BLUEPRINTS

Reflecting God's Image Outside of Eden

March 2024

This month:

10 things Ruben learned during his incarceration

"WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?"

By Pastor Stephen Cervera

"CONTAGIOUS COMPANY"

By Pastor Joel Malm



Blueprints

March 2024, Volume 6, Issue 3

Blueprints offers a bold message of original intent, which is that plan, purpose, and design God has inscribed into the heart of His men and women.

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Blueprints For Living Ministries, Inc. was birthed out of a preaching firestorm that occurred in "God's Country" (aka Hondo, TX) in 2011. Led by Jason Cole and Ruben Constante, Jr., this preaching revival stirred hundreds of men to seek God's will and purpose for their lives.

Two years later, Ruben created this ministry's newsletter, called *Blueprints*, which would become its first outreach platform.

By 2015, Ruben finalized this ministry's current curriculum, which is neatly organized into five blueprints. During those four years, God had initiated Ruben through a rigorous testing and refining process, which placed him in several crises

of faith. These trial periods became pivotal moments in which he learned to cultivate God's design for his life.

Blueprints For Living Ministries, Inc. now stands as a clear voice in a world that has erased and redefined God's blueprint for humanity. What began as a few sermons from behind a prison pulpit is now a team of dedicated men who are driven to impart spiritual and secular education that promotes positive change and personal growth and development.

It is a call for a return to original intent.



Five Blueprints For Living

- 1. The Blueprint of God's Image
- 2. The Blueprint of Gender Design
- 3. The Blueprint of Marriage
- 4. The Blueprint of the Church
- 5. The Blueprint of Discipleship



PILLARS OF TRUTH

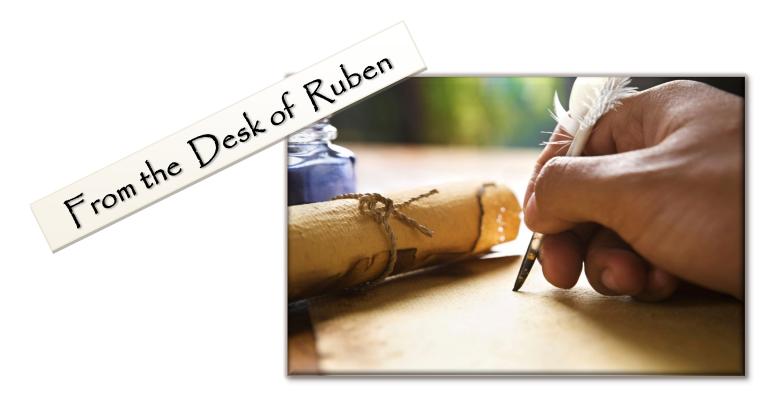
Because Blueprints For Living Ministries, Inc. is dedicated to standing on and proclaiming God's original intent for life, we center our worldview on the only standard which reveals original intent: the Holy Bible.

Aside from affirming the Nicene and Apostle's creed, we adhere to the Reformed positions of the Christian faith, those doctrines which the reformers believed were central to Christianity. We stand alongside Martin Luther, who boldly refused to recant the clear teachings of Scripture. Therefore, we stand on the Five *Solas* of the Protestant Reformation:

- 1. Sola Scriptura ("Scripture alone"): The Bible is our highest authority.
- 2. Sola Fide ("faith alone"): We are saved through faith alone in Christ Jesus.
- 3. Sola Gratia ("grace alone"): We are saved by the grace of God alone.
- 4. Solus Christus ("Christ alone"): Jesus Christ alone is our Lord, Savior, and King.
- 5. Soli Deo Gloria ("to the glory of God alone"): We live for the glory of God alone.

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I am not going to lie.

These past two months have been very hard for me and my wife. Not maritally but financially. Within a span of six weeks, we've had three setbacks that shoved us into a super-mega-ultra tight spot.

And the Devil knows how to play off those moments, causing me to doubt what I'm even doing at times with this ministry, our podcast, and this monthly publication.

But I press forward anyway.

The apostle Paul said, "I count not myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. .." (Phil. 3:13). Paul was a fighter and never gave up.

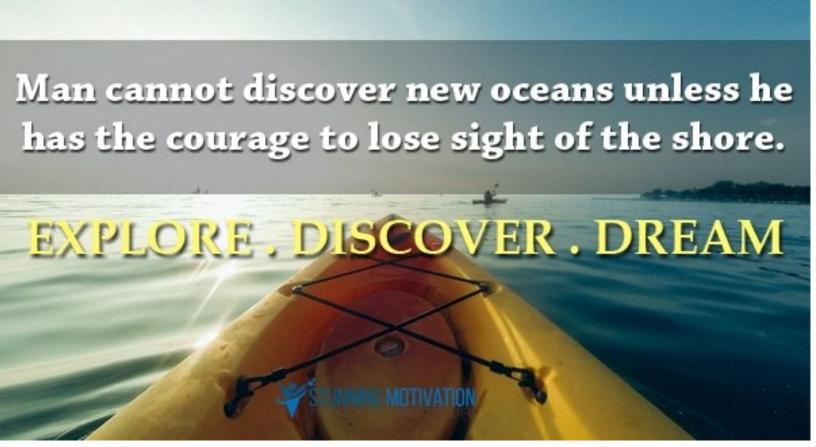
I want to be like that.

If you find yourself pressed on all sides, with your life seemingly like it has you in a literal chokehold, don't tap out.

Fight! Fight! Fight!

Ruben Constantes Jr.

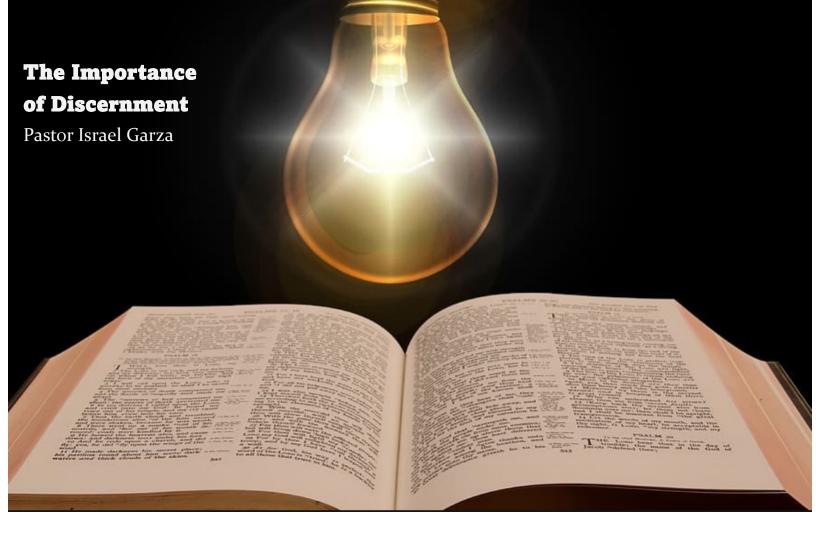




Be. Inspired.

If you continue to carry the bricks from your past, you will end up building the same house.







In being asked to write on this topic of discernment, I find myself with such peace.

As a pastor I always want to ensure that we provide a word that is not filled with the mysticism of so many false doctrines. What I want to make clear is that discernment is of God. Discernment must be under the order of God and is not an act of some mystical-I'm-highly-spiritual power that is only obtained by few.

No!

In biblical context, discernment generally refers to the ability to judge well, to recognize and follow God's will, or to distinguish between what is morally and spiritually right or wrong, accord-

ing to God's teachings. It is seen as a virtue and a wisdom that goes beyond simple perception or superficial judgment. Discernment in the Bible is often associated with wisdom, understanding, and insight, and it is considered a gift of the Holy Spirit.

As we read in Proverbs 2:1-5 "My son, if you will receive my words. And treasure my commandments within you. Make your ear attentive to wisdom. Incline your heart to understanding; For if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; If you seek her as silver. And search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will discern the fear of the Lord. And discover the knowledge of God."

Discernment is a gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:10) and is a proof of our maturity in relationship with God and His Word. Scripture reminds us that discernment is to be sought, to be in-

The importance of discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong. It's knowing the difference between right and almost right. (Charles Spurgeon)

quired and we must study to gain discernment in the Word of God.

Hosea 14:9 Reads, "Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; Whoever is discerning, let him know them. For the righteous will walk in them, but transgressors will stumble in them.

The prophet Hosea gives the people (and us!) a choice: either to live in the wisdom of the Lord's way (Word), or to live according to the foolishness of the world.

Romans 12:1,2 also confirms that we cannot be with the mind of the world and prove what the will of God is. We must be transformed, seeking the renewing of the mind according to the view of God. Lack of discernment is the reason so many of us fall, but when present is also why so many do not fall. Discernment again is the knowledge of God's will, His desire, His design and purpose before we decide to do anything, saying and believe anything.

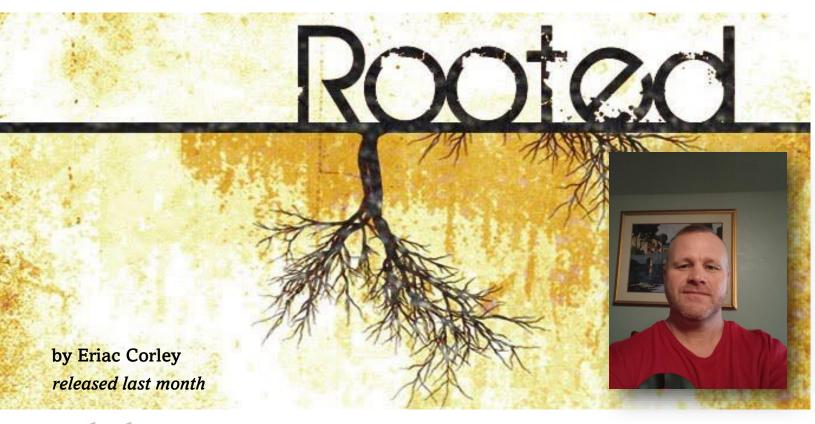
Samuel Johnson said, "The supreme end of education is expert discernment in all thingsthe power to tell the good from the bad, the genuine from the counterfeit, and to prefer the good and the genuine to the bad and the counterfeit."

I know that God has given us His Word to be

a light unto our feet (Ps. 119:105). My thoughts are ordered by His Word, not my intellect nor my experience solely His Word. Discernment allows me to filter what is before me according to God's standard.

Let us seek God, His wisdom, and His precepts to be our discernment. Lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight (Pro. 3:5,6).





As I was preparing for

As I was preparing for another chance at release from prison, I began to think, pray, and meditate on what it would take to live a successful God-centered life. I had already been released once before and returned after four years. I knew in order to do that, I'd have to change something.

I have a tendency to over complicate things and reason myself out of God's practical wisdom. God had sent me a true man of His, Dewayne Jordan, who constantly reminded me of the simplicity and sufficiency we have in Christ. As I continued to seek the Lord, even through many struggles, I began to see that the root issue was unbelief.

I believed in God, and I knew He was good; however, I didn't believe in His love for me. I had no root in that simple truth, and that leads to no place good. Yet, Dewayne continued to encourage me to seek my significance and value in His love for me.

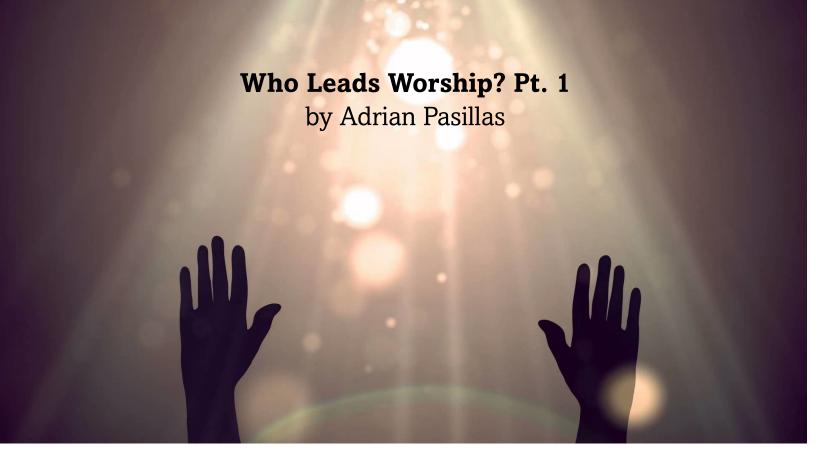
As time would prove, I began to find my root in His love and grace. Everywhere I turned I saw His faithfulness and it is from this paradigm a light began to dawn in my heart.

As the Lord continued to minister to me, He set the stage for my release and told me through Dewayne that all I had to do was continue to do the same things I was now doing after release----seek and walk in His great love for me. Everything else would fall into place. Every day, I see the evidence all around me. All I have to do is look and stay rooted in His love!

God bless you guys and continue to fight the good fight of faith!

NOT THAT WE ARE SUFFICIENT IN OURSELVES TO CLAIM ANYTHING AS COMING FROM US, BUT OUR SUFFICIENCY IS FROM GOD.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:5



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The title of "worship leader", to describe the chief musician in a church body worship service, has become fairly mainstream in today's evangelicalism. One problem with this title is that it is *not* a biblical church office. The New Testament prescribes only two offices for the church, that of elder and deacon. "Worship leader" (along with "minister," "director," or any other title) may possibly describe a function of one of the two biblical offices, but the title itself is not found in Scripture. If a church has an individual whose primary responsibility is to plan and lead that church's weekly corporate gatherings of worship, then such a prominent and important position must be performed by one of the two biblical officers of the church.

So, who may serve in this role, especially when this office is not found in holy writ? A sticky issue presumably subsumed within worship is whether a woman may serve in this role. If the term worship leader is not found in

scripture, why couldn't a woman lead in this capacity? Would the biblical model prevent a woman from giving her testimony, offering up Scripture reading, making announcements, leading songs, or offering a public prayer? A better question would be this: Are any of these ministries an expression of authoritative, elderlike teaching over men? Confusion and imprecision, especially when comes to who may serve, is not of God. Hey, we love the women of and in the church. Heaven forfend that can do without them! Nevertheless, we are to give careful consideration via Scripture to help clarify the matter of women in leading worship.

Jesus is the only true worship leader.

To the effect that the title "worship leader" serves some useful purpose in the church, the main problem of the title more than implies an errant theology of worship. There have been essays written about how Sunday morning worship is to be an "experience", that a "Las Vegas Revue" (my words, because I have been, way in the past, in the midst of such shameless gaudiness and cacophony), is to usher worshipers into a corporate awareness, into an emotional flow of God's manifest presence, and

that such an experience is "essential" to a good worship.

As many as the churches who conducts such services is how many problems there are to their theology of worship. But only Jesus Christ is the true worship leader; only He can lead us into God's presence made possible only through the sacrificial atonement and high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ. As in Ephesians 2:18 (ESV):

"For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father."

and, as a reminder, Hebrews 10:19-22:

"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith,

with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

Only Christ leads us into God's presence.

Only Jesus, as the high priest, through His sacrifice enables sinners to "draw near" into God's presence for communion with Him. Only He can lead us into worship.

Within the necessary attributes of humanity are the physical senses of touch, taste, sight, hearing, and feeling. But our senses are to no avail when it comes to the worship of God, even when we are veritably in the presence of Him; there is no tangible or physical proof. Our communion with God is manifestly metaphysical (beyond the senses). It is, at its very essence, spiritual.

Next: Who Leads Worship, part 2: An Important Question...





In this third episode titled "The Ex-Felon's Challenge" I brought into the studio Pastor Israel Garza of Redeemed Ministries from San Antonio, TX. In this conversation, we share candid thoughts on what ex-felons struggle with when they get out and what those struggles are rooted in.

Pastor Israel and I met in prison and have learned from personal experience what traps ex-felons fall for when they are released, so tune and find out how you can avoid what we went through!

"Reflecting Him"

a Blueprints for Living Ministries, Inc. podcast

Blueprints for Living Ministries, Inc. is dedicated to teaching men and women God's design for life. With this new podcast called "Reflecting Him," we share hope, encouragement, direction, and purpose to a world that is set on defacing God's image and deifying man's. We echo John the Baptist's words in believing that Jesus must increase and we must decrease. In short, our goal is reflect God's image outside of Eden.





Recently NASA released photos that they claim are pictures of heaven.

That's right NASA says they have found heaven. The photos taken by the Hubble telescope show a picture of a heavenly city. It's funny how hard people want to find heaven by manmade ways instead of seeking the way, the truth, and the life which is through Jesus Christ. They have shown these images all over social media. A major discovery if you will.

However, it's only been on social media. To us who are in Christ we have known this all along. It's our faith in Jesus that causes us to believe in this heavenly city. I. John 14: 1-4 Jesus tells us of this place where He is and had gone to prepare a place for us. Images of heaven are given in the book of Revelation. For we walk by faith not by sight.

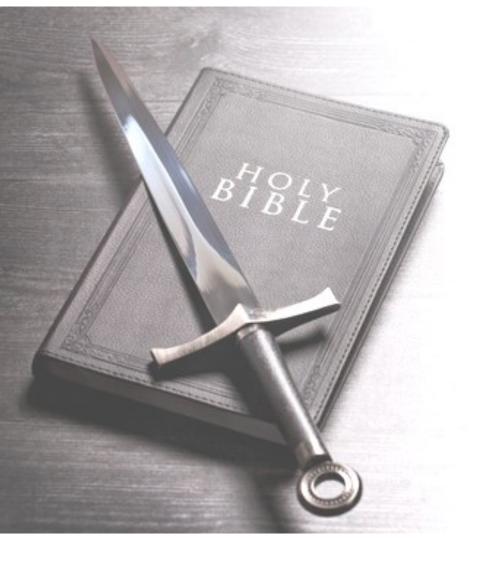
Now these images are beautiful but faith in a place that you can see with the eyes of your heart holds far more beauty than anything ever could. Which leads to this question: What are you looking for? Are we looking for those things that we can see, touch, or smell? If you are, those things will perish. It's our hope, our trust, our faith that

will not perish!

I do not need to look through a telescope to see heaven. I can see heaven in Jesus. In His life, in His Word, in His promise, and in His arms! When they published the images of heaven, they said NASA has found heaven. But what about the person who needs hope today? In need of peace today? In need of a savior today? It's when they turn to Jesus that they find heaven!

I encourage you today to not look for the things you can see and touch. Do not be like doubting Thomas. But rather look towards Jesus, grab His hand, and He will take you straight to heaven! Stop looking down today, look up to your Redeemer!





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In an effort to motivate our readers and encourage their personal walks of faith, we will feature this new section called "Leadership Corner" and provide quotes and proverbial sayings, along with a brief message from someone in our writing team.

I wake up everyday with a profound gratitude, knowing that God has given me the greatest ministry ever: to be a father to my son.

(Ruben Constante, Jr.)





Leader's Corner

There are several things that come to mind when I think about when the going gets tough.

However, the main thing for me is to remember Romans 8:28. "All things work together for the good of those that love the Lord and are called according to His purpose." This has kept me grounded for years and has carried me through trials and tribulations. One time I had gone through one of the most trying seasons in my life. I was dealing with having to move out of my apartment by the end of the week (with

no other apartment to move into) and experiencing a horrible breakup with someone I had thought I was going to marry. The feeling of despair, anxiety, and fear of the future due to not having a place to stay left me feeling hopeless.

In addition, I felt worthless, lied to, and angry at the fact that I was no longer "chosen" or "loved" by the person who once said they wanted to spend our lives together. Sitting there, I asked God, "why me?"







Then, almost immediately the scripture Romans 8:28 rang in my mind. The word of God tells me that all things work together for the good of those that love the Lord and are called according to His purpose. Not some things, not only the good things or the things we like, or convenient: ALL things.

That thought alone made me rejoice knowing that what I was enduring was for His glory and for my good. Those who belong to Christ have put their trust in the faithful, sovereign, all knowing God of the universe, and our lives are in his hands. When the going gets tough we can rest in knowing that God is good, and He promises to work all things out for our good.

(Angel Price)



A GOOD LEADER IS A PERSON WHO TAKES A LITTLE MORE THAN HIS SHARE OF THE BLAME AND A LITTLE LESS THAN HIS SHARE OF THE CREDIT. JOHN MAXWELL



When I look at the role of leadership, I know that no task will be easy. At every turn many challenges will always be present. But what is one called to do, "when the going gets tough?"

Too many leaders, parents, pastors and so on, fail when we take on tasks with our own established mind set. We do not consider at times areas that our task will face difficulties.

In the book of Proverbs 20:18 says, "Plans are established by counsel; By wise counsel wage war." In the moment that we face something tough, too many people freeze up, yet with the counsel of the Lord there is an assurance that His counsel we have His will, provision, and the assurance of victory.

In the tough times we gain wisdom, experience of God's awesome love, guidance, and peace. There will come in every tough time a peace and rest allowing us to focus on His

desire. So many men throughout the Bible that faced tough times, and times of fear found in God all one needs to complete the task at hand.

The people that we surround ourselves with can encourage us, strengthen us and as scripture states, iron will sharpen iron. Tough times create the sharpening that we need to pass on to others.

In leadership there is no room for quitting, paralyzing fear, nor is there room for being unfocused. Remember that God says to us, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9

(Pastor Israel Garza)





A special thanks to these faithful ministries and organizations who make our classes possible!







My daughter recently informed me that her favorite musician is Taylor Swift. I laughed, because, though T.S. makes some fun music, my daughter hasn't ever really listened to that music (and believe me, I know—I'm helicopter-parent adjacent.)

So, I think something else is afoot here.

Rene Girard said, "Man is the creature who does not know what to desire, and he turns to others in order to make up his mind. We desire what others desire because we imitate their desires." He called this mimesis—like miming or copying others.

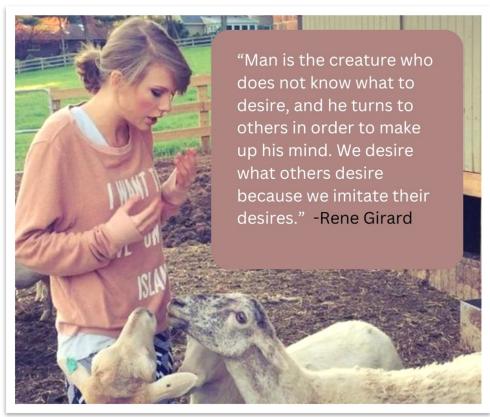
This tendency to copy or follow others has all sorts of implications for society, but the thing I think underpins his whole philosophy is this simple truth: We become like those we hang around with.

I know that sounds like a lesson for kindergartners, but I need to be reminded of it from time to time. I tend to adopt the direction, desires, and disciplines (or lack thereof) of those around me. We shouldn't live in a bubble or echo chamber. We need exposure to things outside our circle. But we also need to realize that, in a real way, we're prone to be led places we may not really want to go if we're just following those around us. And the crowd tends to be wrong on a regular basis.

May we be those who pay attention to the impact those around us are having on our direction. May we delight ourselves in the Lord, looking to him, and trust that he'll give what we truly desire (Ps. 37:4).

"Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm." (Proverbs 13:20)

P.S. I know I'm probably gonna get some hate from people who can't read for context. So, before you send that hate, try to see the big picture here. This isn't an attack on T.S. or those who like her music, I actually like some of it.





ATTITUDES ARE CONTAGIOUS. ARE YOURS WORTH CATCHING?

The 10 Most Important Things I've learned

Ruben Constante, Jr.

- 1. We need a blueprint. Without an intimate understanding of God's design for life, we all wander to and fro looking for satisfaction in whatever captures our attention.
- 2. There is no such thing as an "anger problem." Anger is never a problem; it is the normal response to that which threatens us or those we love. How we deal with anger, however, is where problems may arise.
- 3. Beliefs are the most powerful weapons we have. What we believe will always affect our emotions, which in turn motivates our actions. In this sense, we can definitely be our worst enemy.
- 4. No one makes us do anything. We always have a choice. Some choices aren't pleasant, but they are choices, nonetheless. Which leads to. . .
- 5. True freedom and power are found in accepting responsibility for our actions. The more we blame others, the more we forfeit our power to do something about our situation.
- 6. We can't control anyone's beliefs, attitudes, or actions—only our own. The more we try to control others, the more we lose control over ourselves.
- 7. There is always hope. Roses may have their thorns, but storms are followed by their rainbows as well. Focus on the colorful bows in your life.
- 8. People were designed to be loved, not owned. However. . .
- 9. Love is not tolerant; it is discriminatory by nature. It is not the inclination to allow whatever to happen to whomever but stands as the moral compass which guards the image of God within us. Love protects. And finally. . .
- 10. Our treatment of others is an indication of our character. We aren't supposed to "match energies." Instead, we extinguish indifference with love, for love is what changes the world.

What does the Bible say about tattoos?

Tattoos are more popular than ever in many parts of the world. The number of people with tattoos has increased dramatically in recent years. Tattoos are not just for delinquents or rebels anymore. The edginess of rebellion historically associated with tattoos is starting to wear off.

The New Testament does not say anything about whether or not a believer in Jesus Christ should get a tattoo. Therefore, we cannot say that getting a tattoo is a sin. Because of Scripture's silence, getting inked falls under the category of a "gray area," and believers should follow their convictions in the matter, respecting those who may have different convictions.

Here are some general biblical principles that may apply to getting a tattoo:

• Children are to honor and obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1–2). For a minor to get a tattoo in violation of his or her parents' wishes is biblically unsupportable. Tattoos born of rebellion are sinful.

"Outward adornment" is not as important as the development of the "inner self" and should not be the focus of a Christian (1 Peter 3:3–4). A person who desires a tattoo to garner attention or draw admiration has a vain, sinful focus on self.

· God sees the heart, and our motivation for



anything we do should be to glorify God (1 Corinthians 10:31). Motivations for getting a tattoo such as "to fit in," "to stand out," etc., fall short of the glory of God. The tattoo itself may not be a sin, but the motivation in getting it might be.

° Our bodies, as well as our souls, have been redeemed and belong to God. The believer's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). How much modification of that temple is appropriate? Is there a line that should not be crossed? Is there a point at which the proliferation of tattoos on one body ceases to be art and starts becoming sinful mutilation? This should be a matter of individual reflection and honest prayer.

We are Christ's ambassadors, delivering God's message to the world (2 Corinthians 5:20). What message does the tattoo send, and will it aid or detract from representing Christ and sharing the gospel?

• Whatever does not come from faith is sin (Romans 14:23), so the person getting the tattoo should be fully convinced that it is God's will for him or her.

We cannot leave the discussion of tattoos without looking at the Old Testament law that prohibited tattoos: "Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:28). The reason for the prohibition of tattoos in this passage is not stated, but it is likely that tattooing was a pagan practice connected with idolatry and superstition.

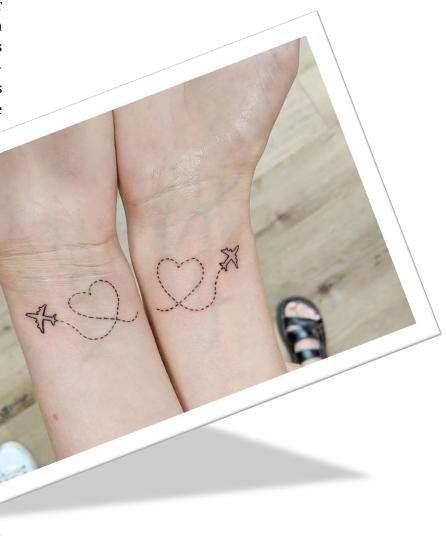
It was probably common for the pagans to mark their skin with the name of a false god or with a symbol honoring some idol. God demanded that His children be different. As He reminded them in the same verse, "I am the LORD." The Israelites belonged to Him; they were His workmanship, and they should

not bear the name of a false god

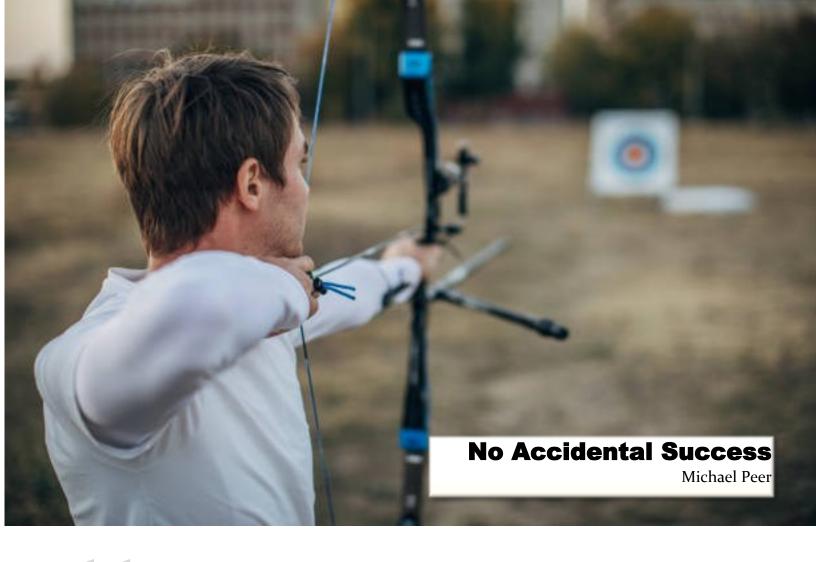
on their bodies.

While New Testament believers are not under the Mosaic Law, we can take from this command the principle that, if a Christian chooses to get a tattoo, it should never be for superstitious reasons or to promote worldly philosophy.

The bottom line is that getting a tattoo is not a sin, per se. It is a matter of Christian freedom and should be guided by biblical principles and rooted in love.







Discipline is needed to succeed outside of prison.

There is a word that is often heard around here at Transformations: Intentional. To be intentional about something is to "do it on purpose; deliberate." To succeed on the outside, you must be intentional. There are so many things and people pulling you in so many different directions, and if you're not being intentional about your relationship with Christ, your relationships with your family, in your relationships with your church, in how you relate to those inside and outside of your immediate circle of influence, then you're just not doing it right.

We are told in Matthew 6:33 that we are to "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." What are "these things?" Read in context, they are the basic things needed to survive (i.e.,

food, clothing, shelter). But even in that, we've got to be intentional. I've got to intentionally seek God in His Word daily. I've got to be intentional about seeking God in prayer constantly. I've got to be intentional in each area of my life. I cannot just sit by idly and let this gift pass me by.

This life is a gift. We were created to give God glory. Take an honest look around and you can see that every created being, except us, are doing exactly what God created them to do. And in doing so, they are glorifying their Creator. We humans, however, have rebelled. We have defied the King and said, "Nope, I'm not doing that." Brothers and sisters, it ought not to be so. It is time that we be intentional with our gift.

Succeeding on the outside is quite simple: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-39), then do whatever you want. As Paul

said, "love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:8-10). If we are intentional about loving the Lord and loving each other, then we will succeed.

I was told my first time down that if there was anything I wanted to do when I got out, that I must do it within the first 90 days. If I wanted to go back to school, then I must apply right away. If I wanted to get back to work, then I must start looking and applying as soon as I could. If I wanted to be an active member of my local church, then I had to get plugged in immediately. Waiting and doing nothing gives you just that—nothing.

However, there are some things that you shouldn't do right away, such as finding your old friends, going to those places you used to go. Yes, you want to show them how different

you are now, but we've all heard the maxim, "you go to the barber's shop long enough, and you'll eventually get a haircut." How true those words are.

If you want to succeed on the outside, then be intentional about it. May God bless you as you seek Him first.





TELLS ME THAT NO MATTER WHAT LIES AHEAD OF ME,

GOD

IS ALREADY THERE.

Don't forget to stop by our social media sites to see more of what God is doing through our ministry.







