

Week 3  
Home Page Summaries, Days 2-5

Day 2

God's Identity

Doing the Right Thing

Parents often tell their children, "Don't ask unless you're willing to hear 'No' as well as 'Yes.'" That can be a tough one, since no one likes to hear "No" for an answer. Abraham once asked God a set of questions that required him to trust that God's answer would be best because of who God is. You'll read about it in Genesis 18:25 (p. xxx).

Day 3

My Identity

Knowing Where God Is

Imagine what life would be like if God were as fleeting as a shadow. You identify where he stands and what his will is, then come back an hour later and discover what you learned no longer holds true. And on a spiritually cloudy day, he can't be found at all! James 1:17 (p. xxx) assures us that, unlike shadows, we always know where God is.

Day 4

Impact

What Makes Life Wonderful

Television, radio, and the magazine rack in the grocery checkout line offer an endless supply of opinions on how to make life wonderful. Ignored by most people is the prescription from the most trusted Person in the universe; a proven prescription that could bring trust and happiness to the whole world. Discover what it is in Psalm 19:7-11 (p. xxx).

Day 5

Implication

The Changing of the Mind

In 1 Samuel 15:29 (p. xxx) God is called "the Glory of Israel," a rare name for him in the Bible. It refers to the eternity or "everlastingness" of God. In a world of brief commitments and even shorter attention spans, our reputation as dependable and trustworthy people will be enhanced as we learn to think like him.

Week 3, Day 1  
Deuteronomy 23:14  
351 words

The Promise  
The Original Promise Keeper

Joshua 23:14 There is probably no larger collective stain on the conscience of the human race than the guilt associated with unkept promises. Parents make promises to their children and then don't follow through. Spouses make promises to end disagreements—and then don't keep them. And, of course, there are the promises that politicians make. Those are so rarely fulfilled that no one even thinks of them as promises any more.

But think what a blessed event it would be for a parent to gather his or her children around the bedside in life's waning hours, and to summarize life by saying that all promises had been kept: "Children, it is a great comfort for me to leave you knowing that not one promise that I made to you has gone unfulfilled. It was my intent to win your trust by keeping my word, and I believe I have done that." Think what it would have meant to those children growing up to have had a parent who kept every promise. What a difference it would make in the life of a child never to develop the cynicism that comes when promises are repeatedly not kept. The trust and faith that would arise would be of a purity perhaps unknown in our experience.

Most people will never have an earthly relationship in which every promise is completely fulfilled. Unfortunately, our suspicion of people makes it hard for us to trust God and his promises. But we need to listen in on the conversation Joshua had with the leaders of Israel near his death. He reminded them that they knew—not just mentally knew, but knew with all their heart and soul—that God had kept all of his promises. *All* of his promises. Knowing with your heart and soul means that you know God kept not just the letter of his promises, but the spirit of them as well. Kept them not because he had to, but because he wanted to.

God is fully trustworthy, and really, really wants you to know that you can trust him with everything—now and for eternity.

God's Promise to You: "My word spoken is my word accomplished."

Week 3, Day 2  
Genesis 18:25  
359 words

## God's Identity Doing the Right Thing

Genesis 18:25 True faith is a funny thing. On the surface, it can appear no different from true fatalism. Both the faithful and the fatalist believe that everything will “work out in the end.” True, *something* always works out in the end. But the difference between the faithful and the fatalist is two-fold: one, the faithful believes that the end result can be influenced, and two, the faithful believes that the end achieved is the end decreed (that is, that there is Someone directing the end, making all things “work together for good”).

Take the story of Abraham in Genesis 18. God was about to bring judgement upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their terrible sins. Abraham was concerned for the lives of his nephew Lot and his family who lived in Sodom—perhaps ten people in all. He asked God whether he planned to sweep away the righteous (Lot and his family) along with the wicked. Would God spare 50 righteous? “Yes” was the answer. 45? Yes. 40? 30? 20? 10? Each time Abraham shrunk the circle, God stayed in it with him, agreeing to spare as few as 10 righteous in the city. It is one of the most amazing “negotiations” between humanity and deity found in Scripture. And what was Abraham’s point of argument with God? That the Judge (or Ruler) of all the earth must do right. God apparently agreed with Abraham’s assessment. God *is* the judge of all the earth, and would do right by the ten righteous in the city.

We don’t know what would have happened to the city, and Lot’s family, if Abraham had been fatalistic instead of faithful. But because he knew God would allow him to speak, and that God’s answers are governed by his own righteous character (meaning the answer, whether Yes or No, would be the right answer), he brought his request to God.

Which are you—faithful or fatalistic? Faithfulness means that you will let your requests be made known to God, and then rest in his peace (Philippians 4:6-7) because God is the Judge of all the earth—and he always does what is right.

God’s Promise to You: “Whatever my answer, it is right.”

Week 3, Day 3  
James 1:17  
361 words

### My Identity Knowing Where God Is

James 1:17 Your back yard is a great place to learn about who you are. Here's how: Select a tall, skinny tree or pole that is not surrounded at its base by other bushes or growth (you need to be able to see its shadow clearly). Check your local weather report for the week and choose a sunny day when there will be few clouds in the sky. Starting early in the morning, go out and mark the location of the shadow of the tree, and do so every hour during the day until sundown. Given your location, and the time of the year, you should have an arch or pattern of markers indicating the steady movement of the shadow during the day.

Lesson: with God, you only need one marker. Unlike shifting shadows, James tells us, God never moves. If God was like a shadow, he would be all over the place in his dealings with you. First here, then there, then way over there. It would be impossible to predict his movement. But think of this: the movement of the shadows is actually not a problem. In fact, man learned to "tell time" first by marking the shadows as they lengthened and shortened through the course of a day. It is the *consistency* of the shadows that makes life on earth possible. (Think of how life would be if you didn't know when you would next see the sun!) The same God who built consistency into the movement of heavenly bodies is consistent with his children. Though James uses "shifting shadows" as an apt metaphor to illustrate God's stability, it is indeed God's stability that makes even the course of the sun, and the shadows it produces, dependable.

For the believer, this means there is complete security (freedom within consistent boundaries) in our relationship with God. The one who knows God and his Word is the one who is at peace. Since there are no arbitrary or capricious movements with God (just as the sun doesn't jerk from place to place in the sky), the believer is the child of a trustworthy Father. And trustworthy fathers produce secure and trusting children.

God's Promise to You: "I do not want you to wonder who or where I am."

Week 3, Day 4  
Psalm 19:7-11  
352 words

## Impact What Makes Life Wonderful

Psalm 19:7-11 “What a wonderful world it would be,” say the words of the song. While the singer concludes that this blissful condition will occur if his sweetheart returns his affections, the Bible has a different perspective. See if these conditions wouldn’t go a long way toward making the world a “wonderful” place: the emotional life of all people is restored, revived; the naïve, foolish, and morally weak become wise in all their dealings; sadness is replaced by joy in the heart; spiritual vitality is evidenced in the brightness of people’s eyes and countenance; people learn to respect and honor God; wicked acts are replaced by righteous ones; and a knowledge of the ways of God become the most valued and sought after commodity on earth. What kind of impact would these changes make on our world? What impact would they make on you personally?

These changes—whether individually or nationally—come about, Psalm 19 tells us, as a result of internalizing who God is and what God says. God is trustworthy, and he is perfect. Therefore, the impact of an individual, a nation, a world, coming to know and be like God would be to dispel from our lives the things that make us *untrustworthy*. It is our failings, our shortcomings, our sins which create disharmony in our lives and communities. If we took all that God is and all that he has said, as revealed in his laws, statutes, precepts, commands, and ordinances—in short, if we began to honor and reverence him—then his character would change our character. Please note—this is not a self-improvement program. This is doing all that his word says, which is receiving by faith the power of his life in us through the gift of his Holy Spirit. His Spirit provides the continuing motivation for our accepting his will in place of our own.

Consider the impact of learning everything possible from the most trustworthy person you know. Since God is the most trustworthy person anyone can know, the impact of his life on yours (and yours on those around you) will be wonderful indeed.

God’s Promise to You: “I remain trustworthy because of who I am and who you can become.”

Week 3, Day 5  
1 Samuel 15:29  
356 words

### Implication The Changing of the Mind

1 Samuel 15:29 A story appeared in the sports sections of all the major news services about a college basketball coach who couldn't decide which job offer to take. Over the course of three days, he switched four times between three schools, citing personal and family matters that were fueling the changes of his mind. He initially ended up accepting an offer he had originally rejected, thankful that the school would give him a second chance.

The net result of this story would have merited only a small column on the interior of the sports section: "Coach resigns position at school A and accepts position at school C." Nice to know, but not groundbreaking news. It was the *way* the coach got to school C (A to C to B to A to C) that put it on the front page. It was the changing of his mind that made the story newsworthy (and his new employer a bit nervous. Is this how he runs a basketball team?)

Why does it make us nervous when people change their minds for less than obvious or understandable reasons? Because their decisions then appear to be on the basis of a whim, an impulse, a feeling, or a mood. And we don't like people making decisions that way—especially when the decisions affect us. We like people who speak the way Christ said we should all speak: Just say "Yes" or "No" (Matthew 5:37); and then stick with what you say. No less a spiritual authority than the prophet-priest Samuel used "man" as an example of what God is not like when it comes to being dependable and trustworthy. When announcing to Saul that God was taking the kingship of Israel away from him, he warned him not to think that God would change his mind: ". . . he is not a man, that he should change his mind."

Why did Samuel position man as the opposite of God? Because in our natural state, we are. But by God's grace and with his help, we can become as trustworthy and as dependable as he is (if we don't change our mind).

God's Promise to You: "My mind has been the same forever; it never changes."