**Americas Promise Ministries Newsletter**
PO Box 157
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**November/December 2026**

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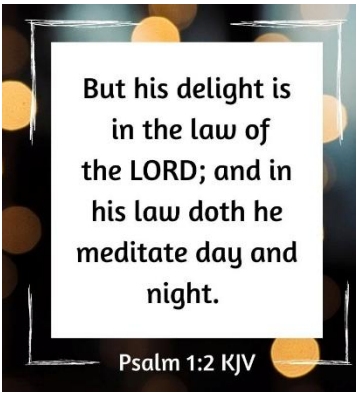
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# America's Promise Ministries Newsletter

**November/December 2026**
Pastor: Kevyn Reid
Founder: Pastor Sheldon Emry Previous Pastor: Dave Barley




## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK:

### Fear Not, Little Flock

In our previous newsletter, I wrote about the importance of proving all things and allowing the Word of God to be the final authority in everything we believe and teach. We discussed the necessity of examining doctrine, questioning assumptions, and following the example of the Bereans, who searched the Scriptures daily to determine whether the things they had been taught were so. That remains an important part of our work here at America's Promise Ministries, and it is something we will continue to emphasize. But over the past several weeks, our Sunday messages have taken us in another direction, one that I believe is just as important for the people of God. We have been talking about hope.

Not the sort of hope that comes from pretending everything is going well. Not the sort of optimism that requires us to ignore the condition of our nation, the troubles facing our families, or the difficulties confronting our people. Rather, we have been considering the hope that comes from understanding who our God is, what He has Promised, and what He still intends to accomplish through His Covenant People. And I believe this is a message that many of us need to hear.

You see, there is a danger in spending so much time examining everything that is wrong with the world that we begin to lose sight of everything that is right with the Promises of God. We can study judgment, apostasy, corruption, national disobedience, and the failures of our people until we become thoroughly acquainted with everything that threatens us. We

can become very good at explaining how we arrived at our present circumstances, identifying the enemies of righteousness, and warning others about the troubles that lie ahead. There is certainly a place for that work. The Scriptures themselves contain warnings, judgments, and admonitions that we would be foolish to disregard. But if all our study produces is fear, discouragement, bitterness, or a sense of helplessness, then I believe we have neglected something tremendously important.

The God who warned Israel of judgment is the same God who Promised Israel restoration. The God who corrected His People is the same God who remembered His Covenant. And the God who called His People into service has not abandoned the purposes for which He called them. That is where our hope belongs.

**Romans 15:4**
***For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.***

Notice those words: ***patience, comfort,*** and ***hope.*** Those are among the things that our study of Scripture ought to produce. We are not only collecting information about Biblical history or prophecy, but we are also learning about the faithfulness of our God, and that knowledge ought to strengthen us for the responsibilities He has placed before us.

Over the past three Sundays, we have considered this from several different perspectives. We began with Christ's remarkable assurance to the little flock.

**Luke 12:32**
***Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.***

I want you to consider those words carefully. Christ did not tell His disciples that they needed to become an enormous organization before they could accomplish anything worthwhile. He did not tell them that their significance

depended upon their numbers, their wealth, their influence, or their ability to impress the world. He called them a little flock, and then He told them not to fear. That is a remarkable assurance, particularly for those of us who understand the Kingdom message and recognize the tremendous responsibilities that accompany our identity as God's Covenant People.

Sometimes we look at the great Promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants. We consider the restoration of national Israel, the establishment and advancement of God's Kingdom, and the great work of proclaiming the Gospel of that Kingdom throughout the earth. And then we look around at our little congregations, our scattered brethren, and the relatively small number of people who understand these things. We might reasonably ask, ***"How are we supposed to accomplish something so great when there seem to be so few of us?"*** But that question assumes that the success of God's purposes depends upon our ability to make ourselves impressive. It does not.

Throughout Scripture, God has repeatedly accomplished extraordinary things through a comparatively small number of faithful people. The remnant, the first fruits, and the little flock all remind us that God has a purpose for those who have been set apart for His service. The first fruits are not the entire harvest, but they belong to the harvest. They are a portion dedicated to God, and their significance is found in the purpose for which they have been set apart. So, it is with the little flock. We are not called merely to possess knowledge that others do not possess. We are called to do something with that knowledge. We are called to preserve the truth, teach our children, encourage our brethren, proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom, and demonstrate through our conduct what it means to live under the authority of our King. Remember your life may be the only Bible some people read! **Being few in number does not make our calling insignificant.**

And that brings me to something else we have been

discussing. In our second message, we considered the picture of a knight and his armor. I have always appreciated the old ideals associated with knighthood: courage, loyalty, honor, restraint, and service. There is something appealing about the image of a man who possesses strength but understands that his strength carries responsibility. Of course, the Scriptures, rather than the romantic stories of knights, establish our standards of righteousness. But I believe the illustration helps us understand something important about our Christian lives. We can know a great deal about righteousness without always practicing it.

We can explain the Commandments, discuss the Covenants, understand the identity of Israel, and speak confidently about the Kingdom of God. But eventually Sunday comes to an end, and Monday morning arrives. We return to our jobs, our families, our responsibilities, and the ordinary difficulties of life. And that is where the things we profess to believe must become the things we actually practice.

**Proverbs 16:32**
***He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.***

Think about that. The world celebrates great conquerors and military victories, but Solomon tells us that a man who can govern his own spirit has accomplished something greater than taking a city. Sometimes our greatest victories are not particularly impressive to anyone watching. Sometimes the victory is holding our tongue when we would rather speak harshly. Sometimes it is forgiving someone who has wronged us. Sometimes it is showing patience when we are exhausted, or demonstrating kindness when we have every reason to be frustrated. Sometimes it is simply getting up in the morning and trying again after a day in which we did not live up to the standards we profess.

And that brings us to one of the most encouraging Promises in all of Scripture.

**Isaiah 49:15–16**

***Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.***

Here, Israel had begun to believe that God had forgotten her. The circumstances of the nation were discouraging. The Promises seemed distant. The people had experienced judgment, correction, and captivity. And from their limited perspective, it appeared that perhaps the God who had made those Promises was no longer concerned with them. But God's answer was unmistakable: ***"Yet will I not forget thee."*** What a wonderful assurance that is for His Covenant People!

God had not forgotten Israel. He had not forgotten the Promises made to the fathers. He had not abandoned His purposes simply because His People had failed to remain faithful. Now, that does not mean that disobedience has no consequences. We know better than that. The Scriptures repeatedly demonstrate that God's People are accountable to Him and that national disobedience brings correction. But correction is not the same thing as abandonment. And there is something especially beautiful about the contrast we find in the Promises of the New Covenant.

**Jeremiah 31:34**

***And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.***

Consider that for a moment. God has not forgotten His People, but He Promises to remember their forgiven sins no more. He remembers His Covenant. He remembers His Promises. He remembers the People He has called His own. Yet He also promises mercy, forgiveness, and restoration. That ought to give every one of us a reason to continue.

Perhaps you have made mistakes. Perhaps you have said things you wish you had never said, neglected responsibilities you should have fulfilled, or treated someone less kindly than you ought to have treated them. Perhaps you have carried the memory of those failures for so long that you have begun to believe they permanently disqualify you from doing anything worthwhile. But God's Word does not teach us to spend the remainder of our lives beneath the weight of yesterday's failures. We ought to repent where repentance is necessary. We ought to make things right wherever we can. We ought to learn from our mistakes and seek to become better servants of our King. And then we ought to continue.

That was the point of our illustration concerning the knight and his armor. The purpose of the armor was never to convince the world that the man wearing it was perfect. The purpose was to prepare him for service. Sometimes that armor becomes scratched. Sometimes it becomes dirty. Sometimes the man wearing it becomes weary, discouraged, or wounded. But when the day is finished, he cleans the armor. He repairs what he can. He rests. And when morning comes, he puts it back on. Not because yesterday was easy. Not because tomorrow will necessarily be easier. But because he remembers the King whom he serves. And our King has not forgotten us.

That brings us to our most recent message, in which we considered the account of Gideon. Most of us remember Gideon because of his extraordinary victory over the Midianites with an army of only three hundred men. But before there was an army, before there was a victory, and before Gideon became the man we remember from the Scriptures, there was a rather ordinary man trying to preserve a little wheat from Israel's enemies. His nation was in trouble. His people were suffering. And when the angel of the LORD appeared to him, Gideon had some very serious questions.

**Judges 6:13**
***And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be***

***with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.***

Have you ever wondered something similar? Perhaps you have looked at the condition of our nation, the difficulties confronting your family, or the struggles within your own life and wondered how these circumstances can be reconciled with the Promises of God. Gideon knew the history of Israel. He knew about the deliverance from Egypt. He knew about the mighty works of God. But he also knew what was happening around him. And when God called him to deliver Israel, Gideon's response was to explain why he was hardly the man for the assignment. He was not particularly powerful. His family was poor. He considered himself the least in his father's house. But God's answer was wonderfully simple.

**Judges 6:16**
***And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.***

God did not begin by explaining to Gideon how impressive he was. He directed Gideon's attention to the One who would be with him. And that, dear believers, is something I want every one of you to remember. You may feel small. You may feel inadequate. You may look at the responsibilities before you and wonder whether your efforts could possibly make any meaningful difference. Perhaps you have spent years trying to teach someone who refuses to listen. Perhaps you have supported this ministry, shared our newsletters, distributed sermons, or attempted to explain the Scriptures to family members who seem entirely uninterested. Perhaps you have begun wondering whether any of it matters.

But we cannot always measure the value of our labor by the results immediately visible to us. The child you teach today may remember those lessons many years from now. The person you encourage may never tell you how much your

words meant to them. The Scriptures you share may be read and understood long after you have forgotten the conversation in which you shared them. And the work you do faithfully, however small it may appear, is not necessarily insignificant simply because you cannot see the entire result.

**1 Corinthians 15:58**

***Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.***

There is our encouragement. Our labor in the Lord is not in vain. We do not need to become the saviors of the world. We already have a Savior. Our responsibility is to serve Him faithfully with the opportunities, abilities, and understanding He has given us. And that service begins with the things immediately before us.

Teach your children. Encourage your brethren. Study the Scriptures. Help someone who is struggling. Be faithful in your marriage, your household, your employment, and your community. Demonstrate patience, mercy, honesty, and restraint. If you have neglected something that ought to be done, begin putting it right. If someone needs your help, offer what you can. If you have become weary, take the rest you need and then continue. Do not spend so much time worrying about everything you cannot accomplish that you neglect the things God has already placed within your reach.

We are presently living in the Kingdom, and we have a responsibility to advance the work of that Kingdom here upon the earth. We are not merely waiting for some distant event to give our lives meaning. We are called to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom, strengthen our families, preserve the truth, and prepare another generation to understand the Covenant Promises of God. There is work to be done today.

I believe that is where the themes of our last several messages come together. In our previous newsletter, we emphasized the necessity of knowing the truth. We

encouraged you to search the Scriptures and establish your faith upon the Word of God rather than the traditions or opinions of men. Now I want to encourage you to take the next step. **Let the truth you have learned become the hope by which you live. And let that hope become the faithfulness with which you serve.**

We should not merely become people who can explain the Kingdom. We should become people whose lives demonstrate the responsibilities of that Kingdom. We should not merely know that God has made Promises to Israel. We should be strengthened by those Promises. And we should not merely recognize that we belong to a little flock. We should understand that the little flock has a great calling, and that the greatness of our calling rests upon the greatness of the God who has called us.

As we approach the Thanksgiving season, I believe we have much for which to be grateful. We have the Scriptures. We have the Promises of God. We have the fellowship of our brethren, even when many miles separate us. We have opportunities to serve, people to encourage, and a Gospel to proclaim. Above all, we have a King whose faithfulness has not failed.

I want to thank each of you across this nation who continue to walk with America's Promise Ministries. Your prayers, letters, encouragement, financial contributions, and continued fellowship mean more than you may realize. Some of you have supported this work for many years. Others have only recently joined us. Some are able to participate in our weekly services, while others receive these newsletters and study them quietly at home. Wherever you may be, I want you to know that your fellowship is valued and your faithfulness is appreciated.

We continue to pray for you and your families, for your health and well-being, for your strength in difficult times, and for the peace and encouragement that come from knowing the Promises of God. We pray also for our nation, that our People

might return to the commandments of the Holy One of Israel, recognize their responsibilities under His Covenant, and once again seek righteousness rather than the ways of this present world.

There is much yet to learn, and there is much work yet to accomplish. We will continue examining the Scriptures together, testing what we have been taught, correcting error where we find it, and growing in our understanding of the Kingdom and the purposes of God. But let us do that work with hope. Let us not become so consumed with the darkness of this age that we forget the light of God's Promises. Let us not become so discouraged by the smallness of our numbers that we forget the greatness of our calling. And let us not become so burdened by yesterday's failures that we neglect tomorrow's opportunities.

**Galatians 6:9**
***And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.***

So, my dear brothers and sisters, take courage. If you are weary, rest. If you have stumbled, get back up. If you have made mistakes, learn from them. If your strength seems insufficient, remember Gideon and the God who promised to be with him. And if you find yourself wondering whether your efforts matter, remember the little flock and the great purposes of the Father.

Our King has not forgotten His People. His Covenant has not failed. His Promises have not been abandoned. And our work is not finished. ***Fear not, little flock.*** There is still a Kingdom Gospel to proclaim, a people to encourage, a nation to pray for, and a generation to teach. So, when morning comes, put the armor back on. We have a King to serve. May God bless and keep each of you, and may He strengthen us together in the knowledge, hope, and service of His Kingdom.

**In Christ's Service,**
*Pastor Kevyn Reid*

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## From Trust and Obey to Daily Meditation

By Dave Fox

In the last newsletter I wrote about my journey of learning to trust the Lord and obey Him, not to earn salvation, but to express my gratitude and love for God. Jesus said, ***"If ye love me, keep my commandments"*** (**John 14:15**). Daily Scriptural reading has shown that one of the commands that keeps appearing is the call to meditate on His Word.

***"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."*** **Joshua 1:8**

In my lifetime, I have studied and practiced different forms of meditation, and some of them are quite inspiring, but they did not ever seem to fit what the Bible was telling me to do. So, the natural question for me became: ***"Lord, how do I actually meditate on Your Word every day?"***

For years I had been praying for discernment and for a deeper understanding of Scripture. I wanted to know Him better. I wanted to be able to give a reason for the hope that is in me (**1 Peter 3:15**). I wanted to be bold about the fact that He is the Alpha and the Omega, that He declared the end from the beginning, and that His Promises are sure, and I knew that meditation on Scripture would help me get there. I just did not yet know what daily meditation was supposed to look like in ordinary life.

***"Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day."*** **Psalm 119:97**

For instance, while working on my psychology degree I took an Eastern Psychology class that turned out to be very enlightening, to say the least. We studied different forms of meditation, including Zen. The practice required focusing only on the breath and, in some cases, repeating sutras. However, I could not say the sutras because they denied the existence

of God. When I told the professor I could not say those sutras, he said the point of the practice of this form of meditation was simply to clear the mind of all distractions and focus on what matters most. I was grateful when he told me that I could say whatever prayer I wanted without losing points off my grade.

So, I used the time to thank the Lord for every breath He gave me and to ask Him to teach me His Word, to grow my faith, and to help me understand Him better. Looking back, that prayer was the beginning of the path that eventually brought me here. The meditation practice, however, was not the direction I needed, because Zen meditation focuses on emptying the self of all thoughts and emotions, not filling the self with scriptural learning.

***"My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night."*** **Psalm 63:5-6**

Years later, while I was still married, my wife and I attended a Foursquare church. We took part in a couple's Bible study led mainly by the pastor's wife. She practiced a form of meditation called Lectio Divina: we would pray together, then she would read a short passage she had chosen (usually from Galatians, Ephesians, sometimes a Psalm, or a few verses of Proverbs), then we were supposed to sit quietly for several minutes and focus on whatever word or phrase stood out to each of us individually. After the silence, we were then supposed to share, in as few words as possible, what we focused upon with the group. Some people focused on a single word, like ***"light"*** or ***"angel,"*** and they would say how that makes them feel about Jesus's love for us.

I always wanted to focus on what the whole verse meant or what the passage was actually saying, and I tried to encapsulate that in a simple phrase. The time was sincere and centered on how wonderful Jesus was, yet we never talked about the Covenants, the birthright, or the larger story that ties the whole Bible together. I found the problem with the Lectio

Divina form of meditation is that it seemed to bend the Word of God to what we wanted to get out of it, not to teach us the whole story of God's Will for His creation. Using the Lectio Divina left me feeling I was still missing something. I knew Jesus is the same ***"I AM"*** who spoke to Moses, but I did not yet understand the connections that run from **Genesis** to **Revelation** as I have come to know them now.

***"I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways."*** **Psalm 119:15**

Coming to Sandpoint and sitting under teaching that takes the Covenants seriously changed everything. I began to see the Covenants promised to Adam and Noah; the Abrahamic Covenant that passed to Isaac, then to Jacob—with the birthright going to Joseph's sons (especially Ephraim) and the sceptre given to the line of Judah; the Mosaic Covenant; the Davidic Covenant; and the New Covenant from Jesus as both the Son of David and High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Suddenly the whole of Scripture became the story of my People, and the Laws and Promises given to them. The understanding of the kinsman-redeemer was revealed, along with the responsibility to carry the Gospel of Jesus to the world. That understanding is what made real daily meditation possible.

***"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night."*** **Psalm 1:1-2**

You may be surprised to know that, for most of each week, Pastor Reid and I work the day shift together at a local restaurant—he is the lead server, and I am the other main server. His wife, Maggie, works the evening shift there as baker, and their eldest son works Saturdays as a dishwasher. The work is simply food service, but it has become a daily opportunity. Every day shift turns into living meditation. Pastor Reid talks openly with servers and customers alike about the Covenants, prophecy, and the coming Kingdom.

Conversations with coworkers often start with football, music, movies, or video games, and then turn naturally to what we believe, especially when people ask us about what we will and will not eat. Maggie often stops in during the day and joins the conversation with points of Scripture. People notice. Coworkers and customers come up to him—and later to me, often when I am alone—with more questions. Pastor Reid will often point to me and ask, ***"Dave, which Covenant is that under?"*** or ***"What is that parable?"*** or ***"Where is that in Scripture?"*** Not that he does not know, but he does this partly, I think, to keep me sharp.

***"Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another."***
**Proverbs 27:17**

When the person asking questions already believes the Bible is the unerring Word of truth and that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (**John 14:6**), we do not argue secondary issues. We simply talk about what the Bible says. If someone begins to present another gospel, then that is when the conversation has to be clear (**Galatians 1:8-9**). But most of the time people are simply curious, and we are happy to tell them about the hope we have.

These conversations have provided me with ample opportunity to talk openly about Jesus with fellow servers, cooks, and customers alike. One coworker who is struggling right now has allowed me to have some very real one-on-one talks with him about how much Jesus loves us and how faithful God is to keep His Promises. I have prayed with and prayed over fellow servers and the occasional customer, and it has been wonderful.

***"But whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."*** **Matthew 20:26-28**

On the one day a week Pastor Reid is not there, the questions

still come. On my day off, we have Thursday morning breakfast with Martha and the church group. We usually start off talking about current events, but it always leads to ***"What does Scripture say about this?"*** Then, of course, there are Sunday mornings here at church. So, in a nutshell, I get to fellowship with a whole community of people who have a deep understanding of the Bible, while also sharing my faith with so many others who are longing for the same deep understanding.

Alongside the daily conversations, I still read the Word (one **Proverb** a day, and I am currently in **Ezekiel**), now with the understanding that Scripture interprets itself and the Covenants hold the story together. My evenings are spent studying the works of other believers—from our church and from elsewhere—to understand what they have learned from Scripture.

I also follow several contemporary pastors on social media to see how their views differ from what we teach here. This helps me better understand what Scripture is actually saying so that my position is clearly articulated. This is how I meditate on His Law every day, by being immersed in organic opportunities to learn and share. Pastor Reid, Maggie, Martha, and this whole church family make sure of it, and I am incredibly grateful for each of them.

***"My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promise."*** **Psalm 119:148**

The Lord answered the prayer I prayed for years. My hope and prayer for each of you is that He provides you with similar opportunities. What I have learned is that meditating on His Word is not something I have to manufacture or work at. It is not about emptying myself or about bending His Word to my wants. It is about being filled with the teachings of His Law and His Covenants. For me, it happens naturally—at work, in conversation, in community—every single day. I get to talk about the hope I have in Him with people who ask, and it is awesome.

***"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*** **2 Timothy 2:15**

If you have read this far, I thank you, and I welcome any correspondence at: David.Fox.AmericasPromise@proton.me

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## The Art and Science of the Level Grind

**By Margaret Reid**

A lot has been changing around here. Especially for me. In the last 18 months or so, I went from being a stay-at-home mom, homeschooling my kids, cooking nearly everything from scratch, and maintaining the home, to working nearly full time while still attempting to homeschool and cook from scratch, to going to school full time, putting my kids in public school, and working part time and being offered another position to begin in November. Now I am in the full swing of the season of the level grind.

How did I get here, and what is a level grind?!

Obedience and a love of tedium.

Toward the end of spring this year, my mind began to wander, as it often does, to my many ambitions in life. One of which is to be wealthy. I am sure some of you might have an aversion to that, but I am a generous individual, and in order to be generous on a level that matches my heart, I need more liquid assets. But I digress…

My mind began to wander, and I began thinking of the myriad ways I could pursue a career or type of work that would allow me more financial freedom. And I thought, as I have many, many, many times before, I should go back to school. This time, however, I actually felt led to look into it. I served. I should still have the GI Bill. Surely school would be paid for. So down the rabbit hole I went.

I was very promptly rejected. The time had come and gone; I no longer had access to those benefits.

***"Sorry, best of luck."***

Hang on a minute. Is there anything else that could help?

There is a program for veterans: VR&E, Veteran Readiness and Employment. Its got some red tape and a few hoops to jump through, but I likely qualified.

So, jump I did.

The odd thing here was, the usual anxiety and dread I experienced with such tasks was nonexistent. The drive to pursue this was strong, and had that certain Peace about it. I knew this was from the Lord. It felt like my idea, but it was certainly behaving in that blessed manner akin to *Felix Felicis [Latin for fortunate success]*.

The hoops got further apart, and the clock to the first day of classes came and went. Still, I was not approved. However, I knew this was what the Lord had for me, so I went to my classes, and I completed my assignments, and the deadline to withdraw without financial penalty came and went. Three weeks went by, and finally, I had the meeting. I signed the contracts, and my schooling was paid for.

***Praise God!***

Now that the easy part is over, we take a bathroom break, grab some snacks, and buckle up. It is grinding time.

**Galatians 6:9**
***"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."***

For those of you who do not know, level grinding is a term gamers use when they need to increase the stats of their character by defeating enemies. Over and over and over again. Each battle you win earns points and helps to strengthen the character(s), enabling him, her, or it to defeat stronger bosses and earn sweet accolades.

This is where I am now. To say life is busy is an understatement. I am in the season of the grind, and not the

soul-sucking kind: the *"every enemy I conquer is one more victory toward the end game"* kind.

I am in school for accounting, honestly something I never would have chosen for myself. I am certain that is what the Lord wants me to study, and let me tell you, if I was the one choosing, I would have already changed my major! It is new, and difficult, and a struggle. And that is just one class!

I have math, which I have already exhausted the extent of my competence in, and I am beginning math I do not understand fully. I have communications, which I am good at and enjoy, as well as history, but they are still work. I am taking a full course load, and that is time-consuming, to say the least. Mentally demanding to say the most!

On top of my weekly workout schedule, on top of feeding a family of 9, on top of the household demands and budgets, and part-time work, and the prospect of another part-time job I have been offered, and winter prep, and animals, and life!

**Hebrews 12:11**
***"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness…"***

So why bother? What is all this level grinding for?

It is for the life I have been called to.

In July, we lost a member of the church. He was an incredible man and left a hole in our congregation. He lived an amazing life and was a bright light for the Lord. After his death, I had the distinct impression that though he lived into his 80s, it all went by so quickly. It was as if the Lord was telling me, very clearly, *"This is where you must slow down."*

I have always lived in the fast lane. I talk fast, I walk fast, I drive fast, I work fast. I always wanted to go faster, faster, faster. My friend Sam even told me my Hashimoto's was a disease of not slowing down.

So, the grind is to achieve the life more abundantly God has

called us to. It is to work hard now to reach a point in my life where I live more deliberately.

**John 10:10**
***"…I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."***

I am an incredibly ambitious individual. I want to learn to play the piano, learn Japanese, run Race the Wolf, do Spartan races, hit 21% body fat, learn calisthenics so I can do pistol squats. I want to earn enough money to be ridiculously generous with it. Go to the city utilities and pay people's past-due balances. Buy a month's worth of groceries for someone, get new shoes for kids in need, send a stressed-out mom to a spa, buy a vehicle for someone in need… Ridiculous things.

That is not to say I am waiting. I already do what I can with what I have. Often, the Lord has me do smaller-scale things when I barely have the money to cover it. And I LOVE to do it! I have taught my kids to do so, and they love it. To me, that is another level of serving God: being obedient when you cannot see a way how.

I hope my kids see me now, pursuing a life more abundantly, to live inside these wide, wide parameters He has given us. Every victory in these small battles, I praise God, and every defeat, I praise God. This season of life is one I have waited for a very, very long time. As this year comes to an end, I am just ramping up this season. Faster, harder, louder. A season of endurance, patience, preparation, and honing.

**James 1:3–4**
***"Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work…"***

If you're going to run the race, run it to win it!

**1 Corinthians 9:24**
***"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain."***

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# What if Salvation is Much Bigger than Simply Being Forgiven?

Author unknown

For many Christians, the entire Gospel has been reduced to a legal problem. You sinned. God is angry. Jesus paid the penalty. Now God can forgive you. There are truths contained in that language, but the Biblical understanding of salvation goes much further. Christ did not come merely to change God's opinion about you. He came to change you. To heal what sin has damaged. To restore what death has corrupted. To unite humanity to God. To make us participants in divine life by grace and suddenly Christianity becomes much more demanding.

Because if salvation is merely a legal declaration, I can spend the rest of my life asking one question:

***"Am I forgiven?"***

But if salvation is healing and union with Christ, another question appears: ***"Am I becoming like Him?"***

That question is harder. Am I more merciful than I was five years ago? Do I forgive more quickly? Do I judge people less? Is anger losing its grip on me? Am I becoming more patient? More prayerful? More capable of loving someone who cannot give me anything in return? Or have I simply accumulated Christian information?

***"Am I actively working to follow His Commandments and share the Gospel with others or just educating myself?"***

Because it is possible to know theology without becoming holy. It is possible to defend Christianity while remaining proud. It is possible to quote the Fathers while refusing to forgive your brother. It is possible to receive Communion while holding onto hatred. Knowledge alone is not salvation. Communion is. Transformation is. Life in Christ is.

The great tragedy would be to spend our entire lives around the things of God without allowing Him to heal the things

inside us that are not like Him. This is why the Christian life is us embracing the principles we learn. We pray. We fast. We confess. We forgive. We receive Christ and are Baptized. We struggle against the passions. Not because we are trying to earn God's love. Because His love is healing us. Salvation is not God tolerating you forever because Jesus found a loophole. Salvation is Christ entering death and destroying it. It is being restored. It is the image of God being healed. It is the heart learning to love. It is the whole person being drawn into communion with the Lord God of Israel.

The Gospel is much bigger than: ***"How do I avoid damnation?"***

The real question is: ***"How can I become what God created me to be?"***

The answer is not a technique. It is not a formula. It is Jesus Christ and salvation means entering His life.

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## Rachel

Author unknown

Rachel is one of those women in the Bible whose story looks incredibly romantic if you stop reading early enough.

Jacob arrives in Haran, sees Rachel coming with her father's sheep, rolls the stone away from the well, kisses her, and then promptly starts crying. Which, admittedly, is a memorable first meeting. Rachel is described as beautiful, Jacob falls in love with her, and when her father Laban asks what wages Jacob wants for working for him, Jacob basically says, ***"her."*** He agrees to work seven years for Rachel, and **Genesis** tells us those seven years ***"seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her."*** **Genesis 29:20**.

That is one of the most romantic verses in the Bible.

Unfortunately, Rachel's father was Laban.

And Laban apparently looked at a beautiful love story and thought, ***"you know what this needs? Fraud."***



After seven years, Jacob finally gets his wedding. Except Laban secretly gives him Rachel's older sister Leah instead. Jacob discovers the switch the next morning, confronts Laban, and eventually agrees to another seven years of service for Rachel. He marries Rachel after completing Leah's bridal week, but he still owes Laban those additional years of labor. **Genesis 29:21–30**.

So, Rachel finally gets the man who loved her enough to work fourteen years for her. And then comes the part of her story that tends to get flattened into one sentence: ***Rachel was barren.***

That word is easy to read when you already know Joseph is coming. Rachel did not know Joseph was coming. She watched Leah have Reuben. Then Simeon. Then Levi. Then Judah. And Rachel had nothing.

She was loved by Jacob, yes. Scripture makes that very clear. But being loved did not erase the thing she desperately wanted and could not have. **Genesis 30:1** says, ***"When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister. She said to Jacob, 'Give me children, or I shall die!'"***

That is not the polished version of Rachel. That is desperation.

And Jacob responds with basically the Biblical equivalent of, ***"Why are you yelling at me? I am not God."***

***"Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"*** **Genesis 30:2**.

Fair point. Probably not the most soothing response.

Rachel then gives Jacob her servant Bilhah so that Bilhah can bear children on her behalf, something that was culturally practiced in the ancient world but also contributed to an already spectacularly complicated household. Bilhah has Dan

and Naphtali, and Rachel names them in language that shows just how deeply she viewed her life through the competition with Leah. After Naphtali is born, Rachel says, ***"With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister and have prevailed."*** **Genesis 30:8**.

Except she really had not prevailed. Because this was never actually a competition anyone could win.

Rachel had Jacob's love but wanted children. Leah had children but desperately wanted Jacob's love. Each woman could look across the tent and see something the other possessed that she desperately wanted. And comparison has a nasty habit of doing exactly that. It makes us stare so hard at what someone else has that we stop seeing what God has already placed in our own hands.

Then, finally, **Genesis** says something beautiful.

***Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb.*** **Genesis 30:22**.

Now, ***God remembered Rachel*** does not mean God had forgotten about her. It was not as though Rachel had spent all those years waiting while God suddenly looked down and went, ***"Oh. Right. Rachel. I knew I was forgetting something."***

When the Bible says God ***remembered*** someone, it often means God turned His attention toward that person in order to act. We see similar language when ***God remembered Noah*** in **Genesis 8:1** and when God heard Israel groaning in Egypt and ***remembered his Covenant*** in **Exodus 2:24**. God had not forgotten Noah floating around on the Ark, and He certainly had not misplaced His Covenant with Abraham. The language points toward God moving from waiting to action.

And that makes those words about Rachel even more powerful.

During all those years when Leah was having children and Rachel was not, God had not forgotten Rachel. When she

cried, when she became jealous, when she tried to control the situation herself, and when month after month apparently brought the same disappointment, she had never slipped from God's attention. Rachel could not see what God was doing, but that did not mean God was absent.

Then the waiting changed. God listened to Rachel and opened her womb, and Rachel gave birth to Joseph.

Think about how long she had wanted that baby. How many pregnancies she had watched happen around her? How many times she had probably wondered whether it would ever be her turn? And then she held Joseph.

***God remembered Rachel*** is not the story of a forgetful God finally noticing a forgotten woman. It is the story of a woman who had been seen the entire time, even when it did not feel like it. But Rachel's story still was not wrapped up neatly with a bow.

Eventually Jacob decided it was time to leave Laban and return home. Rachel and Leah agreed to go, and while Laban was away shearing sheep, Rachel did something that feels almost bizarre when you first read it.

She stole her father's household gods.

Yep.

Rachel, wife of Jacob, mother of Joseph, future mother of Benjamin, packed up her belongings to leave home and apparently thought, ***"You know what absolutely needs to come along? Dad's idols."***

**Genesis 31:19** simply says, ***Rachel stole her father's household gods.***

The Bible does not explicitly tell us why. They may have had religious significance, may have been connected with inheritance or family authority, or Rachel may simply have still had some attachment to the religious practices of her father's household. Whatever her reason, Scripture does not tell us,

so we have to be careful not to pretend we know.

And then Laban realizes they are gone.

He chases Jacob's family down and demands to know who stole his gods. Jacob, who has absolutely no idea Rachel took them, confidently declares that whoever has them should not live. Meanwhile Rachel is sitting on them.

Literally.

She had hidden the household gods in a camel's saddle and sat on top of them. When her father searched her tent, Rachel told him she could not stand because ***the way of women is upon me.*** **Genesis 31:34–35**.

And Laban searched the tent. Nothing. Because his daughter was sitting on his gods.

There is something almost unintentionally funny about that scene. These were supposedly gods important enough for Laban to chase his family across the countryside to recover, yet they were apparently powerless to announce, ***"Hello. We are currently underneath Rachel."***

But there is also something sad underneath it.

Rachel had seen the God of Jacob at work. She had watched Him bless their household. She had cried out for children and eventually held Joseph in her arms. And yet when she left her father's home, she still carried something from that old life with her. Maybe that is one of the reasons Rachel's story feels so human.

God had answered her prayer, but Rachel was not suddenly perfect. She could be loved and still jealous. Blessed and still dissatisfied. Part of God's Covenant family and still make terrible decisions. Trust God in one area and apparently stuff somebody else's gods into a camel saddle in another.

The Bible does not clean her up for us.

Eventually Rachel became pregnant again. This time the

pregnancy would end very differently. During the journey, Rachel went into difficult labor. As she was dying, she gave her son the name Ben-oni, but Jacob renamed him Benjamin. Rachel died giving birth to him and was buried on the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. **Genesis 35:16–20**.

That means Rachel never got the tidy ending we might expect.

The woman who once cried, ***"Give me children, or I shall die!"*** eventually died bringing a child into the world. That is heartbreaking. But Rachel's story did not disappear with her.

Joseph would become one of the most important figures in **Genesis**. Through circumstances Rachel never lived to see, God would use her son to preserve Jacob's entire family during famine. Benjamin would become the father of one of Israel's twelve tribes. Generations later, Israel's first king, Saul, would come from the tribe of Benjamin.

And much, much later, another man would identify himself this way: ***circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin.*** **Philippians 3:5**

**Paul.**

Rachel spent years wondering whether she would ever have a child. She died without seeing what God would eventually do through the children she had begged Him for. And maybe that is where Rachel's story hits hardest. We want to see the ending.

We want God to explain what He is doing while He is doing it. We want the prayer answered, the waiting justified, the pain explained, and preferably a neat little conclusion before we have to walk through any more of it. Rachel did not get that.

She never saw Joseph standing in Egypt with enough authority to help save his family from starvation. She never saw tribes come from her sons. She certainly never saw Paul carrying the Gospel across the Roman world.

She saw only the little piece of the story God allowed her to

live. And that may be true for us too. Some of the things God is doing through your life may not make sense from where you are standing. Some prayers may take years before you understand the answer. Some things you desperately want may come differently than you imagined. And some seeds you plant may grow into things you will never live long enough to see.

Rachel's life was messy. She was jealous. She was impatient. She tried to control circumstances. She stole idols and hid them underneath herself on a camel saddle, which is probably not making anybody's list of ideal Biblical decision making.

And God still wrote her into His story. Not because Rachel got everything right. Because God remained faithful even when Rachel was still learning what faithfulness looked like.

The same God who ***remembered Rachel*** had never actually forgotten her. And when it feels like God has forgotten you because the prayer has gone unanswered, someone else seems to be receiving everything you have begged Him for, or you cannot see anything happening at all, Rachel's story is a reminder that silence is not the same thing as absence.

You may only be able to see your little piece of the story. God can see the whole thing. You do not have to see the whole story to trust the One who does.



# Why Women Resist Male Leadership — and Why Men So Often Make It Worse

JH is the only author's name given

Now for the doozie. Why do so many women bristle at male leadership in the home and in the church? Not because every woman is wicked. Not because every man is wise. Not because women are incapable of discernment. And not because every man who throws the word leadership around deserves to be followed with a smile, a sandwich, and a standing ovation.

The deeper answer is older than feminism, older than church politics, older than the latest online skirmish dressed up as enlightenment. It is as old as Eden and just as human as breath.

When sin entered the world, it did not merely stain behavior. It disordered desire. It knocked creation slightly off its axis. It bent what had once been straight as a plumb line and turned harmony into friction, like grit thrown into the gears of a finely made machine. One of the places that fracture surfaced most sharply was in the relationship between man and woman.

God said to the woman, ***"Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."*** I do not read that as some soft, sentimental prediction about romance, as though she would simply gaze longingly at him while he mowed the yard under a honey-colored sunset.

In context, it belongs to the wreckage of the fall. It describes strain. Distortion. Conflict. The same kind of language appears again when sin's desire is pictured as a force crouching, craving, pressing, seeking mastery.

In other words, part of the fall's devastation is that the woman will be inclined to push against God's order, and the man will be inclined to answer not with sacrificial steadiness, but with domination, cowardice, passivity, or selfish heaviness.

So, let's speak plainly.

Women often do not want to follow male leadership because sinners do not naturally enjoy submission to divine order. And men often do not lead well because sinners do not naturally enjoy bearing responsibility under God. Both sides of that equation are cracked by the same fall.

A woman's resistance to godly male leadership is not always loud, theatrical, or obvious. Sometimes it is not a clenched fist but a quiet undertow. Not a public mutiny but a polished refusal. A subtle need to steer from the shadows. A composed but settled determination that she will not be led, corrected, restrained, or overruled.

Sometimes it clothes itself in sophistication. Sometimes in pain. Sometimes in competence. Sometimes in that sleek, modern line delivered with perfect calm: ***"I just do not trust men to lead."*** And humanly speaking, one can often understand why. Many men have been cowardly, lazy, selfish, spineless, soft, absent, tyrannical, or spiritually useless. Many have called themselves leaders while behaving like overgrown boys with truck keys, strong opinions, and no gravitas.

Many have confused authority with appetite, headship with heaviness, and masculinity with mere volume. We have made leadership look like a cheap imitation—part bluster, part passivity, and all burden to the people around them. But abuse of leadership does not cancel God's design any more than abuse of money cancels work or abuse of sex cancels marriage.

A bad king does not erase the throne. A corrupt judge does not erase the court. A sorry pastor does not erase the office. And a weak husband does not erase headship.

Part of the problem is that fallen women often hear the word submission and imagine humiliation. They hear headship and picture a boot on the neck. They hear authority and envision some bloated fool barking orders from a recliner while quoting one Bible verse with barbecue sauce on his shirt.

And to be fair, some men have made that caricature painfully believable. But Biblical leadership is not dictatorship with a Bible verse glued to it like an obnoxious bumper sticker. It is burden-bearing. It is initiative. It is accountability. It is protection, provision, sacrifice, and steady-handed truthfulness ***under God***.

It is not the right to throw our weight around. It is the duty to carry weight. It is not self-exaltation. It is responsibility with calluses on its hands. And that is precisely why fallen flesh resists it. Because when a man actually leads well, a woman must trust, yield, and follow in ways that expose fear, control issues, pride, self-will, and woundedness. She must let someone else take the wheel without reaching over every thirty seconds to jerk it back.

She must live under an order she did not invent and cannot revise at will. And the flesh hates that. It always has. The flesh does not want order. It wants autonomy with a crown. It wants self-rule with spiritual language draped over it like lace over iron. The same thing happens in the church.

Many women do not object to male leadership because they fail to understand it. They object to it because they understand exactly what it means. It means there is an office they may not occupy. It means there is authority they may not seize. It means there is an order they may not redesign simply because they are gifted, articulate, disciplined, intelligent, or stronger than the man currently standing in it. That is what stings.

It is not always inability that makes people restless. Sometimes it is ability without authorization. A gifted woman may think: ***"I can teach better than he can. I can speak better than he can. I am more disciplined than he is. I know more doctrine than he does."*** And you know what? She may be right on every single count. But God never grounded authority merely in talent. If He had, the church would be run by whoever had the sharpest tongue, the quickest wit, and the

strongest personality. **God grounded it in order.**

That is why this issue turns emotionally volcanic so quickly. It is not merely about function. It is about limits. And fallen humanity does not like limits, especially when it feels qualified to cross them. The old sin nature does not care for boundaries. It presses against them like floodwater against a levee, always searching for the weak point, always calling restraint oppression.

But there is another layer to this, and it cuts in both directions. Women often do not want to follow male leadership because men have made leadership bitter. They have confused headship with domination, silence with strength, passivity with peace, and control with courage.

Some men have ruled like petty tyrants with a Bible in one hand and a sullen ego in the other. Others have abdicated so completely that the woman had to become the functional leader just to keep the wheels from rolling off into the ditch. And once she has grown accustomed to carrying what he dropped, she is suddenly told to ***"submit,"*** and the word tastes like dirt in her mouth because all she has ever known is male softness or male selfishness.

So yes, women resist male leadership for sinful reasons. And yes, women also resist because men have often represented leadership so badly. But Scripture still stands like granite in a storm. The answer is not female revolt. And the answer is not male swagger. **The answer is redeemed order.**

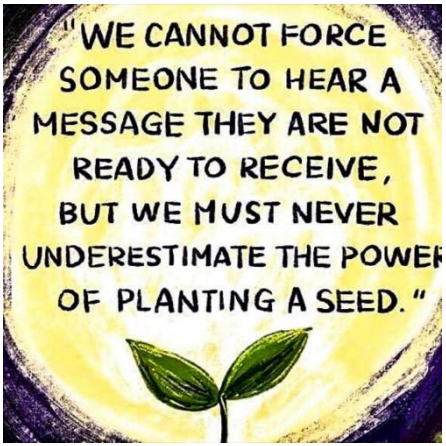
Men must lead like men under God—humbly, sacrificially, steadily, truthfully. Women must respond like women under God—with strength, dignity, intelligence, and willing respect for divine design. Neither sex gets to sanction its rebellion as righteousness.

The woman who says, ***"I will not follow."*** The man who says, ***"I will not lead."*** Both are resisting God, just from opposite sides of the fence. And that, really, is the heart of it.

Why do women not want to follow male leadership in the home and in the church? Because the fall left humanity allergic to God's order. Women often want influence without restraint. Men often want authority without responsibility. Women often want to steer. Men often want to coast. Women often resent headship. Men often disgrace it. And the whole weary, repeating mess keeps proving, again and again, that God was right about human nature from the very beginning.

So no, this is not a rant against women. It is an indictment of the fall. And until people understand that they will keep treating rebellion like empowerment, abdication like gentleness, and disorder like progress. They will keep baptizing impulse and calling it courage. They will keep repainting old rebellion in fresh, fashionable colors and acting as though naming it differently changes its nature.

But God is not confused. He still knows what He made. He still knows how it fell. And He still knows that **the only road back is not through autonomy, but through truth.** Never chained to the regrets behind us, never pulled to the left or to the right, but pressing ever forward along the straight and narrow path—climbing higher, eyes fixed above, as we press on toward the high ground of spiritual maturity. By His grace and for His glory.



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