

Week 4  
Home Page Summaries, Days 2-5

Day 2

God's Identity

The Founding Father

Constitutions are studied primarily to discover the principles and ordinances by which nations are governed. They should also be studied for another purpose: To discover the heart and soul of the governor(s). When God delivered Israel's "constitution" to her he revealed something about himself. You'll read about it in Deuteronomy 9:10 (p. xxx).

Day 3

My Identity

Who Are You?

Modern man searches for an anchor by which to ride out the storms of our time; a cord by which to tether himself to something solid and immovable. These efforts at self-preservation and identity-seeking are noble, but ill-founded. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1:23-25 (p. xxx) that only one thing is enduring enough to anchor the identity of man.

Day 4

Impact

Words That Vibrate the Heart

Some people take great pride in their vocabulary, others in their powers of debate and oratory, and still others in the quickness and sharpness of their tongue. Yet no human words can compare with the word of God—whether written or spoken. Hebrews 4:12 (p. xxx) reveals the supernatural power of Scripture to reveal and renew the heart.

Day 5

Implication

Promises, Promises

How do you feel about promises that are made to you? Do you *really* believe they will be kept? Our jaded perspective tends to color our view of God's promises. Peter tells us why God's promises have been given, and shows that many have already been fulfilled (2 Peter 1:4; p. xxx). The word of God is the source of God's promises to us.

Week 4, Day 1  
2 Timothy 3:16-17  
356 words

The Promise  
The Founder's Vision

2 Timothy 3:16-17 When Ron was offered a job with the privately-held consulting firm, it was after months of applications and interviews. He couldn't wait to discover what it was that kept his new employer so focused—and successful.

“Ron,” his new boss began, “because we're a privately-held company, we don't have to answer to stockholders for how we do business. We only have to answer to ourselves. However, that actually is more difficult since historically we have maintained some pretty high standards.” Later in their meeting, Ron's boss gave him two manuals. One, the smaller of the two, was like a book—permanently bound. The other larger manual was in a loose-leaf notebook with tabbed dividers. “Here's how we stay on track, Ron. The smaller book I've given you is affectionately referred to around here as ‘the bible.’ Our founder wrote it. It contains the history of the company, his vision for our market and products, and the values and principles by which we operate. It's really the heart of the company, the first thing you need to read and absorb—and reread continually. The other manual, as you can tell, is changeable. You'll constantly get updates and revisions because it covers the strategies we're developing on all of our current long-term projects.

“Here's how I like to differentiate between the two books,” he continued, smiling. “If you get assigned to work on a desert island, and you are allowed to take only one book, take the smaller one—‘the bible.’ It contains the values and principles from which you can rebuild the other manual. Our philosophy is that we become equipped to develop strategies for our customers only as we perpetuate our core values and vision. Keep ‘the bible’ with you and you'll remain qualified to do what we do.”

Sound familiar? It's because the company's “bible” plays the same role as the real Bible plays in our faith. The Word of God teaches us, rebukes us, corrects us, and trains us in righteousness, thoroughly equipping us for every good work. So to prepare for being marooned on life's desert islands, keep the Founder's Book at hand.

God's Promise to You: “If you will internalize the Bible, you will manifest my heart.”

Week 4, Day 2  
Deuteronomy 9:10  
354 words

## God's Identity The Founding Father

Deuteronomy 9:10 What do *The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)*, *The Constitution of the People of Hungary*, *The 1619 English Bill of Rights*, *The 1977 Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*, and *The Constitution of the United States of America* all have in common? They represent the will of the founders or current governors of the nations they represent. The purpose of constitutions is to set forth the will of the “founding fathers” about how a nation or people should live.

If you read any constitutional document carefully, you will learn about the identity of the founders. For what founder or founders would compose a document—often stained with the blood, sweat, and tears of a nation’s birth—that did not represent its hard-won and passionate beliefs? Reading a constitution is like reading a character sketch of the author(s). So it was with the “constitution” which God delivered to his newly-born nation from atop Mt. Sinai. Perhaps no nation was in more desperate need of guidance and structure than Israel was. They had been the puppets of pagan pharaohs for four hundred years. Their founder Abraham had bequeathed no constitution to them, and their slavery had afforded no opportunity to become organized and “constitutional” about life. Following their release from slavery their earthly leader, Moses, found himself at the head of a rag-tag, sand-lot nation—*sans* constitution.

Fortunately, the heavenly founder of Israel was prepared. God delivered to Moses two stone tablets with the initial set of guidelines by which the infant nation would grow and live. These laws—known to us as The Ten Commandments—became the initial constitution for Israel. And through the giving of this decalogue, Israel was able to catch a glimpse of its God. He was holy—completely set apart—from the pantheon of gods of the Egyptians. His identity, reflected in his laws, became the mirror in which the Israelites were to find their own identity as a people.

As a New Testament believer, don’t fail to study the Ten Commandments. They are the starting point for getting to know the character of our God.

God’s Promise to You: “You will find my character in the character of my Word.”

Week 4, Day 3

1 Peter 1:23-25

360 words

My Identity

Who Are You?

1 Peter 1:23-25 In *Les Misérables*, the French novelist Victor Hugo posed the questions, “Alas, who are we ourselves? Who am I and who are you? Whence do we come . . . ?” And, we might add, “to what do we go?” The questions of identity occupy the thoughts of every human being. They arise in no small part because of the seeming futility and impermanence of much of life.

But the Apostle Peter leads us to the one permanent, unchanging element of life, and shows how it becomes the anchor of our identity. In 1 Peter 1:24-25 he quotes Isaiah who affirms the transitoriness of man and his glory. Man is like grass and the flowers of the field; here for a season, then gone and forgotten. Grass loses its vitality, turns brown, and withers away. The flowers are resplendent only for a moment and then droop and die. Is that all there is? “Who am I and who are you?”

Not everything is as fleeting as the glory of man. The Word of God is the Rock of Gibraltar of life that is there for every generation to cling to. But even the Gibaltars and Everests of earth will one day crumble before the plan of God. But the Word of our God, Peter says, is *forever*. And, Peter says in verse 23, it is by the Word of God that man answers the great identity questions. For through the Word of God men and women are born again—changed from a mist blown by the wind to a marvelous creation borne by the wind of the Spirit. Peter says the Word of God is an imperishable seed, not a perishable one like those giving rise to grass and flowers. What the Word of God bears last forever!

So “Who am I and who are you?” If we are those “born again . . . through the living and enduring word of God” then we are those whose glory will last forever. It is true: grass withers and flowers fade. But those who are born again by the imperishable word of God will themselves never perish but have everlasting life.

God’s Promise to You: “In my truth you will have identity forever.”

Week 4, Day 4

Hebrews 4:12

363 words

Impact

Words That Vibrate the Heart

Hebrews 4:12 Watch a group of young children at play and it won't be long before you hear one try to alter the lifestyle of another by the power of words: "If you don't give me a cookie, then you're a purple toad frog!" Or, watch a group of adults at play (or war) and you'll see the same thing: "You're dead meat, my friend!" While it's likely that neither children nor adults really expect anything to happen when they express their hopes and wishes verbally, it reveals something deeper—we sense that words are supposed to have power, even if ours have only a little bit.

For instance, we can't turn people into purple toad frogs or dead meat, but we can change the expression on their faces. And we can even prompt behavioral changes. For instance, Proverbs says that reckless words can pierce and wise words can heal (12:19), and that gentle words can calm and harsh words can provoke (15:1). But again, it's not airwaves and vibrating eardrums that cause these changes. It is the personality of one person intersecting with the personality of another via the medium of words. That's about as close as we can come to our words having power.

But God's words are different (because God is different). When he spoke, non-existent things came into being (light, seas, animals; see Genesis 1). And God's Son, while on earth, spoke to inanimate objects like hands and eyes and literally changed their molecular makeup (he healed them). All with a word. God's words have unbelievable power, and they don't lose power when they're committed to paper. Hebrews tells us that God's words in Scripture have the ability to penetrate the deepest part of our person and reveal what is there. God's words vibrate more than the inner ear; they vibrate our whole heart, causing us to hear his voice in the inner man.

If you want to make progress toward spiritual maturity, let the Spirit of God use the word of God in your heart. But be prepared—not only is the word living and active, it's sharper than a sword! But what it cuts, it also heals.

God's Promise to You: "My word is the scalpel that renews and restores the human heart."

Week 4, Day 5

2 Peter 1:4

355 words

Implication

Promises, Promises

2 Peter 1:4 Some view promises like the White Queen in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*: "The rule is, jam tomorrow and jam yesterday—but never jam today." That is, promises are for the purpose of living on hope rather than fulfillment. The modern cynic would agree with the Austrian novelist Hermann Broch: "What's important is promising something to the people, not actually keeping those promises . . . The people have always lived on hope alone" (*The Spell*).

Those perspectives on promises should cause the Christian to shudder, for that is not God's perspective at all. God does not promise to titillate or to tempt; He promises to deliver! He has delivered much already, and by that we know that he will deliver more in the future. With God, it is not the promise, but that which is promised and received, that brings him joy. For instance, Peter tells us that God has given us great and precious promises which have two powerful implications for our lives. First, we participate in the divine nature of God himself. Second, we escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Did God promise that we would become "gods?" That we would be untouched by sin in the world? Not at all. But he did promise that we would share in his life; that we would receive his Spirit (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:16-21;38) and receive his law written upon our very hearts and minds (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:7-13). Jesus himself promised that he would remain with us by sending the Spirit who would live in us (John 14:16-17). All of those promises have been fulfilled by God. His Spirit has come and empowers us to live godly lives, resisting the temptations of this world. It is the fulfillment of these great and precious promises that give us absolute certainty of the promises yet to be fulfilled.

Don't fall victim to the pie-in-the-sky view of promises. God's word is as good as done the moment it is spoken or written. The only thing separating you from the realization of the last divine promise is God's timetable—not his truthfulness.

God's Promise to You: "I make promises to give you hope; I fulfill them to give you joy."