Five

5.1

My first grandchild named me Bibby soon after he learned to talk. It was his way of pronouncing "BeeBee" and, as is often the birthright of firstborn grandchildren, his rendition stuck. He's a bright, blue-eyed, half-grown middle schooler these days. But if you asked him to name his favorite frequent memory-maker with his maternal grandmother, I'm pretty sure what he'd say: Bibby's Secret Closet. I started the game when he was five and his little sister was two and his littlest sister had not remotely entered the mind of their parents. Keith and I had moved into a new house that had a double-door closet in the hall with shelves that seemed to me the perfect place to hide surprises. I stocked it with all sorts of fun and inexpensive things ranging from specialty candies to puzzles, from games to race cars, from dolls and art supplies to toy projectiles, the latter of which are essential if your aim is to steal a little boy's heart.

The rules of the game were established from the start: under no circumstances could they ever peek inside that closet. Indeed, they could not so much as touch the doorknobs or the Secret Closet would turn into just any old closet with no secrets at all. They perished that thought as the worst possible fate, just as I hoped. We get to do generous amounts of life together, so we couldn't play our game each visit or surprise would turn into routine and spoil the joy and, per their wise parents, also spoil the children. Every three or four visits, I'd raise my eyebrows just so and say, "Anybody want to do Bibby's Secret Closet?" They'd pop up like jack-in-the-boxes and run to a certain spot at the end of the hall, and the game would be on.

I'd draw it out as long as possible, opening the doors and closing them quickly as if something had startled me. Then I'd peek back in the closet and around the door again, making faces and performing ridiculously silly antics. They'd shake with excitement from head to toe and squeal like Santa Claus was sliding down the chimney. All this for a treat or toy that often came from a dollar store. We have played our game countless times through the years, and, though Jackson and Annabeth are getting older and playing it cooler, their two-year-old sister being old enough to join in has given it fresh wind.

I made space for this story to serve up some food for thought:

Would it be the same joyful experience for the children if I called them on their way over, told them what prize or candy they were about to get, and handed it over the second they walked through the door? Why or why not?

Read Colossians 1:15–2:3. Write Colossians 2:2-3 in this space.

Underline Colossians 2:3 in your copy above.

Early in our quest I suggested that instant intimacy is not God's signature style for relationships. Study the Scriptures through and through and there's no mistaking the Lord's affinity for surprise disclosure. For the easiest evidence to spot, however, all you need is a glance at Scripture's start and finish. The Bible opens with God creating the universe out of nothingness over an ordered course of six

days in Genesis and ends sixty-five entire books later with Revelation. In Greek, the word for *revelation* is *apokálupsis* meaning:

"Revelation, uncovering, unveiling, disclosure. One of three words referring to the Second Coming of Christ (1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7,13). The other two words are *epipháneia*, appearing (1 Tim. 6:14), and *parousía*, coming, presence (2 Thess. 2:1). *Apokálupsis*, a grander and more comprehensive word, includes not merely the thing shown and seen but the interpretation, the unveiling of the same. The *epipháneiai*, appearances, are contained in the *apokálupsis*, revelation, being separate points or moments therein. Christ's first coming was an *epipháneia* (2 Tim. 1:10); the second, an *apokálupsis*, will be far more glorious."[1]

Lock your eyes on that final word, *glorious*, because it is the glimmering handprint that sets divine revelation eons apart from my opening parable. Bibby's Secret Closet is about unveiling a toy. *Apokálupsis* is about unveiling glory.

Read 2 Corinthians 3:7-18. Record every piece of good news this segment offers a Jesus follower regarding glory.

On this side of Christ's complete unveiling, where "for now we see through a glass, darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12, KJV), we lack the perfection to always enjoy God's way of hiddenness. These dark stretches on our journey may be unwelcome, but they offer wide-open, sweat-faced space for faith. It's the shadowy miles that take the temperature of our trust. For us to persevere or dare to grow in our love for God while we momentarily do not love His observable way is no small wound on the devil's brow. But we would be woefully remiss to only regard the hard side of mystery. It also has an incomparably beautiful side and you haven't hung around this long because you don't know it. The mystery is part of what we love. It is part of what we crave. It is part of what has kept some of us studying the same text and seeking the same God for decades. The very fact that we can't figure it all out is one reason we're still here. We long for exactly what we've got: a Lion we can't tame but we can trust.

The human mind equates the cessation of mystery as an indication of mastery. No one masters God. Glance at Proverbs 25:2 and record what it says.

As we await what will only be revealed in the light of Christ's face, what is at our fingertips in God's Word and what is discoverable of Him beyond are still more than we could exhaust in a lifetime. We can tremble in fear over all we can't see or revel in every speck we can, for "in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3).

Hidden. Not displayed. This is holy hide and seek. We dig and discover. It beats archaeology by a landslide because the words are still alive. Imagine digging up the fossil of a fish that can still swim. If we sit with empty arms crossed, pouting over what Jesus is apparently unwilling to show us, we forfeit laps spilling over with treasures He was happy to uncover. Buried treasures are planted right there in the soil of your path where you can seek them and find them. Treasures set for discovery on a holy timer to be a word in due season. Nothing on earth is like divine revelation. Nothing compares to the Holy Spirit quickening His own words, making them clean air to our pollution-congested lungs and making them lamplight to our clouded understanding. When we don't find what we seek, we still don't shut His Word empty-handed. Like rummaging through closets and drawers in our homes, we stumble on one meaningful thing looking for another.

Nothing on earth is like *divine* revelation.

Scripture is too high to get to the top of it. Scripture is too deep to get to the bottom of it. However, if we brave our brief lives walking, crawling, swimming, sitting, and wading right in the middle of it, we will gain more wisdom than the world's sages.

Keep pleading above all else for Jesus to show you glimpses of His glory, His kingdom, and His ways on the page, and, there in the periphery, He will always show you what you need to know about yourself. Make the most of seeking Jesus, and He will leverage every ounce you bring to the mix and will make the most of your life offering. You steward His gifts, and He will steward you. The breathtaking you the world needs to see is the one drenched to the bone in Jesus. You have no idea how gorgeous you are, soaked in the radiance of His glory. You don't have to go find yourself. Spend your life hunting Jesus down, and He'll make sure your full calling—start to finish—hunts you down. Seek Him with your whole being even if you're in a thousand pieces, and He will sweep you up in His unseen arms, equip you, grow you, develop you, and show you where to set your foot next.

For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.

PSALM 36:9, NIV

Your dialogue today will center on divine treasures "for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21). By this point in your six-week quest, you've gotten the rhythm of query. So this week you'll get to set your own metronome a good bit before you head off by yourself. All the Scriptures below revolve around treasures. Read each one and let it become a catalyst for prayer. The verses are so rich, you shouldn't have a difficult time. If God uses the verse to inquire of you, write down what you believe to be the question and answer it. If, on the other hand, the verse stirs up petitions you desire to ask of God, write them down and expound on them. If one makes you recall something He's done for you, tell Him about it. If one voices exactly how you feel, tell Jesus that.

alm 119:162

overbs 24:3-6

Pray no less passionately if you live alone than you would if your walls were bulging with a large family. You are building a "house" wherever you call home.

iah 33:6

iah 45:3

tthew 13:44

tthew 13:52

In Matthew 13:52, Jesus likens a disciple of the kingdom of heaven to a household master who gathers an assortment of new and old treasures from a storage room. This disciple has in view the full landscape of heaven's kingdom, not naively discarding the old things out of sheer enthusiasm for the new but allowing the new to reframe the old in unexpected ways. As R. T. France puts it,

"The message of the kingdom of heaven does not wipe the slate clean, but rather brings fulfillment to what has gone before, as Jesus has been at pains to demonstrate in [Matthew] 5:17-48. The 'old' is not to be 'abolished' (5:17), but to be judiciously integrated into the new perspective of the kingdom of heaven."[7]

Every time you pick up a Bible—complete with its two testaments—you hold in your hand treasures new and old. The life of faith is a mysterious combination of both. In Christ, a new treasure never devalues an old one. All get to be yours. Sometimes what you considered treasure early in your walk with Him seems childish and unsophisticated later, but it needn't. Those things were dear to you. Cherish them. Reflect back on some old treasures and recount at least one to God.

Write out the exquisite words of Psalm 36:5-9 in any translation you like as your concluding prayer.

5.2

Equipping ourselves to embrace life as a quest calls for the brave, biblical acknowledgment that the road is hazardous, the weather precarious, obstacles await, and evils lurk. Perilous traveling conditions are not automatic indications we've taken a detour. Sometimes they are highway signs saying we're on the right track. A glamorous gospel is not just deceptive. It is tragic. It turns grace into sensuality, and then offers no remedy for sin's bankruptcy. A glam-gospel is the crowd-pleaser of the short run, but in the long run when sufferings inevitably come, it abandons us as orphaned children, leaving us believing God broke His promises.

Following Jesus is the *ultimate* long run.

Following Jesus is the ultimate long run. The muscle it demands is built with protein-packed doctrine believable and sustainable from beginning to end—in celebration and sorrow, exhilaration and malaise, in days of crisp, clear vision, and in nights so black you can't see your feet. To unplugged ears, the New Testament testifies with deafening volume to the role of adversity and the demand for endurance in the lives of disciples on their sure way to happily ever after. Sometimes God Himself sets up an obstacle course to develop and test the runner's discipline, stamina, and agility. With His eye around every blind curve in our road ahead, He seeks "to supply what is lacking in [our] faith" (1 Thess. 3:10, ESV) so we can run triumphantly.

Satan also attends to our marathon with unanticipated patience, biding his time, studying our patterns and weaknesses. He tempts runners nearby to go rogue and trip us. He'll incite spectators to mock us. He'll harass us with regrets and torment us with self-condemnation until we feel like quitting. He'll cover us in shame till we feel like we're running naked. He'll try to sell us anger and hate relabeled as holy passion. He'll camouflage potholes with pretties to coax us into pits. If we manage to dodge them, he'll try to wear us down gradually with discouragement. If we don't wear down easy, he'll tempt us to perform valiantly and with impressive false humility for the applause of an audience we pretend to ignore. And we will fall for some of it. But that's the beauty of running a path paved by a cross and sprinkled with blood. We can get back up.

Do not rejoice over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will stand up. Though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light.

MICAH 7:8

So, here's the point of today's Compass: on a journey fraught with spills, we can access incomparable thrills. Since we can't avoid difficulties and sufferings, we can ask, seek, and knock with everything in us for every gorgeous thing that is ours in Christ, so that we not only can bear up in this race, we can shockingly thrive in it. No, we will not always have fun, but, based on the authority of God's Word, we can always abound.

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:8, ESV

Underline the words *all* and *every*. Circle the word *abound*. Want to see its Greek definition?

perisseúō; from ***perissós***, abundant. To be in excess, exceed in number or measure. In the NT, to be or have more than enough. (I) To be left over, remain, exceeding a number or measure which marks fullness … (II) To superabound, to abound richly.[3]

Glance back at the additional Greek word in the definition—***perissós***. What one English word is offered to define it?

You'll find a form of this word translated in John 10:10. Read John 10:7-10 for context. In His own words, why had Jesus come?

What we're having today is not a pep talk. It's not a lesson chock-full of feel-good aphorisms that have the shelf life of an overripe peach swarming with fruit flies. We have birthrights in Christ that can inject curious happiness into copious hardships. Let's fight for them. Let's fight for the things that make following Jesus so gloriously good that the sufferings won't even be worth comparing (Rom. 8:18). Let's fight for ...

AUDACIOUS LOVE

ECSTATIC JOY

UNABASHED DELIGHT

ASTONISHING FAITH

UNQUENCHABLE HOPE

EXTRAORDINARY FRUITFULNESS

OVERFLOWING GRATEFULNESS

The list is not exhaustive by any means, but these seven are enough to revolutionize our journey. Remember back in Week Four, Day One when I told you that we'd get to the subject of healthy consolations before our quest was over? Today's the day.

All seven of those divine graces—love, joy, delight, faith, hope, fruitfulness, and gratefulness—are generously supported in the Bible as the will of God for His children. Our lesson will only make room for a few under each category so chase others down with a Bible concordance for proof. The choice of adjectives—audacious, ecstatic, unabashed, astonishing, unquenchable, extraordinary, and overflowing—are showcased in multiple scenes in Scripture. Anyway, "superabounding" seems to make elbowroom for certain superlatives as does our fifth recalibrating question, *how much more?* It's no harder for God to give us a pound of something He wants us to possess than to give us an ounce. James 4:2 says, "you do not have because you do not ask." We've got mounds of problems. We may as well take God up on heaps of privileges.

Look up the verses in each category and document how they support the heading. If the number of verses seems overwhelming, it will help to know they also cover today's Query.

AUDACIOUS LOVE

God's supreme desire for us is that we love Him supremely (Mark 12:28-30). Love drives every vertical virtue in the believing life. If Jesus is the uncontested love of your life, you will follow Him, enjoy Him, obey Him, believe Him, find comfort and refreshment in Him, and long to see Him. Love also informs the lateral virtues of the believing life like compassion, forgiveness, generosity, and kindness. "Love does no wrong to a neighbor" (Rom. 13:10). Love makes sharing Christ with others virtually irresistible. It's hard to stay silent about the transcendent love of your life. Love shifts our motivations toward Jesus from what we need to do to what we want to do. To be sure, need is a vital motivator, but nothing compels the human heart like fervent desire. We would run barefoot through a briar patch for love.

The capacity to love God comes from God. It boomerangs right back to Him from the heart that fully catches it. We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Your security and stability in Him and much of your fidelity toward Him are vastly dependent on whether or not you embrace as fact that you are personally, completely, and unequivocally loved by God. God is love. He could no more cease to love than He could cease to be God.

Before you search the verses regarding your love for Him, meditate on the profoundness of John 15:9. To what did Christ compare His love for His followers?

Now proceed to verses regarding audacious love for God.

Ephesians 6:24

1 Peter 1:8a

ECSTATIC JOY

Psalm 4:7

Psalm 16:11

Psalm 43:4

1 Peter 1:8b

UNABASHED DELIGHT

An obvious question regarding this heading is why we wouldn't throw delight into the joy category. They're similar enough. The simple answer is because God references both as if they are somehow distinct yet each greatly desirable. If your translation for each of the following verses doesn't contain the word *delight*, try another. It's too wonderful a word to miss.

Psalm 37:4 (Note the mutual delight in 37:23-24.)

Jeremiah 15:16

Bask in Psalm 18:19, "He brought me out to a spacious place;
He rescued me because He delighted in me."

ASTONISHING FAITH

Matthew 15:28

Hebrews 11:32-35

Write the four fabulous staccato exhortations of 1 Corinthians 16:13 here.

UNQUENCHABLE HOPE

Romans 5:5

Romans 15:13

Hebrews 6:10-12,19

EXTRAORDINARY FRUITFULNESS

John 15:8

Colossians 1:10

OVERFLOWING GRATEFULNESS

Colossians 2:6-7 (CSB, NIV, and NASB use the actual adjective "overflowing.")

Grateful people are the loveliest humans on planet Earth. They smile easy, eyes crinkling, like they know something the rest of us don't. They delight easy. They manage to retain a certain playfulness and childlike sense of wonder that make them sparkle like fireflies in a world of hornets.

As we traverse an earth that is groaning for redemption, we're going to run into toils, troubles, persecutions, tears, losses, heartaches, and grief. These difficulties may dash us, but they cannot defeat us if we fight for audacious love, ecstatic joy, unabashed delight, astonishing faith, unquenchable hope, extraordinary fruitfulness, and overflowing gratefulness. These surpluses of grace in this perilous race whisper what it means for weak mortals to show themselves "more than conquerors" (Rom. 8:37).

I don't have the luxury of writing these things from a loft in Cinderella's castle. I would like to have lived a sheltered life, but I haven't. Some of the reasons I share publicly. Some I don't. Some of my challenges are ongoing consequences of sins and foolish decisions made long ago. Others are sacred trusts drawing me deeper into intimacy with God. I can't say I always know which is which. Six solid decades I've plodded and plowed my life path, and little of it has come easy, yet I'll tell you something from the truest place in my heart. Had Jesus, at any point in the last thirty years, given me a thirty-second heads-up that He was about to sweep me home, I'd have used it to say one thing:

I have had the biggest blast with You.

Stumbling around on our stony paths and falling facedown in the soil, sometimes we accidentally uncover a secret to contentment we didn't even know to search for: God's highest Treasure is our greatest pleasure. Augustine gives voice to that truth:

> "How sweet all at once it was for me to be rid of those fruitless joys which I had once feared to lose ... ! You drove them from me, you who are the true, the sovereign joy. You drove them from me and took their place, you who are sweeter than all pleasure ... you who outshine all light, yet are hidden deeper than any secret in our hearts, you who surpass all honour, though not in the eyes of men who see all honour in themselves ... O Lord my God, my Light, my Wealth, and my Salvation."[4]

As you near the end of this quest, you will hear echoes of the five recalibrating questions that launched this stretch of your journey. Perhaps they will stir up the same answers you recorded over four weeks ago. If so, own them honestly before God, knowing your quest with Him extends well beyond this series. If they differ in any way, take note of the differences and reflect on them with God. They will be significant for your road ahead.

Revisit the third recalibrating question. You'll find it in John 1:38. Record Christ's question here:

Glance back over those seven graces in today's Compass. Thumb through earlier pages of this study. Four weeks have come and gone since this precise question was posed to you.

Tell Jesus in the space below what you're seeking now. If you know based on the Word that what you're asking is God's will, be bold enough to thank Him in advance. It's coming.

5.3

Your life is the stuff of great adventure. It may not feel that way when you're taking out the trash or treating the dog for fleas, but it really is. In all the mess and in all the mundane, you are a living, breathing miracle. You once were dead, but you were raised to new life. You were poor, but someone's death left you rich. Now your inheritance awaits you in a furnished home you've never seen in a land on no man's map. You once were blind, but now you can see. You were deaf to hope, but now you can hear.

You're headed home, but you have no idea how long the trip will take. You've been assigned tasks on your way that you don't fully understand, plus they demand strength your bones do not possess. Instead of being clothed in an invisible choir robe and halo, you were handed a soldier's uniform and shown in the Scriptures that your path unfolds right down the middle of a battlefield with the darkness as your adversary. You don't feel particularly brave or important, yet you've been involved in matters of life and death. You have vile enemies belched from hell that you cannot see who are assigned to stop what you've been sent to do, and you have but one sword and one shield with which to defend yourself. All the while, you're going about life at a job, in a town, and maybe even in a home where most people don't realize who you are and handing small deposits to a bank teller who has no clue what you're worth.

If that's not the stuff of great adventure, nothing on God's green earth qualifies. This epic drama is not your imagination. Your imagination is running rife if you think this is all there is, that what you can see with your eyes is the greater reality, and that time is running out rather than running forward to the ultimate big event. Your imagination is running away with you if you think all you have to bring to the present battle is whatever you brought to the last and that fierceness in spiritual war can't be for the person with ghastly morning breath who stares back at you blankly from your bathroom mirror.

The needle of your compass will point one final time in our six-week quest to the apostle Paul. He is the New Testament poster child for life-on-quest and also fleshes out on the page the kinds of things that are possible for those who

valiantly love, believe, follow, obey, and draw divine strength from the Lord Jesus Christ. His second letter to the church of Corinth is solid gold if we're searching for material that reads like journal entries from his great adventures.

Read the opening entry in 2 Corinthians 1:1-11. Describe the intensity of their hardships in Asia.

What two things had overflowed to them according to 2 Corinthians 1:5?

According to 2 Corinthians 1:8-9, what had the severity of their suffering caused Paul and his companions?

Some truths can't be absorbed theoretically. We don't know what God can do until no one else can do it. No chronicle of Paul's adventures is complete without 2 Corinthians 11:24-33. Imagine you are interviewing him for a podcast. What three accounts in his brief autobiography would you ask him to elaborate on?

1.

2.

3.

A friend of mine decided recently to get away from it all and go camping and hiking by herself. One night she lay shaking with fear while a bear sniffed around her tent for forty-five minutes. That kind of thing has a way of improving your prayer life. You may not have been beaten with rods, but you've probably faced dangers in the city and perhaps in the wilderness. You've been betrayed and endured toil and spent sleepless nights.

If you were writing an autobiography at this point in your life, what three events would you include? List them in the left column. In the right column beside those three events, record how God was involved in that part of your narrative from your perspective.

EVENTS	GOD'S INVOLVEMENT

You have a story underway and it is made up of three parts:

A. Christ's story;

B. Your story without Him;

C. Your story together.

If you haven't already done so, ask God to help you weave these story parts together and tell it. People need to hear it.

Every powerful "Part C: Your story together" will reflect some form of Paul's account in 2 Corinthians 4:1-18. Read this portion.

In 2 Corinthians 4:7, what did Paul say we have?

According to the same verse, why do we have it?

Let the wonder wash over you: we are basic, run-of-the-mill, breakable, crumble-prone jars of clay filled with the incomparable, inexhaustible, exquisite treasure of Jesus Christ. God purposed this holy juxtaposition of treasure and clay so that "this extraordinary power may be from God and not from us." Our unimpressiveness accentuates God's inestimable impressiveness. Let this sink in deeply: By God's unfathomable design your ordinary, everyday breakable self is a storage unit for extraordinary power.

How much difference does it make? Reread 2 Corinthians 4:7-9 and fill in the chart.

We may be …	But we are not …
v. 8a	
v. 8b	
v. 9a	
v. 9b	

According to 2 Corinthians 4:10,
We always carry …
so that …

Write 2 Corinthians 4:12 in this space.

OK. We've bumped up against one of the most mature aspects in the doctrine of suffering. We're a long way from pureed bananas on the baby food aisle on this one. We're in the meat department now, gnawing one of the hardest bones in the New Testament. The fact is, sometimes God may, with gracious forethought and faithful deliberation, allow us to go through something that nearly kills us so someone else can come alive. He alone is life giver, but He can use death at work in one person to demonstrate life at work to another. The Book of Acts, followed by centuries of Christian history, forbids us to ignore the cost at its highest price: following Christ has more than nearly killed many believers. These are martyrs called to the highest imitation of Christ.

He can u
death at
work in o
person t
demonst
life at w
to anothe

What did He say about them in Revelation 2:10?

Jesus esteems every costly sacrifice. Each will be surpassed by reward.

Before we're engulfed with dread over the prospect of death at work in us, consider the possibility that you may have already lived through a measure of it so that life could work in someone else. Extreme circumstances in parenting, in battling injustice, or in mission work, for example, can take a servant of God beyond normative sacrificial living and giving into costs requiring severe death to self, health, or well-being.

Those in leadership who walk in cruciform obedience to Christ will almost certainly embrace such a calling. Have you ever experienced anything like this? Expound.

To stop the lesson here would be such a tragedy. Study 2 Corinthians 4:10-12. What reason did Paul repeatedly give for death working in the life of a servant of God?

In Christ, there's simply no staying dead. Resurrection life is compulsory. Death—no matter the form—never gets to be our benediction. When we're called to the kind of dying Paul described in 2 Corinthians 4, God's purpose is always for the very life of Christ to be manifested in us. That's the best shot people have to catch a glimpse of Jesus when they're not remotely looking for Him. Death at work in us so that life works in another sounds like a dismal earthly sentence with heavenly rewards alone. However, I'd like to suggest that some of those rewards are reaped right here on this planet.

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:6-9. Write verse 8 here.

I love the NASB: "For now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord." Admit it. There are people we'd walk straight into flames for. We'd go through that death process a dozen times just to glance over at them in a worship service and see them rapturously captivated with Jesus. We'd hang by our ankles for a month to hear people we've served testify about what Jesus has come to mean to them. A total stranger could tell us how Christ in us affected them and we'd walk away, tears streaming down our cheeks, and whisper to Jesus, "I'd go through it all again with You just for her/him."

How did Paul testify to this phenomenon in Philippians 2:17-18?

I've experienced another kind of peculiar joy and heard others speak of it, too. In the handful of times I've been called to endure seasons that have all but killed me, for a while I might have existed putting one foot in front of the other, zombie-like. But when I'd finally started coming back to life, I'd invariably feel more alive than before. Ordinary things I'd taken for granted in my busyness were suddenly like lush gifts. I'd close my eyes and savor a gentle breeze across my face. I'd stare in wonder at a pill bug forging a blade of grass that seemed a whole new shade of green. I wouldn't just see the colors of my children and grandchildren's eyes, I'd see the subtle flecks in their irises. A song wouldn't just move me, it would make me sob. Instead of dodging the rain, I'd close my umbrella, hold my head back and let it bathe my face, washing away invisible stains of the last hundred tears. Each time I've wished I could hang onto that vivid awareness of life forever, but soon it's back to life as usual. Then again, that's what eternity is for.

One day there will be no going back to life as usual. One day there will be no more night and no more dying of any kind. The sea and the grave, death and Hades will have given up their dead and the righteous Judge will have assigned final destinies (Rev. 20:11-15). When that eternal day comes I suspect we who were saved from our sins by the blood of Christ will ponder this life and wonder how we ever really called it "being alive."

Rewind to Genesis 3 and read the chapter until you come upon the first of this journey's five recalibrating questions. It is the first divine question in a list from the Bible that, by Revelation's closing, would tally to multiple hundreds. Write it here:

You answered this question in the first day's query. Now answer afresh where you sense you are spiritually, but this time use Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 as a paradigm.

Bringing where you see yourself spiritually into alignment with Scripture is crucial on the quest of faith. It increases stability and forward mobility. How you feel is important. The psalmists often and openly expressed their feelings about how bleak or triumphant their situations seemed. Framing your spiritual condition with the Word of God, however, changes how you see the picture.

Fill in the following lines from 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 to express concepts similar to Paul's, but use your own words and specifics to personalize it.

God,

I am _____

but not _____.

I am

but not

I am

but not

I am

but not

Write 2 Corinthians 4:13.

Second Corinthians 4:7-13 depicts the kind of dying that works in a believer to bring Christ's life to full breath in you. Think of 2 Corinthians 4:13 as divine CPR in the process of resurrection life when death has been at work in you. With "the same spirit of faith … we also believe, and therefore speak." The word translated *spirit* is ***pneuma*** in the Greek text, meaning *breath*.

pneuma **(*pneúma*; gen. *pneúmatos*, neut. noun from *pnéō*)** … to breathe. (I) Breath. (A) Of the mouth or nostrils, a breathing, blast … (B) Breath of air, air in motion, a breeze, blast, the wind … (II) Spirit. (A) The vital spirit or life, the principle of life residing in man.[5]

When you read the Scriptures, believing them with that same spirit of faith Paul talked about, think of the process as inhaling. Then when you speak them, think of the process as exhaling. Get the idea? Nothing supplies more divine oxygen on your quest than breathing in Scripture by faith. Subsequently, nothing applies power to your feet like breathing Scripture out through speech.

Practice the approach with 2 Corinthians 4:8-9. 1) Read it, believing and receiving it by faith, and then 2) speak it aloud with boldness. Countless segments await you in Scripture that can give you spiritual CPR when life is nearly killing you.

Have you experienced a time when God brought you back to life after a death of sorts had been at work in you? If so, recount it to God, including any way life seemed more vivid or precious to you.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 aloud in first person, switching "we" to "I." Testify to Jesus what glories are happening in your life amid these short-lived pains.

Lastly, look back over your answer in your very first query to the question "Where are you?" (p. 16) If you feel you've shifted or moved at all in the last five weeks, express it to God. If not, petition Him to move you where you want to be in Him.

Drag barely beating heart
dulled by woes and foes
and scarred
by worldly flames awry
to your God awaiting
and there by unseen hand
be raised.

5.4

The needle on the compass today points a direction deliberately timed for your next-to-last day. My hope is that, long after this six-week quest is complete, this site on the journey will be one you remember best. Taking the advice we will overhear Jesus give a dearly loved follower will become a crescendo to our contentment, drowning out untold contentiousness.

Read and relish John 21 like breakfast on the beach with the resurrected Jesus. Record each question in the chapter even if the same question is posed repeatedly.

How perfectly fitting for John's Gospel to conclude with questions volleying between Christ and His disciples. That's exactly the way it began. Remember these from John 1:35-51?

> What are you seeking?
>
> Where are you staying?
>
> Can anything good come out of Nazareth?
>
> How do you know me?
>
> Do you believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree?

Life with Christ has more full-circle moments than a bowl of Cheerios®. In John 21 we get to witness the apostle Peter drenched in redemption in front of his peers. The only thing he's more famous for than walking on water with Jesus is denying Him three times. Up until the denial, Peter had practically been the star of the class. A little showy maybe, but stars can sometimes be like that. By the time the camera hits him in John 21, we have a humbler version of Peter. We love the earlier version in Matthew 14, where he has the audacity to shout over the storm, "Lord, if it's you, command me to come to you on the water" (v. 28). But, if we're willing to appreciate a subtler wonder, the post-failure version of Peter is equally compelling. We get the feeling John barely got the words "It is the Lord!" out of his mouth before Peter plunged in the water and swam for dear life to Jesus. Further, instead of lightening his load for a sleeker swim, he grabbed his outer cloak and put it back on. More modesty, less showiness. More listening, less yakking. More Jesus-confidence, less me-confidence. In Christ's upside-down kingdom, those are upgrades.

Today's compass setting offers us an opportunity to underscore a previous point and establish a new one. Let's underscore first. Never one to waste words, by the time Jesus is asking the same question three times, He's tapping His spoon on a glass to get the attention at the table. Most theologians nod to the probability that the number of times Christ asked Peter if he loved Him was intended to match the number of times Peter denied Him. A do-over: same man, same mouth, same subject (Jesus), opposite outcome. If that is a new thought to you, don't move past it quickly. Savor the splendid redemption. The distinct way Jesus pairs affection and vocation in the scene also drums the point we've touched on in our quest: the single greatest motivator for our obedience to His calling is our tremendous affection for Him.

Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.

Feed my lambs.

Then again. And again.

Tuck this somewhere easily accessible in your memory: the harder the obedience, the harder you pray for love. Don't just pray to be strong. Pray to love Jesus more than anyone or anything else on this earth, believing to your core that the best thing you could do for all others in the long run is to love Him most. The path of least resistance in a hard act of obedience is the one that has been forged ahead by love. When Jesus has so thoroughly captivated you that to follow Him is to follow your heart, the pure romance of your quest will take you places the bravest adventurer would fear to tread.

Now, onto the new point. You no doubt caught the million dollar question Peter asked Jesus in John 21:21: "Lord, what about him?" Few things on the quest of faith will trip us up more often than comparing ourselves with others in eyeshot. And social media has offered us an ocean-wide eyeshot. When our heads are whipping side to side, it's hard to focus on the way ahead. When we judge by appearances or compared experiences based on partial understanding at best, we will sooner or later come to the conclusion that Jesus isn't fair. The problem is, it's hard to measure grace by a fair yardstick.

Notice Peter asks the question once, but John quotes the answer twice:

erse 22: "what is that to you?"

erse 23: "what is that to you?"

oose translation? "That, Peter, is none of your business."

And yet that trips us up over and over. "Jesus, why didn't you call me to that?" "Why didn't you give me a gift like that?" "Why didn't it work out for me like that?" "Why can't I have success like that or a ministry like that?" "Why can't I find love like that?" "Why didn't my marriage go like that?" "Why aren't my kids like that?" "Why couldn't I look like that?" "Why isn't my health like that?" "Why couldn't your plans for me have been like that?"

Want to add a few examples?

The answer is left dangling at the Gospel's end on the hook of a question mark: *What is that to you?* In this competitive culture we live in, that seems to be everything. The flip side of the question "what about him/her?" is "what about me?" That one coin flips continually in the grimy hand of comparison. If we don't want to be driven to distraction on our quest, tripping constantly, knees and elbows skinned and bloody, competition may require more than resistance. With sibling rivalry making a public laughingstock of the family of Christ, it needs renouncing. Fellow believers are meant to be companions, not competitors. They are intended to be dearly loved joys and crowns to us (Phil. 4:1) as our sandals flap through thorny soil. They are comforts on a globe aflame with fear and whirling with anxiety.

How do the following segments illustrate this truth?

2 Corinthians 7:5-7	Colossians 4:10-11

In a world where Jesus followers often feel alienated, we can run to one another, huddle, laugh, and muse for a moment and almost taste home.

Whose company gives you what you think might be a foretaste of heaven's fellowship? Name several people.

We squirm for the apostle Peter in John 21:21 because we'd have wondered *What about _____?*, too, even if we dearly loved the other follower. Peter surely loved John dearly. Perhaps he simply wondered if he got the short straw over the denial. The irony is that John may have had questions of his own in regard to the others when he was banished to Patmos. He was the only one of the Twelve left on earth. The others had gotten to offer their lives in martyrdom and were safely in the presence of their dearest Love. In what surely was nearly unbearable isolation, under the beating sun with old, aching bones, don't you imagine the beloved disciple wondered, *Why didn't Your plan for me go like that? What on earth am I doing here?* Then one shocking Lord's day, he got a glimpse (Rev. 1:9-10). We may catch a glimpse this side of the veil why Christ's plan for us didn't mirror someone else's, but we will not truly understand until we're in His presence. Perhaps right there at the marriage supper of the Lamb, we will see the Bride of Christ in her fullness, put completely together, lacking nothing, and we will marvel over the brilliant lace of a billion threads, not one left hanging.

Return to John 21:22. Record Christ's directive to Peter and take it as personally as you would if you were eye to eye.

Here's what you have to give Jesus that no one else on earth can give Him: your faithfulness. You follow Him. Cheer others on with lavish generosity and all the more when there is no reciprocity. Encourage, assist, bless, and celebrate others. Esteem them above yourself without hating yourself. Jealousy and rivalry are relentless bloodhounds on the quest, smelling blood in every whiff of insecurity. Let's quit giving off the scent.

In John 13:1-17, Christ slack-jawed His disciples (none more so than Peter) by getting up from the supper table, tying a towel around His waist, pouring water into a basin, and washing their filthy feet.

Why did He do such a thing according to John 13:14-15?

What question did Jesus ask them in John 13:12?

The CSB words the question to perfection: "Do you know what I have done for you?" Reflect on the profoundness of Christ's question as one of His present followers. Consider your own answer in terms of the immediate context of John 13:1-17 and Christ's similar teachings.

Do you know what He has done for you by calling you ...

to serve rather than be served?

to humility rather than hubris?

to the feet of others rather than over their heads?

to the high road of loving your enemies and blessing those who curse you?

to dispense grace when the natural inclination would be to shame and blame?

to practice mercy over judgment?

Consider the manifold wisdom of Jesus and what a favor He's done His followers. Le the question marinate a moment then put pen to paper to answer it. Let it fall direct on you by writing your name in this blank:

Do you know what I have done for you, _____?

In all likelihood, there are people with whom you're either competition-prone or competition-thrown. The latter refers to comparisons others make between you and someone else. Spectators love competitions so they fuel the fight. Refuse to entertai them. Talk to Jesus and ask Him to help you identify the triggers, to deliver you from the temptation to enter the contest, and to empower you to persist in victory even if others keep competing. Ask Him to replace any envy you have for another person wit genuine appreciation and affection.

Perhaps no one in the New Testament was put to a harder "what about me?" test than John the Baptist. He was the forerunner of Jesus and related by blood. John ha baptized Jesus and sent his own disciples to follow Him, yet Jesus did not show up t rescue John from prison. He was performing magnificent signs and wonders elsewhe Jesus said of John, "Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one greater than John the Baptist has appeared" (Matt. 11:11), but He did not stop John's beheading. Did Jesus even care? Matthew 14:13 reports that, "When Jesus heard about it, he withdrew from there by boat to a remote place to be alone." John knows now why h didn't get the miraculous intervention others did, and Romans 8:18 has become his living, breathing reality. Can you imagine the reunion between Jesus and John? It is unthinkable that he would have said in retrospect, "If I had it to do all over again, I'd still want to be somebody else." It is easier to imagine a man who'd made a wardrob of camel's hair and a diet of locusts singing "O for a thousand heads to give."

Trust Jesus when everybody seems to be getting a miracle but you. When you feel forsaken and yet remain faithful, you are the miracle.

Write Christ's words in Matthew 6:6.

No matter what anyone has that you don't have, no one gets to have more of Jesus than you. No one gets to have more access to God than you. No one is more loved or cherished. No one gets to worship Him more, enjoy Him more, savor His words more, trust Him more, sing to Him more, or receive more of His warmth and comfort.

Turn for the final time in this six-week quest to Luke 11:13. Read it, then write the fifth recalibrating question. Then, Beloved of God, answer it.

5.5

We arrive today at a "Y" in the road after five weeks of walking out our quests within waving distance of one another with our compasses synced. That the grace of getting to serve has never lost its luster to me testifies both to the unforgettably muddy depths of defeat God pulled me out of and the immutable saving, cleansing, sanctifying power of Christ's cross. I don't know if I've worn you out or if God's Spirit invaded these pages as I prayed He would and made this quest energizing to you. On the very first day we discussed that, according to author J. L. Hancock's painstaking research, the KJV Bible is home to 3,298 questions.[6] The sum of questions in most formal translations would fall somewhere in the same ballpark. You may feel at this point that you've looked up all of them. You are a saint and I thank God for you.

To tie up our six-week quest without writing out your five recalibrating questions would be a travesty so, by all means, get to it.

" ?" (Genesis 3:9)

" ?" (Genesis 3:11)

" ?" (John 1:38)

" ?" (Matthew 8:26)

" ?" (Luke 11:13)

I proposed that bringing candid, current answers to these five divine questions not to diary, friend, pastor, teacher, or mentor but—straight to the One who originally asked them can potentially recalibrate and reignite a walk that has lost steam, gotten off track, or stuck in a cul-de-sac. I pray this will prove true. But, no matter what path you take, always know you can find intimacy with God again. Ask, seek, knock.

Early this week I told you that our final miles together would bump us back into all of the five recalibrating questions. We've already bumped into three: *What are you seeking? Where are you? How much more?* Before this lesson ends, you'll discover, *Who told you that?* In today's query, *Why are you afraid?* will reemerge. But let's talk a final time about the broader spectrum of questions beginning with the provocative, often bewildering word *why*. The path is too why-prone not to mention it again toward the end.

Why do you think our human minds are loaded with whys?

My husband, Keith, was famous in his family for his insatiable whys. Every explanation was met with another question. Family members still quote dearly departed Aunt Emma (pronounced Aint Emmer) who lost her temper with him when he was five. Somewhere exceeding a dozen questions, she blurted out, "There ain't no why to it!" But, that's just it. Some of us don't think like Aint Emmer. For us, part of wonder is wondering why.

I think we humans are loaded with questions starting with why because *homo sapiens* (Latin *sapiens* meaning *intelligence*[7]) were created in God's image. We were created with an impressively vast but finite capacity for understanding by a Creator with complete and infinite understanding. We want to know why because we want to understand. We want to understand because we were created in His image. One of countless things to deeply appreciate about God is that, while He steadfastly maintains the right to conceal certain explanations, He doesn't forbid us the right to ask why. The word *why* pops up 483 times in the CSB. Often He, who knows all answers, is the One asking. A smattering:

Jeremiah 44:7 "Why are you doing such terrible harm to yourselves?"

Matthew 9:4 "Why are you thinking evil things in your hearts?"

Matthew 26:10 "Why are you bothering this woman?"

Luke 24:38 "Why are you troubled?"

John 20:15 "Why are you crying?"

Choose two of the five, look up the context, and record it in this space.

Twenty-two times the psalmists ask the question *why*, including questions directed straight to God like "Why have you forgotten me?" (Ps. 42:9) and an astonishing "Wake up, LORD! Why are you sleeping?" (Ps. 44:23). God had not forgotten them nor does He sleep. However, His hands fashioned human emotions with an outlet: the mouth. When questions are brought to Him with sincere angst and pain, in pursuit of God-given understanding, crying out for the repair of intimacy's breach, He does not deny them volume. He may counter with questions of His own as in Job's case but not as a beating for asking. Hebrews 4:15 assures us that Jesus, our great high priest, is able to sympathize with us in every way. Surely this is one of the reasons the Holy Spirit preserved for us in permanent ink Christ's loud cry from the cross.

"Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni?" that is,
"My God, my God, why have you
forsaken me?"

MATTHEW 27:46, ESV

I appreciate the English language supplying a word that rolls from the depths of the soul and out of our mouths like a wail. If I may be so bold, *why* has the perfect phonetic to come forth like a primal howl. In our deepest pain when our souls feel like they're rupturing, we can throw our heads back, open our mouths wide and belt out, *Why?* We may often not get answers, but not because there ain't no why to it. Oh, yes, there is. It's just not time to hear it.

Remember the opening of our quest when we corresponded the five recalibrating questions to five of six oft-repeated investigative questions: *Who? What? Where? Why? How?* One investigative question was missing in our recalibrations and I assured you it would emerge at the end.

Which was missing?

For people of faith who take God at His word, many "ifs" get shoveled away, but there in the deep cleft echoes the question, *When?*

Lord, when?

I know You will _____ because You cannot lie, but when?

I know all things will work together for good, but when?

I know sowing seeds of Your Word reaps a harvest, but when?

I know You will defend Your own, but when?

I know joy comes in the morning, but when on earth will it be morning?

So often the testing is not so much in the believing but in the waiting. What are a few of your own current questions beginning with the words *Lord, when?*

On numerous occasions the psalmist cried, "How long, O Lord?" Here are two:

Lord, how long will you look on? Rescue me from their ravages; rescue my precious life.

PSALM 35:17

How long will the wicked celebrate?

PSALM 94:3

Revelation 6:9-11 poignantly depicts souls of martyrs under the altar crying out with a loud voice, "Lord, the one who is holy and true, how long until you judge those who live on the earth and avenge our blood? So they were each given a white robe, and they were told to rest a little while longer …"

Read the following segments and explain how each one revolves around the question *When?*

cts 1:6-8

Corinthians 13:9-12

Peter 5:4

John 2:28

To me, no segment of Scripture speaks more magnificently to when than 1 Peter 1:3-7. Read these verses from the NIV and circle three time frames: now/for a little while/when.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

As you run the course of your quest, know that in between your "now" and "wh is just "a little while." What seems long now will seem a heartbeat then. Let t words become the banner-waving answer to all that is ultimately worth waiting f When Jesus Christ is revealed.

In the first advent, God wrapped His Son—the *Logos*, meaning Word swaddling clothes of flesh to dwell among mortals, and though Isaiah 53:2 inform us He had no beauty that they should desire Him, remarkably they did. Awakened by His Spirit, they were undistracted by His ordinariness and they beheld His gl the glory of the One and Only (John 1:14). In the second advent all will behold t beauty of His holiness. Many will grieve that they did not believe, but all will ga and bow at the excruciating sight of pure majesty.

Here we are, between those two advents. This One, who is our all, present amon us, His Spirit within us, is hidden from our natural eyes. For now, quavering on t tight rope of faith suspended between those two visible appearings, the height divine revelation is catching any glimpse of Christ's beauty. In all my years of li beating the life out of me, I have always and only come back to life one way. G dazzling me with Jesus.

May the unseen One, who fills all in all, peel away the cataracts our distraction have left on our spiritual eyes and grant us glimpses of Himself and the grace t bear and share them rightly. The whole earth is full of His glory, so keep your eye wide open, Traveler. You are no aimless wanderer. Stay in the Scriptures. Seek th filling and thrilling of the Spirit. Savor good company. Sing, muse, dance, rest, an leap often. Laugh hard because life is hard and laughter is fine medicine. Don keep your tears bottled up. Let them go, trusting God to be your bottler. That wa none will go to waste.

You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.

PSALM 56:8, NLT

Anyway, blinking tears while reading Scripture can be like wipers on a filthy windshield. Suddenly you can see.

I could nod my head until my neck wrenched over these words from the pen of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., "I wouldn't give a fig for the simplicity on the near side of complexity, but I would give my right arm for the simplicity on the far side of complexity."[8]

Those of us with quest in our blood will hunt the Word and world for thousands of scattered puzzle pieces. We'll shout praise to God for every discovery and exult over each handful of pieces that fit together. Still, no matter how long we live, we'll depart this place with hundreds of pieces strewn about. Then, finally, in eternity, we will open our eyes to every puzzle put together with seamless perfection comprising one solitary portrait. We will see His face and His name will be on our foreheads (Rev. 22:4).

I've always loved fireworks. I don't mind them loud. I like the way they burst the sky with fountains of light and how you can only really see them when it's dark outside. Boy, is it dark outside. How about you and I stand right here together for one final moment of our convergent quests and allow God to set off the densest set of questions in the New Testament like fireworks for a few adventurers who have come to appreciate them?

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

ROMANS 8:31-35

Nope.

In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

ROMANS 8:37

Stay the quest, Beloved of God. It's this, then bliss.

Return to Matthew 8:26 and allow the fourth recalibrating question to circle back around. Write it here.

The goal of the quest of faith is not to be fearless. It's to know you are never, ever Christ-less. Bring Him those fears. If you still have the same ones you recorded in Week One, talk to Him and ask Him to help you comprehend why they refuse to be quieted. If you have new ones, tell them to Him.

Record Christ's words in Matthew 14:27.

Note Christ's exhortation "Take courage!" (NIV). For your most stubborn fears, picture the process as an exchange. Hand Jesus your fears, and let Him trade you His courage.

Pen the words of Christ in Luke 12:32.

Who told you that?

Take a moment and reflect on your quest so far. Look back over each day of study and journal a brief note about what spoke to you, what you learned, and what course corrections you need to make. Then, spend a moment in prayer, writing from your heart to the Lord as you move forward on this quest.

DAY 1

Truths I encountered:

What I learned about myself and Jesus:

Course corrections I need to make:

DAY 2

Truths I encountered:

What I learned about myself and Jesus:

Course corrections I need to make:

DAY 3

Truths I encountered:

What I learned about myself and Jesus:

Course corrections I need to make:

DAY 4

Truths I encountered:

What I learned about myself and Jesus:

Course corrections I need to make:

DAY 5

Truths I encountered:

What I learned about myself and Jesus:

Course corrections I need to make:

Lord, as I move forward ...