

Beginnings – ORIGIN *(Where did we come from?)*

- Only Two Choices
- Realize the Significance
- Is it Faith or Science?
 - LAB - Lookable, Accessible, Breakable
- Guess at the Evidence
- Inspect the Evidence
 - Universe = "Decay"
 - Age of the Earth = "Can't Say"
 - Origin of Life by Chance = "No Way"
 - Evolution of Species and Man = "Lacks Genes and Tweens"
- No Compromise
 - DON'T - Death, Orders of Creation, Names in genealogies, Ten Commandments refer to seven-day week

Intent of Life – LIFE *(Why are we here?)*

- Love - GOD and MAN
- Increase - GROW
- Faithfulness - Time, Talent, Treasure
- Eternity – Past, Present, Future

Authority – POWER *(Who's in charge?)* A God Who is:

- Personal and Loving
- Omnipotent
- Wise and All-Knowing
- Everywhere and Eternal
- Righteous and Reliable

Standards – RULES *(What are the rules?)* God's rules are:

- Revealed supernaturally, not derived by reason
- Universal and apply to everyone, everywhere, all the time
- Loving
- Enforced
- Steadfast

R - Relationships

We have already discussed relationships in some detail in the previous section on love. But it is very important to emphasize the need for growth in our relationships. Unless we press forward and look to grow in our ability to be a better husband/wife, parent, child, etc., then we are squandering a God-given opportunity. Time inevitably causes change, and if we're not consciously seeking to make our relationships more pleasing to God then they will likely be changing in bad ways.

Thankfulness is often a key to our relationships. When we're thankful for people we do everything in our power to show them our love. When we take someone for granted we may not invest in our relationship until something (sickness, injury, frustration) threatens to take that person away.

My daughter Rebekah shared a profound insight with me yesterday. She said *“what if tomorrow the only things we had were the things we thanked God for today?”* If we apply this thought to our relationships it can help us remember to grow them through careful tending rather than let them wither through neglect.

Posterity

Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. Psalms 22:30

The concept of “posterity” is a key aspect of our relationships. The term “posterity” typically refers to a person’s descendants such as children and grandchildren. It can also refer to all the people that we influence for eternity.

We will have a lasting impact on future generations (intentionally or not). A man with several children may have hundreds or even thousands of descendants in a few generations. The children of the people he impacts can number in the hundreds of thousands. And when you include the future spouses of all those descendants you start to get a sense of the tremendous opportunity we are given to influence for good or for bad.

*Who, then, is the man that fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him. He will spend his days in prosperity, and **his descendants will inherit the land.*** Psalms 25:12-13

*what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. **We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.*** Psalms 78:3-4

So when we think about growing, we need to remember that we are growing a posterity based on our actions today. We should be purposeful in striving to have a posterity that will be a blessing to future generations.

O - Obedience

By nature man is a sinner, which means it is natural for me to disobey God. Some people think that we are born “neutral” or good and that disobedience is learned from our environment. People that believe that idea aren’t being honest about their own hearts and likely have never been parents. No one has to teach infants to rebel and disobey – it comes as a standard feature. Obedience is a learned trait, and it is never perfectly learned.

Obedience is also not something that maintains itself. We are either growing in our obedience or we are slipping toward disobedience. Slipping away from obedience is a natural thing, but not a good thing. As Christians God gives us the Holy Spirit so that we can resist temptation to sin, but even then we don’t always ask for that strength because sin is so attractive to us.

At our house we used to have some stuff we called “slime”. It is a type of putty with incredible elasticity. It can ooze and stretch and mold itself for lots of fun uses (like sticking it on the ceiling and seeing how long it takes to stretch itself all the way to the floor). But this slime is always being pulled by gravity somewhat like we are always being pulled by temptation to disobey God. If you set a blob of slime on a stair rail or chair or anything it will start to be pulled downward by gravity. If you leave it long enough it will gradually work itself down as far as

it can go until something stops it. The only way to keep it from doing that it is to keep pushing it back up or to close it up in a box.

This is an imperfect analogy, but our tendency to sin is somewhat like gravity and our obedience is somewhat like slime. To pursue obedience we have to continually push ourselves up in the strength Christ gives us to overcome our natural sin nature. We **MUST** be growing in obedience.

So how do we grow in obedience? We already covered some suggestions in the “O” section of Loving God. Here are four additional suggestions:

1. **Make yourself accountable** to a person who will ask you about your sins and obedience on a regular basis (at least weekly). Just knowing that you’re going to have this discussion can help you resist temptation.
2. **Learn to flee temptation.** Ask God to show you what situations, people, and activities in your life provide strong temptations for sinful thoughts or action. Sometimes we don’t need to try to get stronger in resisting a particular temptation. We just need to stop, turn it off, throw it away, or otherwise flee it altogether. Bob Schulz in Boyhood and Beyond recommends that when we’re tempted we should ask the question “God, what do you want me to be doing right now?” and then go and do that instead of trying to fight a likely losing battle with temptation.
3. **Use the Golden Rule** to evaluate your words, actions, and thoughts. Would I want someone else to say those things, do those things, or think those things about me?
4. **Deal with sin in your heart before it takes root and bears bad fruit.** Since sin starts with thoughts, would I be ashamed if people knew what I was thinking? If so, I should ask God to change my heart so that I don’t have to pretend my heart is different than it is.

W - Work

God created us to work, and work is good. Before Adam sinned God gave him the responsibility to care for the garden:

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. Genesis 2:15

After Adam’s sin God said that his work would be harder, but work is still a good thing. Our culture says that work is to be avoided when possible, and that leisure (unproductive time) is our goal. But God created us to work. Whether we get paid or not, we are to be doing the work God has given us.

- **We have been saved to do good works** that God has prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10)
- **We are to work with all our heart at whatever we do** because it is the Lord we are working for, not men (Colossians 3:23)
- **We are to work in the specific roles God has given us.** God gives distinct roles to men and to women, and our work should focus on fulfilling those roles. Our family acrostics for these roles are LEADER and HELPER:
 - The LEADER work of a man includes:
 - Leading
 - Elding
 - Attaching (being a husband)
 - Defending
 - Earning a living
 - Rearing children

- TheHELPER work of a woman includes:
 - **H**elpmeet to her husband or father
 - **E**ducator at home
 - **L**asting (spiritual) beauty
 - **P**roducing godly offspring
 - **E**nterprising at home
 - **R**ealmkeeping for her household

These are discussed in more detail in other writings.

- **We will be judged based on our works.** Our relationship with God is not earned, but we will earn rewards based on our work. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 talks about our work being tested by fire, and if we have built our work on the right foundation (Jesus Christ and His Word) then what we have built will survive the fire and we will receive a reward. I don't fully understand this promise, but it conveys the concept that our work is important and will be judged.
- **We bring glory to God by the fruit we bear.** John 15:8 tells us that bearing fruit brings glory to God and shows that we're Christ's disciples. We don't cause the fruit (only God makes it grow) but we are responsible for planting and tending just like Adam was. All the farming and gardening analogies in scripture show that we are to be faithful in our part and that God will bring the increase. One of my pastors called it the law of the sower:
 - You reap what you sow
 - You reap more than you sow
 - You reap later than you sow

Jesus said, *"My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working."* (John 5:17). Doing the work he has given us is part of the reason we have life.