on the man. No—it’s not built on him. It’s built on what he could do: receive revelation.

Then Jesus says, “By the way, I’m going to suffer and die and be resurrected.” And what does Peter say? “No way. I’m never going to let that happen to You.” He rebukes Him. And Jesus says—what? “Get behind Me, Satan.”

FROM MOST HOLY TO SATAN IN TWENTY MINUTES

He just went from most holy to Satan in twenty minutes. Why? “You have the things of the flesh and the world and man—not the things of God.” There it is. A person can go from the most holy person there is to Satan in twenty minutes. And it’s really simple. How? Where do you go?

To the kingdom—or out of it.

Were you going to go into the kingdom and seek the answer? That is what Jesus would have liked Peter to do: “I know you don’t understand that, and I know it bothers you. That’s okay.” What Peter didn’t do, was come and say, “What do You have in mind here? What are You telling me?” Then he would have stayed in the kingdom, and Jesus would have told him the answer—which was a mystery to him. But Peter said, “I’ve already decided.” He walked out of the kingdom, and he was no longer of the kingdom. He was actually following the enemy.

So Jesus says, “If anyone wants to learn this, you have to surrender your will. Deny self. Stand on what I have done at the cross, giving you the privilege to be with Me. And come and follow Me.”

Most of our time, if we are going to receive mysteries, is to be where? With Him in the resurrection. But to get there, you have to surrender your will to walk with Him in the kingdom. He says, “It’s really simple. If you walk with Me, you’ll get the revelation. I built it purposely this way—and that’s why I say things in mysteries.”

LESSON 1:

WHY GOD SPEAKS IN MYSTERIES

PAUSE AND REFLECT:

1. Peter received an extraordinary revelation and immediately stumbled back into flesh-thinking. What does that say about how quickly we can shift from one to the other?

2. What might Jesus have said to Peter if Peter had asked, “Lord, what do You mean You must suffer and die?” instead of rebuking Him?

3. Where in your life right now are you tempted to “rebuke” something Jesus has spoken because it doesn’t match what you wanted to hear?

LESSON 1: WHY GOD SPEAKS IN MYSTERIES

CLOSING THE LESSON

As we finish this first lesson, it is profound—full of interesting threads. He purposely set it up this way, which seems odd at first. Wouldn't you make it easy?

He says it really is easy. The only requirement is that you have to walk with Him. That's it. As you walk with Him, He will reveal the answers to you. He purposely set it up that way—because if you don't walk with Him, you'll take it into religion, into law, and you'll walk away from the truth which stands on its own.

So go back over this lesson as you get ready for Lesson 2. Go back through these verses and really soak in the truth of what all this means—how He set it up so that the requirement to receive His mysteries is simply this: be with Him. The best life is the life where the mysteries are revealed, and you have to be with Him to receive them.

We will look forward to Lesson 2, which will begin to show us a little about what exactly all these mysteries are.

 PAUSE AND WRITE

Before you close this workbook: in one sentence, what is the most important thing the Lord said to you in this lesson—and what is one specific way you will respond to Him this week?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the left side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

LESSON 1:

WHY GOD SPEAKS IN MYSTERIES

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these nine questions for personal study and small-group discussion. They build on the whole lesson—not on any single section.

Scriptural Understanding

Three questions that test your grasp of the biblical text in this lesson and the keywords in those passages.

1. In Mark 4:11–12 Jesus says the secret of the kingdom of God has been given to His disciples while those outside hear in parables “lest they should turn and be forgiven.” In the context of the whole passage and the rest of this lesson, what is Jesus actually saying about why God speaks in mysteries—and what is He NOT saying?

2. John 18:37 records Jesus saying, “Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” Unpack the keyword listens. What does it imply about the posture of someone who is “of the truth,” and how is that different from someone who merely hears words about Jesus?

3. In the Pharaoh narrative (Exodus 5–11), the Hebrew uses two different words translated “hardened”—one meaning resolute/strengthened and the other meaning dull/insensitive. Why does it matter that both words are alternated throughout the story, and what does that pattern teach us about how a heart actually becomes hard?

LESSON 1:

WHY GOD SPEAKS IN MYSTERIES

Deeper Understanding

Three questions that ask you to recall and articulate the key concepts of the lesson.

4. Rich said, "Life with Me is not a system. Life with Me is not law. Life with Me is relationship." In your own words, explain how a system can mimic relationship and yet completely miss it—and why God designed mysteries specifically to prevent that substitution.

5. Trace the connection between three statements from this lesson: (a) "The Word stands on its own," (b) "Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice," and (c) "You can't receive revelation in the old man." How do these three together describe how God has designed the Christian life?

6. Peter went from receiving the highest revelation ("You are the Christ, the Son of the living God") to being called "Satan" in the span of a few verses. What is the mechanism Jesus identifies for that fall, and what would Peter have needed to do to stay in the kingdom?

LESSON 1:

WHY GOD SPEAKS IN MYSTERIES

Personal Application

Three questions that move from understanding to obedience.

7. Name one current “enigma” in your life—a circumstance, a relationship, or a question where God’s will feels like a mystery to you. What is the very next step of being with Him you could take this week to begin receiving the revelation you need?

8. In what specific area have you been quietly hoping God would exempt you from a clear command (forgiveness, generosity, purity, surrender of a relationship, etc.) because the cost feels too high? What does the truth that “the word stands on its own” mean for that area?

9. Where in your week are you most likely to slip from the new man back to the old man—and what is one practical, repeatable way you will “put on the new man” at that point of slippage going forward?



LESSON 2:

THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST



**Our hearts harden
because we
keep rejecting
opportunities to
receive the truth, and
the natural makes it
harder and harder for
us to soften.**

Welcome to Lesson 2 of The Mysteries of God. The first lesson established something profound: God set the mysteries up so that we can only receive them one way. Either we are walking in the Spirit with Him in the life of the kingdom—in which case He will explain the mysteries to us—or we are in the flesh, and the mysteries remain hidden. He purposely arranged it so that there is no other path. His heart is that all we need is a heart to go with Him, and He will give them to us.

We also learned that walking in the flesh hardens the heart. He does not harden it on purpose. Our hearts harden because we keep rejecting opportunities to receive the truth, and the natural makes it harder and harder for us to soften. As we discussed last time, the desire to walk with Him is everything—because, as Jesus said, “If you are of the truth, you will hear My voice.”

In this lesson we ask a different question: What exactly are these mysteries? Scripture begins to describe them, and as it does, a striking pattern emerges. The mysteries are not abstract truths floating in the air. They reside with a Person. They are revealed by a Person. And the Person dwells in you.

LESSON 2:

THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST

SECTION 1—THE SOURCE OF ALL MYSTERY

Before we ask how mysteries are revealed, we must ask Who holds them. The throne room of heaven gives us the answer in unmistakable terms.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **To Whom does heaven itself ascribe wisdom, might, and glory?**
- **Why does the location of these treasures matter for how we receive them?**

¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,

¹² saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”

¹³ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

¹⁴ And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Revelation 5:11–14 ESV

REFLECT

1. When John saw heaven, who were the angels and every creature worshiping, and what specifically did they ascribe to Him?

LESSON 2:

THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST

2. If wisdom, might, honor, and glory all reside with Him, then in order for us to receive them, where must we be—and with Whom?

3. How does joining heaven's worship of Christ change the way we approach the mysteries we are seeking to understand?

They worshiped Him because He is worthy—He is the answer to everything. We join His worthiness by our willingness to worship Him and to recognize that being with Him is the source of every mystery. Strength, honor, glory, wisdom—all of it resides with Him. So if it resides with Him, then in order for us to receive it, we have to be where He is.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Daniel faced a king's demand impossible by human means. As you read, watch how he responds.**
- **What does Daniel expect from God before he even asks?**

¹⁴ Then Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon.

¹⁵ He declared to Arioch, the king's captain, "Why is the decree of the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the matter known to Daniel.

¹⁶ And Daniel went in and requested the king to appoint him a time, that he might show the interpretation to the king.

¹⁷ Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions,

¹⁸ and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

LESSON 2: THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST

¹⁹ Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

²⁰ Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might.

²¹ He changes times and seasons; He removes kings and sets up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;

²² He reveals deep and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him.

²³ To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for You have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of You, for You have made known to us the king's matter."

Daniel 2:14–23 ESV

REFLECT

1. Nebuchadnezzar demanded both the dream and its interpretation. Why is this "the epitome of a mystery," and what made it humanly impossible?

2. When Daniel went in and asked the king for a couple of days, what was he expecting from God—and how do we know he was confident, not hopeful?

LESSON 2:

THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST

3. Daniel does not say merely, “God can interpret dreams.” What does he say God does, and how does that shape our posture when we face our own impossible situations?

When Nebuchadnezzar demanded the dream itself, the wise men were trapped. No one could possibly know what the king had dreamed except the king. So they began killing everyone. Daniel, however, simply said, “Give me a couple of days,” and went home. Why? Because he knew Whom he was going to. He went to God and said, in effect, “You know everything. You can reveal this to me.” And the epitome of the mystery is right there: I do not even have a clue. So, God, would You do what? Reveal it.

When Daniel asked the king for time, what did he expect? The answer. He knew God would give it to him. He did not say, “I hope so, because if not, well, I guess we are all dead.” He said, in effect, “Just relax—and stop killing everyone—I will get it.” Why? Because he knew God. He is the deliverer of mysteries.

PAUSE AND WRITE

Where in your own life are you facing something only God can reveal? Write down the situation, then write what it would look like to expect Him to reveal it before you ever bring it to Him.

LESSON 2:

THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST

SECTION 2—CHRIST IN YOU: THE HOPE OF GLORY

Paul now collapses the distance between the believer and the Source. The mystery is not far from us—it is in us. And the moment we see this clearly, the next pitfall comes into view: drifting back into law.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Paul calls something previously hidden “now revealed.”**
- **What does it mean that the mystery itself is a Person, and that Person dwells in you?**

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of His body, that is, the church,

²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known,

²⁶ the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to His saints.

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.

Colossians 1:24–27 ESV

REFLECT

1. The mystery, Paul says, is now revealed to those with a heart to hear. Who is the “riches of the glory” of this mystery, and where is He located?

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2. If you need revelation of mysteries, Paul has just connected the dot for you. Through Whom will you receive that revelation, and why does Paul present this as a comfort, not a burden?

3. Where is Christ when He says He will reveal the mysteries to you? What does that imply about how “close” the answer actually is?

Paul connects a dot for us. You need revelation of mysteries—how are you going to get it? Through Christ. He will tell you. And it is not difficult. Why? Because He is already in you. He is not out there, and you do not have to guess at it or get someone else to explain it to you. He says, in effect, “I will let you know—I am already in you.” The basis of the mystery, the way the mysteries are revealed, is that He is in you. That is part of the mystery itself. How beautiful is that?

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Paul publicly confronts Peter—a man who already knew the truth.**
- **How could someone who once received revelation drift back into law?**

¹¹ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.

¹² For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.

¹³ And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

¹⁴ But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a

LESSON 2:

THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST

Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

¹⁵ We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners;

¹⁶ yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

¹⁷ But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!

¹⁸ For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God.

²⁰ 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 faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

Galatians 2:11–21 ESV

REFLECT

1. Peter already understood scripture and truth. He had been the very first to receive that the gospel goes to the Gentiles without partiality. So what, unfortunately, did he drift into?

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2. Paul's warning is sharp: if you operate by intellect, even while you think you are following God, where will you drift back to—and what happens to your hearing of God's voice?

3. When Peter drew back, did Christ in him suggest that move? What had Peter actually rejected, and how did Paul's confrontation work to bring him back?

Remember—if you operate by law, who is determining the rules? You are. Why? Because your mind is trying to remember and apply. And Paul is talking to believers. Even Peter. Did Peter understand scripture? Of course. Did he understand truth? Yes. But he drifted into law. And this shows the necessity to keep walking with God. Peter was the first person to understand that all of this was going to the Gentiles without any partiality. He was in Jerusalem when God said, "No, you do not have to be circumcised." He understood it all.

Then something happened. He went back to the flesh and back to law and said, "I set up a rule." And Paul says, in effect, "If you operate in the intellect, even while you think you are following God, you will drift back to law and start operating that way. And instead of receiving more insight about mysteries, you will reject those mysteries and go back to a sense of rulership."

Then Paul names the essence: it is not I who live, but Christ in me. He is living in me. His purpose is to reveal mysteries. All I have to do is be willing to receive them—by revelation, not by deciding what it means and turning it into law. Because if you go to law, you stop hearing God's voice. Did Christ ever instruct Peter to draw back from the Gentiles? No. Peter stopped receiving the truth, even when it was being offered. He rejected the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Paul looked him in the eye and called him a hypocrite—which tells you something about Paul's strength—and said, in effect, "What you are doing is not right. Come on back. Come on back." It is a way of living.

LESSON 2:

THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST



 PAUSE AND WRITE

Where have you been turning revelation into rules—converting something God said in a moment into a permanent law you now enforce on yourself or others? Name it specifically.

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LESSON 2:

THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST

SECTION 3—THE PLEASANT PATH AND THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL

Now Scripture begins to describe what living in the mystery actually feels like. David, in Psalm 16, sketches it in poetry—a life where God Himself charts the path, and the path turns out to be pleasant.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **David describes a “pleasant” path he could not have charted on his own.**
- **Notice when and how God speaks to him—particularly the timing in verse 7.**

¹ Preserve me, O God, for in You I take refuge.

² I say to the Lord, “You are my Lord; I have no good apart from You.”

³ As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.

⁴ The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names on my lips.

⁵ The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; You hold my lot.

⁶ The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

⁷ I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me.

⁸ I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure.

¹⁰ For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let Your holy one see corruption.

¹¹ You make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 16:1–11 ESV

LESSON 2:

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REFLECT

1. David says the path of life is something God “makes known” to him. What does that imply about whether you can find it on your own?

2. In verse 7 David says God instructs his heart in the night. Why is night a particularly significant time for receiving from God, and what is happening to your logic while you sleep?

3. How many of David’s paths fall in pleasant places? What does this tell you about God’s default intention for your life when you are walking with Him?

David describes a life that will be pleasant if he walks with God. He says, in effect, “You will make known to me the path of life, which is going to be pleasant for me.” So if I am going to walk on the path of life, what must I know? The path. Based on what? What He reveals—what He makes known to me.

Notice the implication: the mystery includes your individual walk along the circumstances of your life that God will create, and have you experience pleasantness. How many paths will that be? All of them. But it is going to require Him making it known. You cannot decide it on your own.

Now if I asked you, “Would you like to live on a really pleasant path?” you would say, “Of course.” Then ask: do you know that you can? How? By walking with Him. By what? By letting Him reveal mysteries. He has to reveal His path to you.

David also gives us a clue. While you are sleeping, what is God still doing? Speaking to you. Is your logic in the way? No. Your conscious mind cannot even refute it. He says, in effect, “My desire is to operate where your logic does not

LESSON 2: THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST

block what I am doing. That means you have to release your logic and let Me speak to your spirit by My Spirit.” Nighttime is the great opportunity, because you are not in the way. If you have a heart to hear, He will bring it to your consciousness, and you will respond. He will give you dreams, and you cannot refute those. It is a spiritual thing, not a natural, logical thing.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Pay close attention to the tense of the verbs.**
- **What has already happened before you ever asked?**

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

⁴ even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love

⁵ He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will,

⁶ to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved.

Ephesians 1:3–6 ESV

REFLECT

1. Paul says God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. What is the tense of that verb, and why does it matter?

LESSON 2:

THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST

2. Where are these blessings located, and what does that tell you about the realm in which the mystery operates?

3. If His good pleasure has already been set in place, what is left for you to do—and what disqualifies a person from experiencing it?

He says He has already blessed us—the tense matters. It is already so. The mystery, interestingly enough, is that He has actually given it to you. It is all available. But notice where it is available: in the heavenly places, in the kingdom—spiritual, which will translate into the natural. It is already there. His good pleasure is to give it to you. How does He do that? He has to make it known to you. You did not have to manufacture it. All you have to do is listen, process, and receive—and you will experience the good pleasure He has already set in place.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **What did Christ's blood purchase, and what does it now make possible for you to receive?**

⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace,

⁸ which He lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight,

Ephesians 1:7–8 ESV

LESSON 2:

THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST

REFLECT

1. What does redemption and forgiveness release you from, and what does it free you to do?

2. Paul says God has lavished His grace on us “in all wisdom and insight.” How does this connect grace to the revelation of the mystery?

3. If you no longer have to be perfect, what is the one thing you do have to do?

He says, in effect, “I have given you redemption and forgiveness. I took care of your situation where you had to be perfect. I have released you from that—you no longer have to be perfect. You just have to walk with Me.” He gave us this aspect of release so that we could experience the riches of His grace. And the riches of His grace will be the revelation of your path—to bless you with all the things He wants to give you. You now have the privilege of joining Him because you can hear His voice.

LESSON 2:

THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- Paul names the mystery directly.
- Think about what it implies: His will, for you, is described as a mystery.

⁹making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ

¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth.

Ephesians 1:9–10 ESV

REFLECT

1. “Making known” means to disclose, reveal, show. What is it that He is making known to us?

2. If His will for you is described as a mystery, can you figure it out on your own? What does that imply about every plan you draft without Him?

3. How does this passage redefine the goal of the Christian life—from “discover the right rules” to what?

LESSON 2: THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST

Think about what this implies. Can you figure out His will on your own? No. If you say, “I am going to do this, this, and this,” would He bless it? He says, “Well, you have not discovered My will.” Why? Because you decided on your own—which by definition is not His will, because His will is a mystery. His will is different than yours. His ways are different than your ways. His plan is different than yours. Why? He sees it all. And He will lead you step by step to the very best.

So if it is a mystery, but I want to live there—to have the pleasant path—what should I do? Seek the mystery. Walk with Him and let Him reveal it. The blessing is that He will reveal the mystery of His will so that you live on the pleasant path.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Who lives within the believer?**
- **What is His role in delivering the counsel of God’s will to you?**

¹¹ In Him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him Who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of His glory.

¹³ In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,

¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 1:11–14 ESV

LESSON 2:

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REFLECT

1. Paul reiterates: Who is sealed within you, and what does His presence guarantee?

2. You can receive the counsel of His will and know it—but only on one condition. What is it?

3. Even though Christ is in you, can you shunt Him off? How does that happen, and what is the antidote?

Once again, Paul reiterates: Who is within you? Christ. The Holy Spirit. They are already in you. You are sealed. You can receive the counsel of His will and know it—He will absolutely give it to you if you have a heart to receive it. The mystery is that it is not complicated, but it is true: you cannot receive it unless you receive the knowledge of it from the Holy Spirit. Which means that even though He is in you, can you shunt Him off? Yes. How? Walk away and start deciding on your own. He is available, but He will not force you. That is part of the mystery itself.

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PAUSE AND WRITE

Where in your life have you been deciding on your own and calling it His will? Write it down. Then ask Him directly: “What is the mystery of Your will here?” Leave space and listen.

SECTION 4—DEMONSTRATING THE MYSTERY: WORKMANSHIP AND WITNESS

The next move Paul makes is unexpected. The revelation of the mystery is not just for our private blessing. We are meant to demonstrate it—and the audience is wider than we ever imagined.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Paul writes about a stewardship—a mystery now made known not only to people, but to a different audience entirely.**
- **Watch for who else is meant to see God’s wisdom.**

¹ For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—

² assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you,

³ how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.

⁴ When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,

⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it

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has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

⁶This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

⁷Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of His power.

⁸To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

⁹and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things,

¹⁰so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

¹¹This was according to the eternal purpose that He has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,

¹²in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in Him.

¹³So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

Ephesians 3:1–13 ESV

REFLECT

1. Paul says the church makes known the manifold wisdom of God. To whom—and why is that audience surprising?

LESSON 2:

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2. If we are demonstrating God's wisdom to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places, what kind of activity must therefore be happening in our lives?

3. Why does merely doing things in the natural fail to "make known" God's wisdom to the principalities and powers—what would actually impress them?

Paul says the mystery is that everybody—Jews and Gentiles alike—can receive the understanding of living out the riches of the glory of God. Does that include you? Yes. There is no partiality. It is not, "Some are lucky, some are not." The riches of God are available to everybody.

Then Paul makes a striking turn. The purpose of the church is to make known—to reveal to whom? In this passage, not "everyone." What does he say? The angelic. The heavenly host. The powers and principalities. The church is to make known the manifold wisdom that comes from the revelation of God's will.

Now, if you are going to make it known to them, what must be happening? Supernatural things. Because if it is just you doing it in the natural, does that impress the principalities and powers? No. In fact, if you are operating purely in the natural, they say, "I have more power than you, and I have authority over you." But when you walk with God, when you live in the path He has for you, when He reveals the mystery of His will—and that mystery includes Him doing supernatural things—you demonstrate to the principalities and powers what the supernatural looks like. You experience it. They observe it. And they understand.

And if we can make this known to the principalities and powers, who else will be interested? Everybody else. That is why Paul says, "I do not want you just to preach about Me. I want you to actually reveal Me in you, in the life that people will see." People will say, "Is that possible for me?" Yes—but you are going to have to walk with Him so He can reveal His mystery for you, so you can do the same thing.

LESSON 2:

THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **We are seated with Him in the heavenlies, and we are His workmanship.**
- **What comes first—the works, or the walking?**

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us,

⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

⁶ and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

⁷ so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:4–10 ESV

REFLECT

1. Paul says God raised us up with Him and seated us in the heavenly places. Where do you have revelation of the riches of His grace—and where does it then translate into the natural?

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2. You are His workmanship, created for good works which God prepared beforehand. Who determines what counts as “good”?

3. If God prepared specific good works for you in advance, what does that mean about trying to do everything, or about taking on assignments that were not actually given to you?

Scripture is always clever and interesting. Paul says, “I am going to explain the riches of His grace”—and the riches of His grace are that He has raised you up with Him in the heavenlies so that you can experience those riches. Where do you have revelation of that? In the kingdom. In the spiritual realm. He says, in effect, “I brought you up with Me. I have raised you up with Me so that you could have revelation of the mystery, to live out the riches of My grace—and the riches of My grace flow because you can be with Me in the heavenlies.”

Then comes verse 10: you are His workmanship. He is working in you, giving revelation, manifesting Himself in you. He has created you for the good works He has already prepared. Notice—who determines the good? God does. He says, “I want you to join Me in My works, which will demonstrate to the principalities and powers My supernatural life.” It is not you doing good things that you determine. It is doing what He asks you to do, where He can demonstrate His power in reality. And His assignment for you will be unique to you.

Take Colton and Alicia, who have a seventeen-month-old daughter. What is one of their assignments? To take care of her. To help her mature, where she becomes happy and stays happy, to enjoy what it means to know Him and follow Him and process with Him. That is an assignment that starts now. If that is the primary assignment, does it mean you can do eight other things? You cannot, because He prepared it ahead of time. Some of us are empty-nesters; we do not have that assignment now, so we have the opportunity to do other things—because that is not our assignment.

THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST

Do you see—it is not about joining a ministry. It is not about going to do these good activities. It is, “Join Me in My good work, which will demonstrate the supernatural.” And if you follow that, you will experience the supernatural—and so will those you have been assigned to. Your role is simple: I have prepared good works for you to do—what? Walk in them. Walk in them, understanding My will. Why do you do that? Because that is a mystery. I will let you know.

 PAUSE AND WRITE

What is your specific assignment in this season—the one God prepared beforehand for you? Be honest about what it is and what it is not. What “good works” have you been doing that He never actually asked of you?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines, typical of notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

LESSON 2:

THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST

SECTION 5—MATURING OTHERS IN THE MYSTERY

The mystery does not stop with us. Paul's vision of maturity is that those who have received it will help others receive it too. And along the way, he keeps redirecting our pursuit—away from riches we can chase and toward the One Who reveals.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Paul describes maturity in Christ.**
- **Where is wisdom hidden, and what is required to access it?**

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, that is, the church,

²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known,

²⁶ the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to His saints.

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.

²⁸ Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

²⁹ For this I toil, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works within me. [...]

^{2:1} For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face,

² that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ,

³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Colossians 1:24–2:3 ESV

LESSON 2:

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REFLECT

1. Who has all the wisdom and knowledge, and where is He located?

2. When Paul says he labors to “present everyone mature in Christ,” what does he actually mean by maturity in this context?

3. How does the mystery multiply? What is your role in helping someone else discover the will God has for them?

Who has all the wisdom and knowledge? Christ. Where is He? In us. Paul says, “I want you to live that out—and I want you to present others to receive that same thing.” What thing? That they live in Christ, and Christ lives in them, to reveal His mystery—His will for them.

So part of His will for me is to help you experience your will. By doing what? Staying with Him. Receiving His will being revealed for you. Part of my will is to help you discover your will from God—and the revelation of that, so you can experience the riches of His glory. And so it multiplies, and multiplies, and multiplies. The mystery just continues. He says, “I would like you to help this person learn that.” “Okay, Lord—but how do I help them learn that?” There is really only one way: bring them to Christ. Bring them to the place where they get the mysteries. And the only way they can get the mysteries is to hear His voice. And the only way they can hear His voice is to walk with Him. So when Paul says, “present everyone mature in Christ,” it includes this: maturity means I am actually experiencing the mystery, and the next step of maturity is when people say, “Is that possible for me?” and I can say, “Yes—let me walk with you toward it.”

LESSON 2:

THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- Paul warns about being taken captive.
- What replaces revelation when we drift, and where is the fullness of deity actually located?

⁴ I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.

⁵ For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

⁷ rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

⁹ For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,

¹⁰ and you have been filled in Him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

Colossians 2:4–10 ESV

REFLECT

1. Paul says the fullness of deity dwells bodily in Christ—and that you have been filled in Him. What does this say about whether anything is missing in what is available to you?

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2. You have all of Christ right now—but have you experienced all of Him? What does that distinction reveal about the journey of revelation?

3. Paul does not promise exemption from trouble. Why is the existence of trouble in your life actually an opportunity for the mystery to be displayed?

Paul says you can receive the wisdom of this mystery by receiving it through revelation, and you can let it dwell in you, and you can then make it known to others by inviting them to that same place. Because the fullness of God resides in you, and as you receive it you will exhibit it—which will be the mysteries, and the truth, and the beauty of the pleasant path He wants you on.

But notice: we are never saying you will be absent from trouble. Are you living in a world of trouble? Yes. He says, “I do not exempt you from that, and I do not pull you out of it. Interestingly, because of it, I get to demonstrate My power even more—because there are things you cannot overcome by yourself.”

Do you have all of Christ right now? Yes. Have you experienced all of Him? No. It is a walk of Him revealing more and more and more of Himself, step by step, according to the path He has for you. Ten years from now, will you still be discovering His fullness? Yes. But there is nothing missing. He never says, “That piece of Me is not really available to you.” He says, “All of Me is available—I will guide you into receiving the truth of that step by step.”

LESSON 2:

THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Riches are not condemned here—but pursuit is redirected.**
- **What does Paul tell us to chase instead, and Whose example does he point to?**

¹¹ But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.

¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

¹³ I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in His testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession,

¹⁴ to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

¹⁵ which He will display at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

¹⁶ who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,

¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

1 Timothy 6:11–19 ESV

REFLECT

1. Does Paul say material riches are bad? If not, what is the distinction he draws—and what is the danger when riches become the pursuit?

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2. Paul lists what we should pursue: righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. How does pursuing these positions us to receive His revelation?

3. Why does Paul invoke Christ's "good confession before Pontius Pilate" at this exact point—and what does he expect you to go look up?

Does Paul say material riches are bad? No. The key is that you do not chase them. Let Him reveal and give them to you according to the path He has for you. Pursue righteousness, godliness, love, faith, patience, endurance—receive the blessings. He says, "Do not rely on the financial piece. I will give you financial freedom—but I want you to live out the fullness of life by pursuing Me, because I am the source of it all. I will give it to you, and you will understand the full riches of life—which is more than just material. It is spiritual riches, relationships, emotional resolution. All of those things are available to you. Do not confuse it. My riches are not just financial. And by the way, if you seek only the financial, you will lose it all. So let Me give it to you. Do not chase it."

Then Paul slips in a clue: "as Christ confessed before Pilate." He has just dropped a hint—and to receive its full weight, we have to go where Paul is pointing.

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As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- This is the “good confession” Paul referenced.
- What single sentence from Jesus reveals the mechanism by which truth is received?

³⁶ Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But My kingdom is not from the world.”

³⁷ Then Pilate said to Him, “So You are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice.”

³⁸ Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?” After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in Him.”

John 18:36–38 ESV

REFLECT

1. Paul’s reference to Pilate is not a casual aside. What was the “good confession,” and how does it apply to receiving the riches of God’s glory?

2. Jesus gives the single mechanism for receiving truth in one short sentence. What is it—and how does it tie this entire lesson together?

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3. When Paul references something briefly in scripture, what does the author of this teaching say is the ideal response from the reader?

Paul knew what happened with Pilate—through the disciples and through the Holy Spirit reinforcing it. He says Jesus gave the confession before Pilate, and it applies directly to what it means to receive the riches of God's glory. And what was it? Jesus said: "If you are of the truth, you will hear My voice." There is the clue to the whole thing. If you want to know the truth of what it means to live out the rich life of God, you have to be willing to hear His voice—which will then demonstrate it to you. That is what Jesus said before Pilate. I always love how the scriptures work. Paul does not say, "And you have got to hear God's voice." He says, "What happened with Jesus when He said that to Pilate?" Ideally, when you read that, what would you do? You would go look it up. You would ask, "What did that mean?" And we know what it means, because we can go read it. That is the mystery—Scripture inviting you to come and find.

LESSON 2:

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As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Paul returns to the same theme: revelation.**
- **Why does he repeat this, and who is now included in “partakers”?**

¹ For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—

² assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you,

³ how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.

⁴ When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,

⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

⁶ This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

⁷ Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace, which was given me by the working of His power.

Ephesians 3:1–7 ESV

REFLECT

1. Paul says “Gentiles”—but who does that ultimately include in the broader scope of the mystery?

LESSON 2:

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2. Paul does not say the inheritance is automatic. He says you are a “partaker.” What does it mean to partake—and what does refusal to partake look like?

3. How does the metaphor of being invited to a meal help clarify the difference between God’s offer and our reception?

Paul says, “I have received revelation, and I understand the mystery—and the mystery is that it now includes Jews and Gentiles.” And who does that include? Everybody. That includes me. He is not partial. He does not say some get it and some do not.

You can be a partaker of the promises—of what God will do, of how He will guide you, of the very best He has for you. He does not say it is automatic. He says, “a partaker.” If you are going to partake, what does that require? You have to choose to be with Him and partake of it.

Picture an exceptional lunch prepared and laid out, and the announcement: “We invite you all to come and partake.” What does that imply? Come, be with us, and actually eat the food. He is not forcing you. You can say, “I am going elsewhere—I am going to McDonald’s.” That is your right. He has invited you. To receive the great meal, what do you have to do? Partake. Walk with Him, and let Him give it to you.

LESSON 2:

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As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- Paul prays for something that already exists in you to be experienced more fully.
- What is the role of the Spirit, the inner being, and the community in this process?

¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,

¹⁶ that according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being,

¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,

²¹ to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:15–21 ESV

REFLECT

1. Paul prays we would be filled with the fullness of God—yet earlier he said the fullness already dwells in Christ in us. How do we reconcile these two statements?

LESSON 2:

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2. Why does Paul say we comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth “with all the saints”? What does that say about the role of community in the mystery?

3. God can do “immeasurably more than all we ask or think.” The author warns this is not an invitation to imagine bigger. What is it actually inviting?

As you build this depth of spiritual understanding, you start to see what Paul is saying. He prays that you would be filled with all the fullness of God. In Colossians, Paul said Christ is the fullness of God—and where is Christ? In you. So Paul prays you would learn to be filled with what is already there. How? Let Him strengthen you, keep revealing things to you, keep saying, “You are receiving it. You are My child. Trust it.”

Together with all the saints—that is community—we get the height and depth and length and width of all this. We have to learn it as a community.

Then Paul adds: He can do immeasurably more than all you can ask or think. What does that mean? His will, when it is supernatural, will arrive in ways you could not even imagine. Now this is not an invitation to imagine something big and demand God deliver it. If God said, “I can give you anything more than you can imagine,” my imagination might say, “Let me win a five-million-dollar lottery.” He says, in effect, “I can do greater than that.” But you have just dictated a number. He says, “No. The right prayer is, ‘Father, I need financial provision; I need resolution to my business problem.’ I can do immeasurably more than you can even think of. So do not bother trying to figure it out. How about if I just do immeasurably more than you can think? And I pray that you experience the fullness of God, which will do exactly that.”

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PAUSE AND WRITE

Where have you been imagining big things and asking God to confirm them, instead of simply naming the real need and letting Him do immeasurably more than you can think? Re-write one of those prayers in His framing.

SECTION 6—THE MYSTERY OF LAWLESSNESS

There is one more thing Paul names—and it is sobering. Alongside the mystery of God, there is a counter-mystery already at work in the world: the mystery of lawlessness. It is dangerous because it never feels like what it is.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Paul names a counter-mystery: the mystery of lawlessness.**
- **Identify what makes deception so dangerous—and what defense is given for those who “love the truth.”**

¹ Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to Him, we ask you, brothers,

² not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

³ Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

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⁴ who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

⁵ Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

⁶ And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time.

⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.

⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of His mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of His coming.

⁹ The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders,

¹⁰ and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

¹¹ Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false,

¹² in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

2 Thessalonians 2:1–12 ESV

REFLECT

1. Paul calls the Antichrist the “epitome of lawlessness” and an agent of Satan. What is deception, and why is it so dangerous—what does the deceived person actually believe about themselves?

LESSON 2:

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2. Paul says the mystery of lawlessness is “already at work.” What does that mean for our daily walk right now, not just in some future age?

3. Verses 10–11 give a sobering reason why deception takes hold. What did the deceived refuse to do—and what is the warning for us?

Paul uses the description of the Antichrist at the end of the age to say: he is the epitome of lawlessness, the agent of Satan, working through deception. And deception means replacing truth with a lie that you think is true. So if I am in a position where I believe a lie and someone asks, “Are you deceived?” my answer is, “No”—because I believe what I think is true. The interesting depth of it is that I think it is true. It is not. But I do not know it is not. That is deception. Paul says lawlessness—the mystery of lawlessness—is already at work. So we have to be careful. The revelation of the mystery of God’s will is received by hearing His voice; you receive truth and are not deceived. At the same time, lawlessness is operating: a counterfeit that is not truth, but you believe it as true because you are not listening to the truth.

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As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- Lawlessness has a source.
- Notice where Paul locates it—and what fruit it bears.

¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

²¹ But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

Romans 6:19–21 ESV

REFLECT

1. Where does lawlessness come from, according to Paul? Who are you following when you walk in lawlessness?

2. When you become the determinant of truth—drawing from logic, tradition, or what someone has told you—what spiritual category have you actually entered?

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3. Why is it so important to have other believers around you who can say, “I do not see what you are doing as of God”?

If you are going to receive the mystery of God, it is by pursuing the truth—because you are hearing His voice. So where does lawlessness come from? Who are you following when you walk in it? Your human nature. Your sin nature. You have decided you will be the determinant of truth, and what you believe is what you have arrived at by logic, tradition, or what someone has told you. It is really simple: lawlessness comes when you go to the flesh and not to the spiritual revelation of truth. Now you are walking in lawlessness—but you remember, you think you are not.

That is why we need people around us. Sometimes the loving thing is for someone to say, “I do not see what you are doing or saying as of God. I do not think you are getting the truth about His will here. Would you be willing to let me help with this?” Do not get stuck in your own will. Come and follow Him.

LESSON 2:

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As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- Paul draws sharp contrasts: light/dark, righteousness/lawlessness.
- Why can these never coexist in the same place at the same time?

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

¹⁵ What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?

¹⁶ What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make My dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

¹⁷ Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you,

¹⁸ and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me, says the Lord Almighty."

2 Corinthians 6:14–18 ESV

REFLECT

1. Paul frames lawlessness as the polar opposite of light, of Christ, of truth. Can the two coexist in the same place? What does that mean about where you are at any given moment?

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2. When you go to flesh, what category have you stepped into—even if you cannot tell that you have?

3. Paul says lawlessness “is in operation” right now. How would you know if you were in it without knowing?

Paul says lawlessness is the difference between light and dark, Christ and the enemy, truth and not-truth. Can they exist in the same place? No. So where are you? You can be in lawlessness when you go to the flesh—that is why Paul says it is operating right now. Lawlessness is in operation. How? By people not pursuing the truth, and not realizing they are not receiving the truth, because they are not with Him. Light and dark cannot be in the same spot.

Now if you are thinking you are in a good place, but you are actually in lawlessness because you are in the flesh, what is the problem? You do not know the truth. You do not know the light. You think, “I am in the light”—and you are in darkness. That is the essence of lawlessness. It is not obvious. The only way you would know you are in lawlessness and not in the light is if you actually know the light.

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As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **John equates sin with lawlessness, and links both to abiding.**
- **What happens to our perception when we stop abiding?**

¹ See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.

² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.

³ And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure.

⁴ Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.

⁵ You know that He appeared in order to take away sins, and in Him there is no sin.

⁶ No one who abides in Him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen Him or known Him.

⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as He is righteous.

⁸ Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

⁹ No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.

¹⁰ By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

1 John 3:1–10 ESV

LESSON 2:

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REFLECT

1. John equates sin with lawlessness. If lawlessness is deception—believing what is not true—how does that reframe your understanding of practicing sin?

2. John says no one who abides in Him keeps on sinning. What is the link between abiding and not being deceived? Conversely, what happens to our minds when we stop abiding?

3. How does the author say you can “tell how it is going for you”—what is the practical fruit-test for whether you are walking with Him or in lawlessness?

John says: if you are practicing sin, you are practicing lawlessness. And what is lawlessness? Deception. You think it is true, but it is not. You are not following His will and you think you are. Or you say, “I am a believer, of course”—but you are deceived because you are not walking with God and getting the mysteries revealed to you.

The reason is simple. If you keep on sinning—meaning, walking in the flesh while thinking you are good—it is because you have stopped abiding. The verses say it directly: you have stopped abiding. And when you stop abiding, you have shunted off the power of the Holy Spirit who is trying to convict you that you are not walking in the right path. You have stepped into things not of God, and it will not go well for you, because His path is pleasant. His path is shalom. His path is resolving your problems.

When you stop abiding, what happens to your mind? You default to yourself. You start justifying. You think what you are doing is right. You become

THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST

insensitive to the work of the Holy Spirit. And actually, the diagnostic is pretty simple: How is it going for you? You can say, "I am making a lot of money." Okay—how is it going for you? "Yeah, but I am miserable. Or under pressure. Or full of fear and anxiety." That is because you are not walking with Him; you are determining your own path.

So here is the depth of it: both the mystery of God and the mystery of lawlessness are in operation. The mystery of truth is, "Are you hearing My voice?" The mystery of lawlessness is, "You are not hearing My voice, but you think you are fine." Both operate at the same place—and either you are with Him or you are not. The depth of the mystery is who you are with. So He says: choose Me.

 PAUSE AND WRITE

Honestly assess: how is it going for you right now? Not in dollars or accomplishments, but in shalom, in resolution, in being able to hear His voice. If something is off, what is the truth you may be unwilling to hear?

[illegible]

LESSON 2:

THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST

CLOSING THE LESSON

As we close, we hold these beautiful truths together. The mystery itself is Christ in us, the hope of glory. The fullness of God is in us. The ability to hear His voice is in us. He wants to reveal beautiful things and put us on the path of pleasantness and grandeur—if we have a heart to go.

And He warns us, plainly, that there is a counter-mystery: the mystery of lawlessness, where you think you are doing okay but you are not, and you are not being led to your very best. So it is important to know that this all revolves around His will for us, which can be known. If we are receiving it, the supernatural will happen, and it will be made known to the principalities and powers, and others around us will gain a heart for it as well. The fullness of maturity is helping other people do the same thing.

It is a beautiful arrangement: He purposely set it up this way so that we have to walk with Him. Next lesson we will learn about the depth of how we receive this—and then how we experience it.

LESSON 2:

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The nine questions below are designed for individual reflection or group discussion. Take time with each one—write your answers below the question and revisit them through the week.

Scriptural Understanding

1. In Daniel 2:14–23, Daniel tells the king he can show the interpretation before he has even prayed. Daniel then declares that God “reveals deep and hidden things” and “gives wisdom to the wise.” In context, what is Daniel teaching us about the relationship between God’s character and a believer’s confidence—and what is he teaching us today about how we should approach impossible situations?

2. In Ephesians 1:9–10, Paul names a single keyword that anchors this entire lesson: “mystery.” Unpack the word as Paul uses it. What does it mean that God’s will for you is described as a mystery, and what does this keyword imply for any plan you draft without first hearing His voice?

3. In John 18:37, Jesus tells Pilate, “Everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice.” In its original context, Jesus is on trial for His life and refusing to defend Himself in earthly terms. What did this sentence mean to Jesus and Pilate in that moment, and what is it saying to followers of Christ today about how truth is actually received?

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Deeper Understanding

4. Rich teaches that the mystery of God and the mystery of lawlessness are operating at the same time, and that lawlessness feels like truth to the person inside it. Articulate, in your own words, why deception is so dangerous and what it actually is—and explain what is the only protection a believer has against it.

5. Paul says in Ephesians 3:10 that the church makes known the manifold wisdom of God “to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” Restate the key concept: how do believers “make known” God’s wisdom to a heavenly audience, and why does this require something more than natural living?

6. Rich draws a sharp distinction between “doing good things you determine” and “joining Him in His good works prepared beforehand.” Articulate that distinction in your own words. What changes when you understand that your good works were prepared for you specifically, and that walking in them is the assignment?

LESSON 2:

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Personal Application

7. Where in your own life are you currently turning revelation into rules—taking something God said in a moment and converting it into a permanent law you now enforce on yourself or others? Name it specifically, and ask Him what He is actually saying to you in this season.

8. Rich gives a diagnostic: “How is it going for you?” Not in dollars or accomplishments, but in shalom, in resolution of conflict, in clarity of His voice. Take an honest inventory of one area of your life. What does the fruit reveal about whether you are abiding or operating in your own logic?

9. Paul says we are partakers of the promise—but partaking is something we choose. Where have you been admiring the meal but not actually eating? Identify one specific place this week where you will choose to partake—to walk with Him and let Him give you the mystery of His will—rather than going elsewhere.

LESSON 3:

OUR ROLE IN RECEIVING THE MYSTERIES



"My mysteries are going to lead you to the spectacular if you have a heart to go."

Welcome to lesson three of The Mysteries of God. This is our final lesson of the course, and it brings everything together. We have learned that the purpose of mysteries is that Jesus requires us to walk with Him—for Him to explain, to reveal, to disclose what He knows that we don't. If we don't have a heart to learn, He said we will not understand it. He actually did it purposely.

The reason is that we wouldn't take it off into law and develop more religion, but rather we would stay in relationship with Him so that we could receive the very beautiful mysteries He has to reveal to us. He said, "My mysteries are going to lead you to the spectacular if you have a heart to go."

In the last lesson we learned that this requires us to walk with Him, because these mysteries flow from the truth that He is in us, the hope of glory. We have the ability to receive His fullness as we hear His voice. As we hear His voice, we walk on the spectacular path of His supernatural work, which demonstrates to the principalities and powers that the truth of God is there.

At the same time, lawlessness or sin operating reveals that we're not walking in truth. Sin and lawlessness is deception that says, "I think I am." We think we are walking in truth because we're in the flesh, not walking with Him receiving the mysteries—we've taken back over our own understanding of what we think is right. We say, "I will," but we are deceived about it, and we won't experience the fullness of what He has.

So with that beautiful opportunity, the question that comes up is this:

What is really our role in receiving these mysteries?

LESSON 3:

OUR ROLE IN RECEIVING THE MYSTERIES

SECTION 1—GOD REVEALS BEFORE HE ACTS

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Have you ever wondered whether God consults with His people before He acts? What does Scripture suggest about His pattern?**
- **If God truly reveals what He is about to do to those who walk with Him, what posture would you want to be in?**

⁷“For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.

Amos 3:7 ESV

It’s an interesting statement. God doesn’t really act unless He reveals His secret—His mystery—to His servants who have a heart to receive it and then operate within it and experience it. It is profound that this is true. And He gives us great examples that it is true.

Remember when Christ was born, there was a priest who was waiting for the birth of Christ. How did he know? God had revealed it to him. God told him, “You’re not going to go be with Me until you see My son being born.” Since he had received that revelation, he could say, “God is going to act in this very, very big way. So I will be able to understand it when it happens. And by the way, I’m not going to die until He does.” When they brought the child into the temple on the eighth day for circumcision, the priest said, “There is the Son of God. I see what God told me would happen. He has acted, He had revealed it to me, and it happened, and I get to see it.”

And by the way, when we think about the end of all things—He has already revealed that, too. To whom specifically? To John, who said, “I’m going to show you exactly what is going to happen. I’ve revealed it to you.” Could John have figured that out on his own? Maybe—he had Daniel, he had some Scripture. But God said, “I’m going to reveal what I’m about to do to My servants.”

If that’s true, what position would we like to be in? We want to be receiving the revelation of what He is about to do in our lives. He says, “I’m going to do it as I reveal it to you. Why? Because you have to be with Me for Me to do it. That’s how I deliver the kingdom.”

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As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- When you sense God is about to do something significant—perhaps something difficult—how do you typically respond? Do you draw near, or pull back?
- Notice how God speaks to Himself in verse 17. Why might He decide not to hide His plan from Abraham?

¹⁶ Then the men set out from there, and they looked down toward Sodom. And Abraham went with them to set them on their way.

¹⁷ The Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do,

¹⁸ seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

¹⁹ For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him."

²⁰ Then the Lord said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave,

²¹ I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me. And if not, I will know."

²² So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the Lord.

²³ Then Abraham drew near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?

²⁴ Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it?

²⁵ Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"

²⁶ And the Lord said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake."

Genesis 18:16-26 ESV

LESSON 3:

OUR ROLE IN RECEIVING THE MYSTERIES

Abraham is facing a situation. He's observing what God said He's going to do because of the city's unrighteousness. God has revealed it to Abraham—and Abraham says, "Are You sure You want to do that with the righteous? You certainly aren't going to destroy the city and have the righteous destroyed with it. Far be that from You." God says, "Okay, if I find fifty, I'll spare the city."

Now think about what Abraham is beginning to do. He sees something. He has heard something. He is starting to observe it. And what does he do? He draws near to God to say, "Would You consider these things I'm trying to understand?" And God says, "Yes—I'll spare it."

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **What does it look like to "negotiate" with God? Is that something you've ever felt comfortable doing?**
- **Watch how Abraham steps the number down from fifty toward ten. What is he really trying to discover?**

²⁷ Abraham answered and said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes.

²⁸ Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there."

²⁹ Again he spoke to him and said, "Suppose forty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it."

³⁰ Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there." He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there."

³¹ He said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it."

³² Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there." He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it."

³³ And the Lord went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.

Genesis 18:27-33 ESV

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Think about what just happened between Abraham and God. He's dialoguing. He's negotiating. God said, "I will," and Abraham is trying to find the truth of what He's really saying. In essence, Abraham wants to know: if anybody is left, would You still destroy the city?

He's doing it in an interesting way—in his mind, he's trying to determine: is there a number at which You say no? In essence, what he is asking is the proportion. If there are fifty thousand people in the area and only ten are righteous, will that matter? He's trying to get to it.

Does God mind the dialogue? No. By the way, did God say, "Hey, I know what you want to know. The truth is, if anybody's there, I'll take care of it"? He knew the answer. But He just kept saying, "What do you got? What do you think? What do you think?" That is how it goes.

Asking, listening, asking, listening. That's how revelation comes.

God could simply have said, "Hey, Abraham, if anybody's left, I won't destroy this." Don't we wish God would just give us a one-line answer? "Great—You gave me Your will, just tell me Your will." But that's not how He works. He says, "Why don't you talk to Me about it? What do you see going on? What's happening? What do you understand? What do you like? What don't you like? What are you observing?" It is dialogue.

Now we know something interesting about how this story ended. The city was destroyed. There was no one righteous in it. What did Abraham have to do? He didn't have to leave—he had already moved on, believing God. But who else was there? Lot. And his family.

God said, "Get them out—because they're there, and I'm going to destroy the city. When you come out, follow Me and don't even look back." Lot's wife had the same revelation. "If you get out of there, you won't be destroyed. While you're getting out, look toward Me, do not look back at what I'm about to do." And she said, in effect, "I really want to know what that is." She didn't obey. She looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

If she struggled with that, what could she have done? She could have said, "I'm struggling. I'd like to see this. I'd like to observe this. Could You help me with this? I know You told me not to. I heard that. What would You have me do to make sure I don't? Is there a consequence to what I'm about to do?" God would have continued the dialogue. That's how revelation works. It isn't, "I give you the answer, now go figure it out." It is, "Walk with Me, walk with Me, walk with Me"—which is dialogue.

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FOR REFLECTION

1. What is the principle in Amos 3:7, and how is it demonstrated in Abraham's exchange with God?

2. Why didn't God simply give Abraham a one-sentence answer about the righteous in Sodom? What does the back-and-forth tell us about how He prefers to communicate?

3. What could Lot's wife have done differently when she struggled with God's instruction? How does that apply to a struggle you're facing now?

PAUSE AND WRITE

Where in your life right now do you sense God may be revealing something to you that you haven't yet drawn near to ask Him about?

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SECTION 2—OUR ROLE AS MINISTERS OF THE MYSTERY

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **What does it mean to be a “minister” of the gospel? Have you thought of yourself in those terms?**
- **Paul speaks of three actions in this passage—proclaim, warn, and teach. What might each look like in everyday life?**

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,

²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known,

²⁶ the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.

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.

²⁸ Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

²⁹ For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. [...]

¹ For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face,

² that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ,

³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Colossians 1:24–2:3 ESV

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Paul says, “I am going to make you a minister of the gospel by making known the riches of My glory, which is the mystery—Christ in you, the hope of glory.” So what does the minister do? A minister proclaims God’s message. He says, in effect, “I am going to show you what it means to walk in My will. You help others walk in My will for them.” That is what a minister does.

If somebody comes along and says, “I’ve got a real problem and I really need to know what God has to say about it,” what do you declare to them? You declare that God has the answer, and they can receive it if they learn to walk with Him. The essence of the mystery is this: you can receive the mystery of His will. He knows it. He wants to give it to you. He wants to make it known to you. All you have to do is learn to walk with Him, which is what He will help you do. That is the first thing you declare.

Then comes the exhortation: you have a choice. You are either going to walk with Him or not. Life will be with Him. The answers will be with Him—if you walk and hear His voice. If you don’t, you’re not going to receive it.

With Me. Without Me. With Me. Without Me.

Joel showed me a clip from a movie that captures this picture. Tom Cruise plays a spy who has been framed and a bunch of people are after him. He’s using a woman as cover, and she keeps trying to get away from him. So he says to her, “Look—your life expectancy is here with me ... without me, it’s here. With me. Without me. With me. Without me.”

It’s actually that simple. If you are going to walk with Him and receive the mystery of His will, life is here. If not, it is here. Your exhortation to others is, “That’s the truth, and you can’t get around it. So I would encourage you to do it.”

Then comes the third role—teaching. The word teach itself means to demonstrate what teaching looks like. The word here is to have whole discourse with people, so that they learn to have discourse with Whom? With Christ. So you tell someone the truth and give them the clarity of it. If they say, “Okay, what do I have to do?,” you have to teach them what that looks like. You don’t just say, “Good luck, you’d better do it right.” You say, “Tell me where you are. Are you able to hear God’s voice? What is it like for you to hear God’s voice? What do you need to understand about that? Let me walk with you.”

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Teaching, in this sense, is dialoguing with someone in order to get them to dialogue with God—so they can receive His will by hearing His voice. You walk alongside of them. That is your role: if you are going to receive mysteries, you have to be in a position where you dialogue with Him; you understand what He is doing; and then, to go deeper, you teach others to do the same. You serve as a ministry to present them complete—that they hear the mysteries of God, which is Christ in them, the hope of glory.

Here is something striking: as you teach this, what does it do for you? It reinforces the truth. Stay with Me, dialogue with Me, hear My voice. As you teach it, you remember it. So if you are ever drifting, you're reminded—"Wait a minute. Don't I remember the truth I'm teaching others?" The more you give it away, the easier it is for you to stay there. And by the way, if you teach what someone else should do but never do it yourself, your message becomes hollow and empty. So you have to be able to say, "This is where I am experiencing it right now. And by the way, it can happen to you, too." The more you teach it, the easier it is to receive it.

FOR REFLECTION

1. What three things does Paul say a minister of the mystery does (Colossians 1:28)? Describe what each looks like in your own words.

2. Why does Rich say teaching is essentially "dialoguing with someone in order to get them to dialogue with God"? How is this different from telling people what to do?

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3. How does teaching this truth strengthen the teacher? What happens when a teacher proclaims it but isn't living in it themselves?

PAUSE AND WRITE

Who in your life right now is in a position where you could declare the mystery—that God has an answer for them—and walk alongside them as they learn to dialogue with Him?

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SECTION 3—HEARING AND FOLLOWING HIS VOICE

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **What does Jesus say is the requirement for abiding in His love? Is this something you find easy or hard?**
- **Notice how often Jesus repeats some form of “if you do what I command you.” Why the repetition?**

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.

¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

¹² “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you.

¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

¹⁷ These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

John 15:9-17 ESV

Jesus says: “If you are in a place where you can receive the mysteries and experience My love, what are you called to do? I will have you bear fruit to others.” But before that, He says you have to be obedient—you have to follow what He says. He repeats it a couple of times because the key really is that you do have to follow what He says.

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If that is the requirement, what is the first thing you have to understand? What He said. That is why we teach abiding—hearing God’s voice. It doesn’t do you any good to read the Bible as law, and it doesn’t do any good for people to tell you what to do. Rather, we know the One who knows His will, and He has to give it to you through the mystery of revelation—by revealing His will to you. So if you are going to live in that place, you first have to be taught how to hear His voice. You can’t follow what you don’t know.

Does that exempt you and give you an out? No. His word stands on its own. If you don’t have a heart to hear Him, you’re going to live outside of His will. You can wander around for forty years like the Israelites and die outside of His will, never receiving the best He has for you. But if you love Him, you will follow what He says. So the two points are these: Are you hearing what He’s saying? And are you following what He’s saying?

When you do get clarity, much of the time you will struggle to follow that instruction, because it will be the opposite of what you think you should do. What gets in the way? Your logic, which says, “I think I should do this.”

A CEO AND AN OUTSTANDING DEBT

I have a CEO friend in a situation where people owe him money. It would be very helpful for him to collect that money. He has made an attempt to collect it, but the debtors are not going to follow through. They basically say, “Fine—go ahead and sue us.” He has the documents. It’s all there. If he sued, he would win the case.

But he asked, “Father, what is Your will?” And God said, “Yes, just let it go.” He pushed back: “But I’d like to sue him because I’m going to win. They owe me the money, it’s right, and I need the money.” God said, “Yes—but My will is to let it go. I’ll restore it to you in a different way. If you go after it, you’ll go after it. Yes, you’ll win it. But you’re going to lose big.”

What would he lose big? His time. His energy. He’d be consumed by it for months. Going through all of that would be expensive, and all of his attention would go to that—when God is saying, “I’ll restore it to you without doing that. So give it up.” He heard that. He struggled.

Is it okay to struggle? Yes. At that moment, what is the important thing to do? Stay with God and say, “I’m having a hard time with this. Help me have strength to understand it. Help me have strength of conviction. Help me have faith.” Because the issue underneath is really, “Are You going to take care of injustice?” And He said, “I’ll take care of it. Don’t worry. You may not see it, but I’ll take care of it. I’m going to restore to you what you lost. How? I’m not going to tell you. It will be in a different way. I’m not asking you to take revenge on your own. Let Me do it.”

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My role with him is to say, “I believe that. I want you to believe it. Stay with it. Abide in the word. Faith comes from the word. Stay, stay, stay.” And finally he said, “I got it. Okay, I got it.” Did God mind that he struggled with following? No. But what would have happened if he had said, “I’m going to sue him anyway”? He would have suffered the consequence—because His word stands on its own; it’s a double-edged sword.

A LAWSUIT THAT COST A RETAINER

I had another man in a similar boat. He had gone through a divorce, and through the divorce his ex-wife had captured the family estate, which was exempt from all the contracts—all of the documents and the prenup. His lawyer made a series of mistakes, and she got it. The entire family estate was given over to her, when it should have been exempt. The family was very upset. He was very upset.

All of a sudden he woke up and said, “Wait a minute—that was wrong. I’m going to sue my attorney. I’m going to sue him for everything that happened.” Might he win? Maybe. But it’s pretty tricky. He said, “I believe God’s will is for me to do that.” I said, “Okay, well—why don’t we go to the word and see what it says? Let’s ask God.” And God said, “No. I’ll restore to you in a different way. Do not do it. You’re going to lose, and you’re going to lose any money you spend on it.”

He said, “I don’t care. I’m doing it.” He hired an attorney, gave him a \$10,000 retainer, and said, “Okay, help me with the case. Get ready for it.” The lawyer spent the entire \$10,000. Then the lawyer came back and said, “You can sue him. It will cost you \$500,000—and you’re probably going to lose.”

That ate the \$10,000. He came to me and said, “I lost the \$10,000. Now I have to decide whether to spend \$500,000 to recover.” I asked, “What do you think?” He said, “I don’t think so. You know what—I wish I would have pursued what God said. How stupid was I? I not only didn’t do it; I lost \$10,000 and all this time and energy.” God said, in effect, “You suffer the consequences of not being obedient to what I say.”

So first—are you hearing what He says? And then—are you yielding to what He says?

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FOR REFLECTION

1. What does Jesus say is required to abide in His love (verses 9-10)? Why does He repeat the same idea later in the passage?

2. Why does Rich insist that the Bible cannot be read merely as “law”? What is the alternative he describes?

3. Why does logic so often fight against obedience? What is the right thing to do when you’re struggling to follow what God has said?

PAUSE AND WRITE

Recall a recent moment when you sensed God say one thing and your logic argued for another. What did you do—and what did the outcome reveal?

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SECTION 4—WISDOM FROM THE SPIRIT, NOT THE FLESH

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Have you ever tried to figure out God’s will purely through logic? What was the result?**
- **Paul contrasts the “wisdom of men” with the wisdom of God. What is the difference, in your own words?**

¹ And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom.

² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling,

⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

⁵ so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

⁶ Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away.

⁷ But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.

⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

⁹ But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—

¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

¹¹ For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

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¹⁵ The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.

¹⁶ “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:1-16 ESV

Paul says, “I did not persuade you with wisdom from the world that belongs to men. I’m not trying to argue or tell you God’s will through logic. Rather, it comes through power—through the revelation of God’s secrets that can be known to us. That is how it works.” He sets it up as the wisdom of God: the mysteries of God are given through spiritual things. You cannot figure it out. “No eye has seen, no ear has heard what God has prepared.” Prepared to do what? To reveal. To disclose. To give you His will.

So you cannot figure it out with your logic. You can look at it and try to figure it out, but you won’t get there. So don’t go that way. Instead, you have to receive it by revelation, which He has already prepared for you about His will and the things He wants to disclose to you. That is why, as we look at helping each other, I don’t say, “You should, you should, you should.” Rather, I ask, “Where does God have you? I’ll walk where God has you to receive His wisdom—because it’s unique to you. He prepared it for you.”

It is a spiritual communication between the Holy Spirit and your soul. He says you have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit of God, who freely gives you all things. So you have the Holy Spirit, and all you have to do is ask Him to reveal—through hearing what He says—His will for you, which is spiritually discerned.

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Then Paul makes a striking statement in verse 14. If you stay in the carnal—in the flesh, in the logic—what God will say to you will become folly. Foolishness. It won't make sense. If you're only receiving what you can determine on your own, what God says will become foolishness to you. And once everything seems foolish, what do you do? You stop bothering with it. "I'll just do it myself anyway." But Paul says that response is unnecessary, because—verse 16—you have the mind of Christ.

Christ functioning in you will give you the heart, the very thought, to say, "I'd like to hear what You have to say."

So we have to be in a place where we keep saying, "I've got to be a receiver, not a go-getter." Receiving means: He speaks. You hear. You receive. You process. You stay with it. And He will deliver it.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **What does it mean to be "set free from sin"? Set free for what?**
- **Notice the choice in verse 18: slaves of sin or slaves of righteousness. Why does there seem to be no third option?**

⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin. [...]

¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. [...]

²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

Romans 6:7, 18, 22 ESV

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Did you see the progression? Paul says, “You have been set free, because you now have a life with God, and you don’t have to be dominated by sin anymore.” What is sin? Going back to self and choosing your own will—like Adam and Eve—saying “I will,” and no longer following the will of God. Paul says you have been set free from that requirement. You don’t have to live that way anymore. (He says the very same thing in Romans 8: you’re not obligated to live that way.)

However—verse 18 says that having been set free, you now have a choice. Are you going to become a slave of Christ’s righteousness? If you don’t, you default back to becoming a slave of self—back to sin—which means you cannot receive the mysteries of God. It is a choice you have to make. When? Every day. All the time. You have the possibility, because you have been set free, to do that. Now you have the freedom either to become a slave of Christ or to go back to prison.

Being a slave of Christ means: I am following Him, hearing His voice, walking on the path He sets. He speaks; I follow. We just read in John 15 that if you love Him, you will follow what He says. How? You become His slave. If you become His slave, He gives you the best. If you choose not to and try to do it on your own, you get the worst. It is not that complicated.

Then verse 22: when you do that—when you choose to follow Christ—the fruit is righteousness, holiness, the best of His will, delivered to you and guaranteed. Your role is to stay in that place: listening and following, listening and following, and recognizing that this path leads to the very best.

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FOR REFLECTION

1. Why does Paul say the wisdom of God is hidden from “the rulers of this age”? Who can receive it, and how?

2. What does it mean that the natural person finds spiritual things to be folly (verse 14)? How might that be at work in someone you know—including, perhaps, yourself?

3. What is the daily choice that comes with being “set free from sin” (Romans 6:18)? Why is there no neutral middle ground?

PAUSE AND WRITE

Identify one situation where you have been trying to receive God’s wisdom by logic. What might it look like to instead receive it by revelation today?

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SECTION 5—SPEAKING HIS WORDS FAITHFULLY

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **How do you discern when someone—including yourself—is speaking from God versus speaking from their own mind?**
- **What is the danger of declaring something to be God’s word when it is not?**

¹⁶ Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord.

¹⁷ They say continually to those who despise the word of the Lord, ‘It shall be well with you’; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, ‘No disaster shall come upon you.’”

¹⁸ For who among them has stood in the council of the Lord to see and to hear his word, or who has paid attention to his word and listened?

¹⁹ Behold, the storm of the Lord! Wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest; it will burst upon the head of the wicked.

²⁰ The anger of the Lord will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intents of his heart. In the latter days you will understand it clearly.

²¹ “I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied.

²² But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds. [...]

²⁸ Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the Lord.

²⁹ Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

Jeremiah 23:16-22, 28-29 ESV

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God is contrasting two possibilities: you can operate in the flesh or you can operate in the Spirit. The key in both cases is the same—are you listening and speaking His words, or are you speaking your own? If you’re speaking your own words, you’re speaking lies. If you’re speaking His words, you will faithfully declare what is true, because you know it’s coming from Him.

As you look at receiving the mysteries, it is a matter of: am I truly hearing His words? You have to have clarity about that. That is why you need your spouse. That is why you need your best friend. That is why you need an inner circle—to confirm. “Yes, you’re hearing from God.” Now you can declare it. Now you can live it out.

If you don’t, you actually perpetuate with others that this is the way. So He says you can become a false prophet. That doesn’t mean you’re permanently a false prophet—it can be a false prophet at the moment, declaring something you say is true when God says, “That isn’t coming from Me.”

THREE COMMENTARIES ON A SUNDAY MORNING

As an illustration of mystery: there was a pastor in a church we attended who came across a very difficult passage. What did he do? He went to three commentaries. He put all three up on the screen side by side. And the three commentaries didn’t agree—they interpreted the passage differently. So the pastor said, in effect, “This passage is unknowable. Here are three ways of looking at it. Pick whichever one you like and do that one.”

And God said, “That’s not from Me.” At that moment, he was a false prophet. Why? What did everyone in the audience now think? That the word of God is unknowable, and the only thing to do is just guess at it—pick whichever one you like and go with it. That negates the entire word of God. You can create your own theology.

I knew that wasn’t of God. For one thing, I know one thing: God’s word is knowable. Now, it may take some while. But here is what the pastor didn’t do. He didn’t take the time. He didn’t take the energy to say, “I need to process this.” He could have said, “I know this is the verse we’re supposed to do this week. I don’t yet have it. I can’t give it to you. So I’m going to give you something else.” That is what he should have done. But instead he told a lie—and the people thought he was a prophet, when at that moment he was false.

As you know the word of God and walk with God, the Holy Spirit will tell you, “Not of Me. That’s not of Me. This is of Me.” He will give you that discernment. Most of the time it will sound like, “I’m not sure about that.” Why? Because you don’t yet have confidence that it is truly from God.

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So is His will always going to come crystal clear? No. It's going to be fuzzy at times. "I'm not sure about this. Am I hearing right? Honey, I heard this—do you think that's right? I'm not sure. I don't think so yet." What do you do then? Keep going. Keep asking. Keep confirming. "Hey, my inner circle—we're still not clear about this. What do you think?" He says, "I'll get you there if you have a heart to go. All you have to be is faithful." The key is to let Him show the mystery to you, not for you to guess at it. If you guess, you will speak a lie.

FOR REFLECTION

1. How does Jeremiah distinguish between true and false prophets? What is the central test (verses 18, 22)?

2. Why does Rich call the pastor in the three-commentaries illustration a "false prophet at the moment"? What could the pastor have done differently?

3. What does it look like, practically, when the Holy Spirit signals that something is "not of Me"? How does an inner circle help with discernment?

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PAUSE AND WRITE

Have you ever—in a casual conversation, a teaching moment, or a piece of advice—declared something as God’s will when, looking back, you weren’t sure you’d heard from Him? What would faithful speech have required instead?

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SECTION 6—FAITHFUL WITH YOUR ASSIGNMENT

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Have you ever felt that what God has given you to do is “small” or insignificant compared to others?**
- **How does God measure faithfulness in this passage?**

¹⁴ “For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property.

¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.

¹⁶ He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more.

¹⁷ So also he who had the two talents made two talents more.

¹⁸ But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money.

¹⁹ Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

²⁰ And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.’

²¹ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’

²² And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.’

²³ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’

Matthew 25:14-23 ESV

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The one who had five returned five. The one who had two returned two. Was the five more than the two? Yes—he did a bigger job. But what was the response of the master to each of them? The same: “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Faithful—to what? To what He gave each of them to do, with whatever He gave them.

My assignment for you is this. The only requirement is that you’re faithful—faithful to hear and follow and stay on that path. It is not about bigness. It is not about whether somebody else is doing more than you. It is about whether you are faithful to Me.

THE LOYOLA NUN

Years ago, Loyola of Chicago—a basketball team that had been small and not very successful—entered the NCAA tournament. A nun showed up at every game, and she became known for praying for that team. The team succeeded; they went up into the Final Four system. It was known: “Hey, that lady is faithful to be an advocate for that team.”

Was she a great teacher? No. Was she a great this or that? No. She was just faithful to the thing God had asked her to be faithful to. He says, in effect, “Let Me demonstrate this to you. There is no indication of what is great and what isn’t great. There is just what God says. The question is: are you faithful to it?” If you are faithful, He will reward you—“I’ll give you more bounty, more abundance. Enter into the joy of being faithful to My assignments.” Hear His voice and be faithful to it.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Why might Jesus commend a “dishonest manager” for his shrewdness? What is the lesson He’s drawing out?**
- **Notice how the passage ends with “you cannot serve God and money.” How does that connect with the manager’s story?**

¹ He also said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions.

² And he called him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.’

³ And the manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg.

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⁴ I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.'

⁵ So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

⁶ He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.'

⁷ Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'

⁸ The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.

⁹ And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

¹⁰ "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.

¹¹ If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?

¹² And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?

¹³ No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

Luke 16:1-13 ESV

It's an interesting story. The master says, in effect, "I'm going to get rid of you," and the manager goes to people who owe his master money and reduces what they owe. The master's perspective on that is striking: he commends him. Why? Because in reality, those people owed the master money, and if the manager simply left, there was a high probability the master would get nothing. So the master saw it as shrewd: at least the master got something. "I know you were doing it to protect yourself, but you were actually clever—you fulfilled something for me."

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And Jesus says: you, who are spiritual, use shrewdness—which I will give you—based on Whom you’re serving. He drives it to the point: you cannot serve God and money. You cannot serve one and not the other. You will despise the one if you serve the other. So you have to choose Whom you’re going to serve.

Even in this scenario, the servant—who wasn’t completely faithful—at least served his master in a way that returned something. The principle is: am I serving the Master? Am I giving the Master what He wants? Am I fulfilling what He wants? You can’t do both at the same time. Because if you try, you’re going to despise one of them. That’s what happens with a hard heart—you say, “I believe serving God is not going to be productive, so I’m going to serve money instead.” And you wind up despising God.

FOR REFLECTION

1. What was the master’s response to both the five-talent and two-talent servants? What does this reveal about how God measures faithfulness?

2. Why did the master in Luke 16 commend the dishonest manager? What was the “shrewdness” that Jesus is pointing to as a lesson for the sons of light?

3. Why does Jesus say you cannot serve God and money? What happens in the heart when someone tries to serve both?

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 PAUSE AND WRITE

Identify one assignment God has given you that may seem “small.” How could you be more intentionally faithful to it this week?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines, typical of notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

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SECTION 7—PRAYING FOR REVELATION AND POWER

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **What do you typically pray for when you face an issue? Do you pray for circumstances to change, or for revelation?**
- **Paul prays specifically for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. Why might that be a more strategic prayer than asking for outcomes?**

¹⁵ For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints,

¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,

¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,

¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might

²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,

²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 1:15-23 ESV

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Paul says: “You pray, because you want to know His will. You want to know these truths. And it requires Him to reveal mysteries.” So you pray. This is something we should pray all the time:

“May I receive Your Spirit of wisdom and revelation in knowing You.”

The word knowledge there is really experiencing—knowledge that is the experiencing of truth. “May I receive that. I’m asking You to give me the ability to hear Your wisdom and revelation of all that You want to say to me. Give me understanding so that I am enlightened to discern, to see what You’re saying.” You keep praying for that. And if you pray for it, what will God do? He will give you the answer. He’ll give you that ability to discern, to hear. All you have to do is ask for that, and you will receive what He has to say. It gets stronger over time.

Then Paul continues: “May I receive Your spiritual power.” This is miraculous power—directed toward whom? Toward you. The same power that raised Christ from the dead. He can deliver it because He is above everything, and everything is subject to Him. So He can make it happen. “Father, I have a problem. I have an issue. I have a conundrum. I have a difficult decision to make. Would You direct Your supernatural ability so that I walk in things that only You can solve, and I get to see Your supernatural work?” That is the prayer. And when? All the time.

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **What does it mean to be “strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being”?**
- **Verse 20 says God can do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think. How does that shape your expectations when you bring problems to Him?**

¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,

¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

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¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,

Ephesians 3:15-20 ESV

So I am praying that the fullness of God is becoming known to me. It is already there—I would like to experience it. I am going to pray that the Holy Spirit strengthens me to receive by faith what He is going to reveal to me. May I gain more and more strength and sensitivity. (Remember, we know the difference between lawlessness and what is of God. I want to know truth—help me have discernment about that. Help me, when something isn't truth, to have a troubling in my spirit not to receive it but to keep going.)

“May you, together with all the saints, learn the depth of all that I want to be to you, which is the fullness of expressing how much I love you by delivering the very best to you.” And may we do that together. And then may I learn that You can do far above what I can think or imagine. The solutions You give me, the supernatural things You give me, will be a surprise—because I don't have to figure them out. You will show me. You will give me things I cannot know.

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A TWO-HOUR PRAYER AND A SUDDEN LEFT TURN

Joel shared with us a story of a supernatural event in his business. Things were going in a direction. He felt, "This isn't the right way." He had discernment—something's off. And yet it all seemed to be heading that way; there were good feelings about it. All of a sudden, something happened, and the situation immediately took a left turn—even the way it happened was striking. It was, in effect, "Yeah—something's off here. I don't think that's the truth."

What could Joel have done? "Got this. I'm going to go. I'm going to persuade. I'm going to persuade." But he didn't. He said, "Father, what do You have to say about this?" He prayed, and God told him, "Pray this verse." That was the instruction.

How could he hear that? Because he was abiding. He was with Him. He was walking with Him. He was willing to receive a mystery, because he didn't know. God said, "I have the answer to the mystery—and here's the verse. Pray that." He prayed it. How long? About two hours. And the way the answer came—Joel said he would never have thought of that. He has seen a lot of scenarios; this was just another thing he would never have imagined.

It was supernatural. Far above what he would have thought to ask. It really did fulfill what God said. The path he was on hadn't been of God; God had to bring it back on track, and He did. All Joel could say in faith was, "I pray that You can do immeasurably more than I could ask or think—go ahead." And He did.

That is how you pray. So when you have an issue, when there is a problem, you don't say, "Woe is me." You say, "Strengthen me. Help me have revelation. Let me have the mystery. You know the answer. The answer will lead me to a pleasant path and to truth—I want to stay there. It is joyful to stay there." Pray and pray and pray constantly: "May I be in the place to receive mysteries." Then you get to experience the answer of the mystery.

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FOR REFLECTION

1. What three things does Paul pray will be given to the believer in Ephesians 1:17-19? What kind of power does verse 19 describe?

2. Why does Paul pray for the Holy Spirit to strengthen the inner being (Ephesians 3:16)? What is the connection between strength and revelation?

3. How does Joel's story illustrate the principle in Ephesians 3:20? What was Joel's posture, and what was God's response?

PAUSE AND WRITE

Bring an issue or decision you're currently facing, and pray Ephesians 1:17-19 over yourself. Write down the verse, then write what you sense the Lord beginning to reveal.

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BRINGING IT TOGETHER

Remember the purpose, which we learned in Mark 4: He did it purposely to keep you close to Him. The only way you can live the abundant life He wants to deliver to you—the covenant and the very best—is through revelation of mystery. Nobody can get there by logic. You can only get there by revelation, which means you have to hear His voice.

The mystery is Christ Himself. He said, “I am the mystery, and I am going to deliver the mystery.” And not only is He the mystery—He is in you, the hope of glory. He is living in you. Your life is becoming a life of receiving Him, and you have the ability to hear His voice and process what He has to say.

Your role is to let Him reveal it to you. He does nothing unless He reveals it to you first. He’ll let you know. His role is to reveal. Your role is to receive. Be a receiver. Then, as you do that, reinforce it by admonishing, teaching, and dialoguing with others—that this is true, that they can receive mysteries which are spectacular. And let Him help you do it. As you teach others, you get strengthened. You stay there. You keep remembering: oh, yes—stay there. Live that way. Live that way.

As we finish this course, we encourage you to look back—particularly at things you may have written down in the first session: mysteries you said you needed to know, pieces of God’s will you needed about your personal circumstances. We urge you to learn that this is available to you. The key is abiding. Stay here in His voice. Follow what He says. And you need people around you to assist and encourage you.

If this is something you are having difficulty experiencing, let us know. We are happy to assist you, to get you connected, and to help you learn what it means to walk with God, hear His voice, follow Him, and receive the mysteries. It will be spectacular.

So we urge you: have a terrific time with this. Continue not only to live out the mysteries, but to teach others. We look forward to seeing you again.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These nine questions are intended to be worked through individually before the next group meeting. Take your time. Where Scripture is referenced, return to the passage.

Scriptural Understanding

1. In Amos 3:7, why does the Lord reveal His secret to His servants before acting? What does this pattern tell us about His relationship with those who walk with Him?

2. In John 15:9-17, what is the connection between keeping Jesus' commandments and abiding in His love? How does the shift from "servant" to "friend" in verse 15 change the disciples' posture?

3. In 1 Corinthians 2:14-16, why is the natural person unable to accept the things of the Spirit? What does Paul mean when he says, "We have the mind of Christ"?

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Deeper Understanding

4. Throughout this lesson, what is the difference between trying to figure out God's will through logic and receiving it through revelation? Why does Rich insist that logic alone will not get us there?

5. What three roles does a minister of the mystery fulfill, drawn from Colossians 1:24-2:3? Describe what each—declare, exhort, teach—looks like in practice.

6. What does it mean to be a "false prophet at the moment," using the pastor and the three commentaries as your example? What was the more faithful response he could have given?

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Personal Application

7. Where in your current life are you facing a decision in which logic is pulling you one direction and you sense God may be saying something different? Describe the situation and what you have sensed Him saying.

8. Identify one assignment from God that may seem “small” to you. What would faithfulness to it look like this week, regardless of size?

9. Pray Ephesians 1:17-19 over yourself this week, and then pray Ephesians 3:14-20 over yourself. What changes in your inner posture? What do you sense Him beginning to reveal?

AN INVITATION TO GO DEEPER

This workbook is a starting point, designed to open your eyes to the incredible life of partnership God has for you. But the journey of walking in the Spirit, hearing His voice, and ministering His power is a daily one, and we are committed to providing resources to help you live it out.

If this material has stirred your heart and you are hungry for more, we invite you to explore the other resources our ministry provides. We have developed these tools specifically to equip you and your community to walk in the fullness of what you have learned.

- **Books and Small Group Curricula:** For those who want to build a solid, biblical foundation, our books and curricula provide in-depth teaching on abiding in Christ, hearing God's voice, and living in the freedom of the Kingdom. They are perfect for personal study or for creating a powerful small group environment where you can learn and grow together.
- **Podcasts:** For encouragement on the go, our podcasts feature practical teachings and real-life testimonies of how these principles are transforming lives, families, and businesses every single day.
- **Retreats:** For a truly immersive experience, we invite you to attend one of our retreats. These are dedicated times set apart to unplug from the world, press into the presence of God, and receive personal ministry and revelation that can accelerate your journey in Him.

You were not meant to walk this path alone. To explore these resources and take the next step in your adventure with God, please visit our website. We look forward to partnering with you as you discover the joy and power of living the full covenant life He has for you.

More information is available at www.AbideMinistries.com



History of **Abide Ministries**



In the 1990s, Rich and Linda Case received a call from God to dig into what it means to truly live in the Spirit.

In the 1990s, Rich and Linda Case received a call from God to dig into what it means to truly live in the Spirit. They had been believers for most of their lives and regularly attended church and Bible studies, but began to realize that, despite knowing the Bible intellectually, their personal experiences seemed disconnected from the promises and truths found in scripture. As they then learned these essential truths through their abiding and hearing God's voice – and began to see the grand life play out in their lives God called them to give that knowledge away. In 2001, God initiated the ABIDE ministry at a retreat with friends in Austria, and through their personal experience of this abiding life, their friends noticed the change in their lives and inquired if Rich and Linda could host a similar retreat the following year. This was repeated three years in a row, and then God called them to host weekend retreats in their home in Colorado.

Through the formal development of the truths revealed by God with Abiding and additional electives, they founded All for Jesus – Living Waters Ministries, now Abide Ministries – and have seen it grow exponentially since then, with 24+ retreat leaders all over the world, 29 online courses, eight books on various aspects of living life with Christ, and a daily podcast. Rich and Linda have also worked with various churches to strengthening them with the truths of an abiding life in Christ, and seeing Christ bring reconciliation and new vision to desperate situations.

Their heart is to bring the truths and promises of God to as many people as possible, showing everyone that when you abide in Christ and seek Him daily, your life can be completely and utterly transformed – enabling you to experience the grand life promised by God.



Vision

At our core, we believe in walking along God's path and connecting to the vine (abiding). As we walk in unity with others and understand God's Word as the truth, we are sure to experience His promised grand life and thus, willingly accept God's will as our chosen path.



Mission

1. Live out and invite everyone to experience the grand, spectacular, abundant life by hearing God's voice.
2. Share God's majesty, a close relationship with us as he yearns for our restoration.
3. God is majestic, grand and pure goodness, so that we can experience His nature in real life.
4. Communicate to everyone, irrespective of their condition, that all are meant to experience God's Divine Life (grand, majestic), by receiving His personal plan for us.
5. God delivers this life for us in a SUPERNATURAL way, transcending human comprehension, and thus, becoming normal in our life.
6. Teach that personal truths are revealed to us by God, grounded on His word – the embodiment of Truth.
7. Recognize that abiding in Christ changes our life in tangible, real ways, and is not just learning about or studying this life.
8. Teach that as we abide in Christ, we learn to understand and follow God's will for our lives, as He leads us personally into His grand, Divine plan for us. His personal plan calls us into His bigger story with our best interest at heart (blessed to bless others).

Statement of Non-Profit Status

Abide Ministries is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization that has been fully funded by our founders, leaders and retreat participants since its inception.

Tax-ID number: 27-1731819

Testimonies

"If I'm not abiding, I feel like I'm dying. Abiding is living...It's powerful to know that you have God's perspective on something."



Steve

"This was the first time that I understood what people meant by God's living Word. And I've been a Christian for a lot of years, but this was the first time it really came alive for me and I really could experience that."



Dan

"It doesn't matter where you are at in your walk. If you just got saved yesterday or if you've been a 20+ year believer like I have, learning how to hear God's voice and learning His will is just as important in day one as it is in day 3,426. You wanna hear God's will and this course has helped me hear Him more clearly."



Bob

"Abiding turned out to be the most transformational thing I've ever had since salvation in my Christian walk and in our marriage, and it's just been amazing. God has a path for us and He is there and He's showing it to us."



Heath

"Before, in my quiet time, it was more of a checklist thing for me to do in the morning, and, honestly, some mornings it was the thing that went if I was busy, and some days it didn't even happen. Now, it's become so personal to me and the time flies by in the morning and God speaks so directly to me and I just never felt that way on a daily basis before. That has been life-altering for me."



Rebecca

"I heard about people living in peace, I heard about people living in joy, and realizing all kinds of things around them are happening. And then we realize, wait a minute, we're there, we have peace beyond understanding."



Brad

Giving to the Ministry

Have you experienced abundant blessing from your time with Abide Ministries?

Pay it forward by donating at abideministries.com/donate and help us support others in learning how to seek Christ and abide in Him! We appreciate your desire to help us share the Abundant Life with the rest of the world.



Learn More at abideministries.com

Podcast

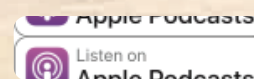
Escape the chaos and uncertainty of the world with our podcast, ***“Come and See, Finding Truth in a World of Chaos,”*** available on YouTube, Apple Podcasts, and Spotify.



CHANNEL



PLAYLIST PAGE



Tune in five days a week as our hosts, Rich Case and Kathy Rocconi, dive into the scriptures and discuss what it looks like to live an abiding life with Christ. Join us as we seek God's truth in a world of turmoil and darkness.

Online Courses



Abide Ministries online courses uncover life-changing biblical truths, with practical application and wisdom. Our courses are joyful and life-giving and are perfect for small groups as well as individuals.

Each course has an accompanying workbook. Join us as we learn about biblical topics like Hearing God's Voice, Discerning God's Will, the Covenant, Living in Forgiveness, Living in the Kingdom of God, Living in the Supernatural, Christ, Clutter and the Calendar, Living the Grand Life, and many, many more.



COURSES

Abide Retreats



Learn more at
abideministries.com

Do you have friends or a small group that you would like to experience what you just experienced?

Would you be interested in attending another retreat, which we call electives to go deeper in your walk with God?

See the various options on our website.
The topics for retreats and courses are the same.

RETREATS



COURSES



STORE

