

A Sure Foundation

The beliefs that we build our lives on

WHAT AM I FOR?

We cannot know who we are without knowing what we are for. The only valid reason for our existence is determined by the One who created us for that reason. Why did God create us? Honestly, it seems that we have been little but trouble to Him. Even foreseeing that, He chose to bring us to life so that, even just a few, might love Him and bring Him glory. Is that what your life is about? Is that the reason behind the events on your calendar, the checks recorded in your register, and the words that you speak? Is that the defining issue of your existence?

It was to Paul. It was his consuming desire not only for himself, but for the world. His passion was to take God's message to the world that everyone might be as transformed by it as he had been. Ironically, Israel had lost their intended identity as God's chosen people by getting wrapped up in their own pursuit of their version of godliness. To claim our true identity, we need only to live out what God has already offered us. We have nothing good to bring to God, but everything good of Him within us. A life given to God will become more and more the life that He has created it to be. He will give us the desire to do the things that He calls us to do. We will become what He created us to be. We will be restored to the truest and best version of ourselves, and not because we spend time looking in the mirror to see who we are, but because we spend time discovering who He is and how He is working in and through us. The more faith grows in us, the more accurately we can see ourselves. We don't think of ourselves more highly than we ought, or lower than we ought. We simply see ourselves as His. Our vision expands beyond what grand righteous lives we can live for God, to what grand things God is doing in and around us. We live bigger than our limits. We pursue things of Christ. We live the glorious reflection of Him that we are meant to be. We don't ask "Can I do it?" we ask "Does God want it?" We are defined by Christ, and see ourselves clothed with the things that God intended for us: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and greatest of all, love. Everything we do is done in the name of Jesus, nothing happens in the name of me, because there is nothing to me apart from Him.

MONTH 4

WEEK 3

READ:

Romans 10-12

Colossians 3-4

Isaiah 6

"... Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you."

Romans 12:3



WHO ME? Isaiah 6

In Romans 10:16, Paul sympathizes with Isaiah's frustration with the Israelites. He quotes Isaiah as saying "Lord, who has believed our message?" The word "our" is powerful. Isaiah is showing a oneness of purpose with God. God's message has become so much of whom Isaiah is that he says "our" message. He owns it and claims it as **his** mission and purpose and calling. To see how that came to be, we can look back at Isaiah 6, the "calling" of Isaiah.

We talk a lot about God's call on us, mainly in the context of preachers and missionaries — "official" positions of service. That leaves many of us "uncalled" by default, which is a great tragedy. Women particularly seem unsure of any calling that God has had on their life. We are strangely content with being out of the loop and passed by. We reason that we are "off the hook" if God has not called us. I think that is because we do not really understand how, or to what, a person is called. In the backs of our minds we seem to think that only special people, like Isaiah, receive any calling, and I think secretly we are relieved.

But a more careful look at Isaiah 6 presents things a little differently. Isaiah felt anything but special. In fact, he felt doomed! He had a vision of God that convinced him that he would surely die because here he was, seeing God, and suddenly every word he had ever spoken seemed wrong and condemning. Have you ever been there? Even my well intentioned words too often come out sounding weak and foolish. Then there are the words spoken in anger or frustration that I wish I could reel back in. Even as I teach a Bible class, I fear that I have misunderstood and misused even God's words. I can understand Isaiah's realization of having unclean lips. Sometimes I wish that God could just glue my mouth shut so that it wouldn't cause any more trouble! Perhaps that is what Isaiah expected to happen when the seraph touched his lips with the live coal. Scar tissue from the burn would seal his mouth right up and that was surely what he deserved! Instead, it cleansed him of his sin—just as we have been cleansed of ours. Our guilt is taken away and our sin atoned for. As Paul quotes from Isaiah; "anyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame." (Romans 10:11) It's the next part of this whole encounter in Isaiah 6 that really grabs me. It does not say that then God talked to Isaiah and told him that He had a job for him, it says that Isaiah **heard** the voice of God saying "Who shall I send? Who will go for us"? It's almost more like Isaiah heard God talking to Himself. **Now**, Isaiah was in tune to the desires of God. **Now** he could hear Him, and was eager to respond. There was a need that Isaiah responded to with a Here am I, send me. It's a bit different than God's calling on Moses, where God was specifically calling Moses to a job. Specific calls do come, but so do the general ones if we are in the position to listen. When God says "Who shall we send?" do you step forward and say "how about me?" or do you say "that call must not be for me"? Listen, because you are equipped by Christ and ready to serve! Who am I to answer God's call? The one that He has redeemed for His purposes.



What is God calling you to do? _____

In what ways does that give definition to who you are? _____

GIFTED TO SERVE

When we consider the ways that God has gifted us to build up His body, we start feeling like we are on dangerous ground. Strange isn't it? If we acknowledge a gift, we feel like we are bragging, or stepping out of defined boundaries, as if it is something that we have control of. That's because we don't really truly see them as gifts from God to be used for His purposes. We see the possession of them more in the light of power to yield. What will they do for me, or what glory will they bring me, not how can they help the kingdom. So, for the sake of appearing humble, we deny them in ourselves. For the sake of being fearful, we deny them in ourselves and others. For the sake of being selfish, we claim them for our own agenda. Why is it so hard for us to see them appropriately as part of who God has created us to be?

What gifts are listed in Romans 12? _____

How are they to be used? _____

“In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we are talking about is Christ’s body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn’t amount to much would we?”

“So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts of Christ’s body, let’s just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren’t.”

Romans 12:6 (The Message)

DO NOT BE OVERCOME BY EVIL

Rom. 12:9-21

As Christians, we certainly do not intend to be overcome by evil, but this section begins and ends with a warning against exactly that. The advice is simple: avoid what is evil and hang on to what is good. The remaining verses in between are very practical measures that we can take to avoid it. What are some of the things that most stand out to you in this passage?

COLOSSIANS 3 and 4

Why does Colossians 3:3 say that our life is hidden? _____

When will we appear in glory? _____

What has happened to our old self? _____

What similarities do we find in Colossians 3:12-17 and Romans 12:9-21? _____

What is everything that we do to be in the name of? _____

What part does gratitude play? _____

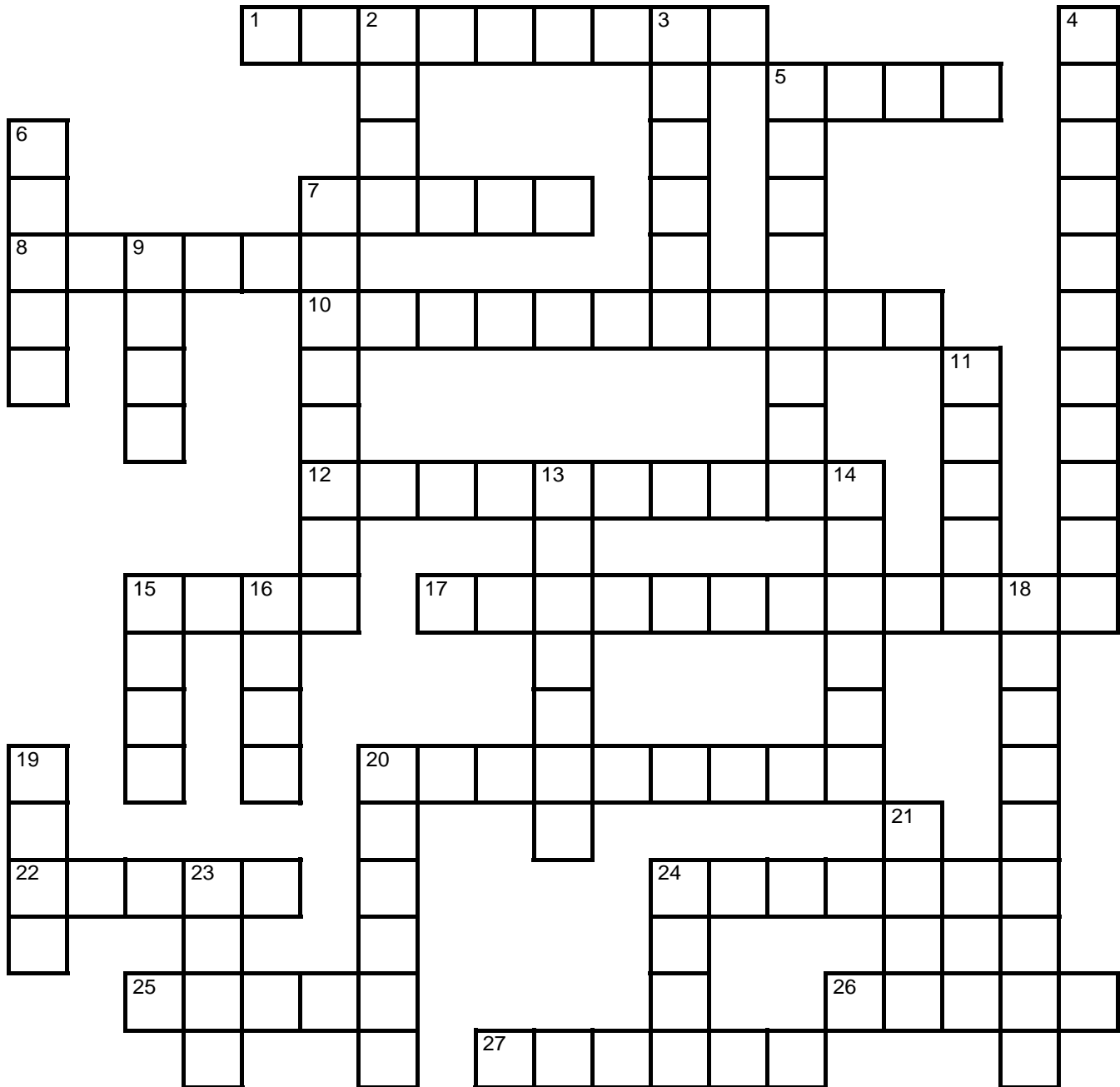
How are we supposed to do whatever work we are doing? _____

In what ways can we make the most of every opportunity? _____



PUZZLE PAGE

COLOSSIANS (clues on following page)



For comments or questions, contact me at kayannausherman@hotmail.com or for more studies visit my website at thelightedjourney.com

PUZZLE CLUES (from NIV translation)

Across

- 1. strengthened for this 1:11
- 5. do in the name of the Lord 3:17
- 7. bearing it in every good work 1:10
- 8. had a church in her home 4:15
- 10. received from the Lord 3:24
- 12. there is none 3:25
- 15. asked God for a knowledge of his _____ 1:9
- 17. overflow with this 2:7
- 20. to be in our hearts 3:16
- 22. the kingdom that we share an inheritance in 1:12
- 24. buried with Christ through this 2:12
- 25. made this with Christ 2:13
- 26. made through Christ's blood 1:20
- 27. be devoted to this 4:2

Down

- 2. Paul asked for prayers for an open one 4:3
- 3. your life 3:4
- 4. have the appearance of wisdom 2:23
- 5. we are rescued from this dominion 1:13
- 6. set it on things above 3:2
- 7. the brothers in Christ at Colosse 1:2
- 9. cousin of Barnabas 4:10
- 11. do not let anyone do this to you 2:16
- 13. found in Christ 2:17
- 14. rid yourself of this 3:8
- 15. let Christ's dwell in you richly 3:16
- 16. the doctor 4:14
- 18. Christ has this in everything 1:18
- 19. conversation seasoned with this 4:6
- 20. bearing fruit and growing 1:6
- 21. live one worthy of the Lord 1:10
- 23. we are presented as this 1:22
- 24. Christ is head of this 1:18

WHAT WE ARE KNOWN FOR

Colossians 4

Paul mentions several people the closing of his letter to the Colossians. He gives a brief explanation of who each of these people are. What does he use to identify each of them?

Tychicus - _____

Onesimus - _____

Aristarchus - _____

Mark - _____

Justus - _____

Epaphras - _____

Luke - _____

Demas - _____

Nympha - _____

Archippus - _____

What did all of these people have in common?

Which would you most like to be known for?

How do you think Paul would describe you?

Who were these people working for? _____