

Just Thinking

95 doodles to noodle over

A JOURNAL, DEVOTIONAL, SKETCHBOOK and WHITEBOARD PRESENTATION
by JASON BOUWMAN

JUST THINKING

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for: Josina, Jamie, Jackson and Jewel

VERBA VOLANT, SCRIPTA MANENT.

(SPOKEN WORDS FLY AWAY, WRITTEN WORDS REMAIN.)

I've scribbled down a lot of silly ideas, quotes, proverbs, jokes and advice in multiple notebooks over the years. Thoughts which I found interesting. Words and illustrations which were helpful to me - stuff which I thought was worth keeping. Now I want to share the best of those with you. I hope you find them helpful too, and that they would bless you in some way. I'm deeply indebted to my family and many friends, colleagues, clients, mentors, coaches, teachers and authors who have shared their hard won experiences with me over the years. A few deserve special mention: Debra my faithful mate and best friend, Mom and Dad (RIP), my big brothers Ben, Andy, Tom and my sisters Connie and Catherine; my team at Compass Creative, Bert Kuik, Jack Wieske, Russ Fearon, Dave Fretz, Keith Verburg, Darren Bosch, Mark Wanders, Peter Kuehni, Chip Robinson, Warren Couglin, Wilf Wikkerink, Barry Hordyk, Harry Hutten, Jon Dykstra, Ryan Smith, Rev Ryan Kampen, Dr Arjan deVisser, Rev Rolf denHollander, Rev Peter Holtvliuwer and everyone who has been kind enough and cared enough to share their thoughts and ideas with me over the years.

jb

I like to play with words; it's true. I love

quotes and proverbs and pithy little

sayings. I love to draw. But more than

all of that, I have come to love the truth!

I do not claim this book to be infallible

but everything in this book is based on

personal experiences, things others

have told me, divine revelation and over

40 years of observation. I stand to be

corrected on anything I've included here.

Yet standing where I do today, this is

what I know to be true.

A WAR OF WORDS

We are at war. We are in a spiritual battle. It has been said that the first casualty in war is the truth. There are of course obvious lies and distortions that are easy to spot. But we have a very sneaky adversary, a master con artist who is adept at twisting things ever so slightly to make his lies a little harder to spot. Soon his little lies and half-truths are on our lips. They become part of our everyday language. They begin to inform our thinking and they even shape our view of ourselves and others.

German aviator and airline executive, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, tells this story.

"Suppose you were to take off from an airport at the equator, intending to circumnavigate the globe, but your

course was off by just one degree. By the time you returned to the same longitude, how far off course would you be? A few miles? A hundred miles? The answer might surprise you. An error of only one degree would put you almost 500 miles (800 km) off course...

No one wants his life to end in tragedy. But all too often,... we set out on what we hope will be an exciting journey only to realize too late that an error of a few degrees has set us on a course for spiritual disaster."

Big time failure doesn't typically happen overnight. It generally results from a series of small, correctable failures along the way. It is hard to spot these "one degree failures" in our own day-to-day

A pilot flying off course by only one 1 degree will miss his targeted destination by many miles if he fails to correct his course. Life is like that too. Constant course correction is needed. Particularly in our thinking. And in our choice of words.

activities. That's why we need a crystal clear flight plan for our life, an easy way to measure success or failure, and someone who cares enough about us to tell us when we're drifting.

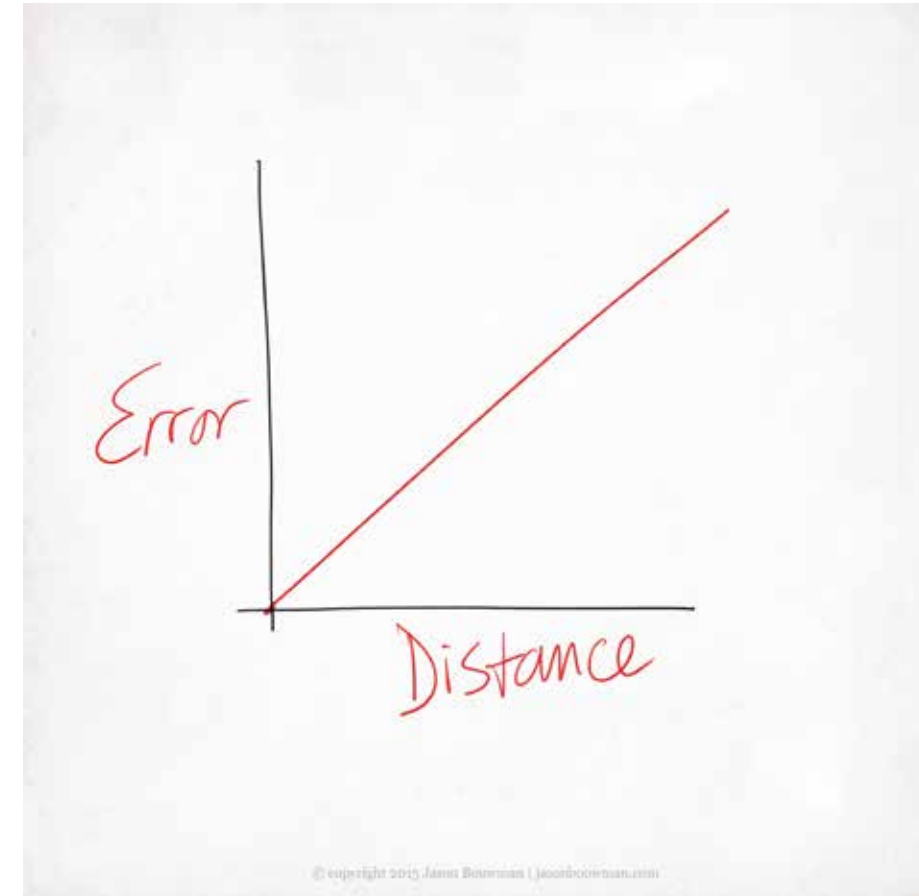
Straying off course doesn't have to result in epic failure. Anyone can make some "in-flight adjustments" along the way provided we have a flight plan. And we do. It's called the Bible.

We are people of "The Word." Great care has been taken to translate the Bible accurately. Great care has been taken in crafting our creeds and confessions. Why then shouldn't we also take great care with the words we ourselves use every day? And why wouldn't we be more discerning of the words we hear from others?

It is said that the average North American is exposed to over 10,000 messages a day. The writer of Proverbs says that "where there is an abundance of words sin is not absent."

Well then...

This book is my little way of helping to examine the kinds of things we say every day. Together we'll take the idioms, the axioms and the well-worn adages we use and hold them up to the light of truth. Then we'll make some minor in-flight adjustments to keep us on course. And of course we'll have a little fun with words along the way.



*God is good, life is tough,
don't get the two confused.*

- ANDY BANNISTER -

If there is only one of these pages that you end up remembering... I hope it's this one.

God is good. All the time.

You will hear it said many times (I know I did) that "life is good!" I don't want to be a downer but I gotta tell you that life is actually quite tough. Very tough for some. A friend of mine is suffering through some serious physical pain right now and is being offered little hope that his condition will ever change. Turn on the news. Be attentive to your friends, family and neighbours. Listen to your own heart. It won't take you long to observe that life is tough. Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble," but then he said, "Take heart! I have overcome the world."

LOOK UP: Psalm 102 | John 16



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If you can remember two pages from this book.
I hope you'll remember this one too.

I saw Simon Sinek present his now famous TED talk at a conference in Toronto and loved it. He summarized what I had been thinking for years - that we need to know WHY we do WHAT we do. However it turns out that he may not have gone quite deep enough. The Heidelberg Catechism teaches us to start not with "Why?" but with "Who?" or better yet "Whose?"

Whose am I ?
To whom do I belong?
To whom do I answer?

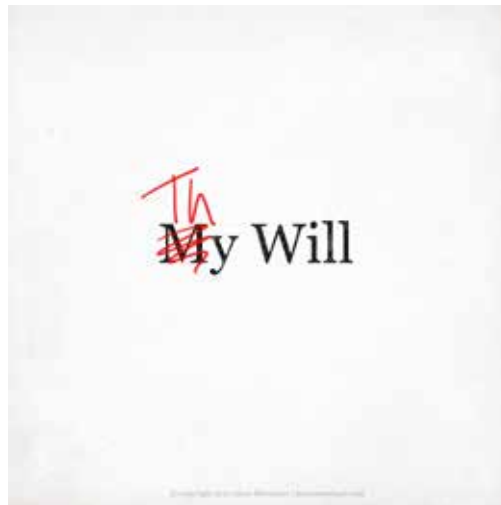
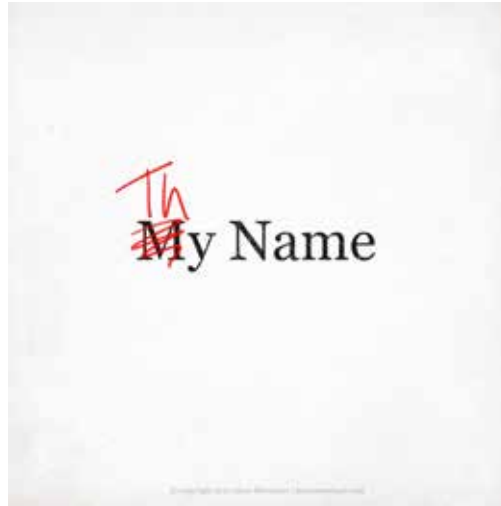
- WHO ? I am not my own. I am God's workmanship.
I belong to my faithful Saviour.
- WHY ? My life's purpose is to honour Him and seek His purposes and join in His kingdom-building work,
- HOW ? by living in alignment with His commandments and keeping in step with His Spirit,
- WHAT? using the unique gifts, talents, opportunities I have been given,
- WHEN? 24/7,
- WHERE? in every role and situation in which I find myself - at home, at work, at school, in my neighbourhood, and wherever else the will of God may take me.

LOOK UP: Psalm 139 | 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20



There's no question.
We are all kingdom builders.

The question is:
Whose kingdom are we building?



You're never too young to consider
what kind of legacy you are leaving.

Watch your **thoughts**; they become your words.
Watch your **words**; they become your actions.
Watch your **actions**; they become your habits.
Watch your **habits**; they shape your character.
Watch your **character**. It will determine your legacy.

Notice that it all starts with our thinking.
Who or what is informing your thinking these days?
Who or what is informing your thinking this morning?
This minute?

LOOK UP: Romans 12:2 | Phillipians 4:8



[God] tends to offer divine direction to those who are willing to order their daily lives around receiving input from Him.

- BILL HYBELS -

Pay attention to what has your attention.

#stayintheword

LOOK UP: Psalm 119 | John 15:1-8



Be joyful in hope,
Be patient in trouble,
Be constant in prayer.

LOOK UP: Romans 12:12 | Colossians 4:2 | 1 Thessalonians 5:17 | Philippians 4:6



I do not know how many crises, regrets, stresses, mistakes, blunders and near misses can be avoided by giving thought to one's steps, but I can say that if we fail to let God inform our view of life and our place in it - then for sure we better LOOK OUT! Darkened by our own thinking we are headed for destruction.

So think a little before doing something.

Determine what is most important. Set some goals. Make a few plans. And then get to work. But let God give you the proper **outlook** on life. Failing to do so will have you reacting to life as it happens to you, one near miss at a time.



LORD'S DAY 1

Q. What is your only comfort in life and death?

Essentially sin is robbing God of the glory that is due his name. All sinful behaviour, at its core, comes from thinking that we ourselves are in fact God.

A. That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil. He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation. Therefore, by His Holy Spirit He also assures me of eternal life and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for Him.

I am God's

"Although my conscience accuses me that I have grievously sinned against all God's commandments, have never kept any of them, and am still inclined to all evil, yet God, without any merit of my own, out of mere grace, imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ. He grants these to me as if I had never had nor committed any sin, and as if I myself had accomplished all the obedience which Christ has rendered for me, if only I accept this gift with a believing heart."

LD 23

The hardest lesson for me to learn was at the same time the most glorious truth I've ever embraced - that being "in Christ" means I am righteous before God. Boy did I have difficulty believing that. Perhaps I should say, "Oh, how I resisted that." For years I listened to the devil, the world, my own flesh and even those close to me hound me with accusations of being a sinner, totally depraved, unable to do any good, inclined to hate God and my neighbour. All of that is true of course but it's only half of the story. And half-truths are as good as a lie. I can't tell you the joy, freedom, release, peace I had when I discovered that when it comes to my salvation, "It [really] is finished." Therefore I now face no condemnation. Does this mean I'm not capable of sin anymore? Unfortunately not. That is the frustrating thing about life here on earth and living in an "earthly tent" (that's what the Bible calls our body). The things I want to do, I don't do and the things I don't want to do, I do. Frustrating! But that blessed frustration prompts me to ask each day again, "Who will save me from this body of death?" Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The struggle Paul describes in Romans 7 is real. Wretched man that I am too! But don't stop reading there. Keep going. "Who will save me from this body of death? Thanks be to God..." Romans 8 says there is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ. God's Spirit testifies with ours that we are children of God. Co-heirs with Christ. All because of the righteousness of Christ that now belongs to me too if only I accept this gift with a believing heart. Wow!



Sin describes some of my behaviour
but it is no longer my IDENTITY.

LOOK UP: 1 John 3:1a | Romans 6



“Religion says, ‘I obey, therefore I am accepted.’
Christianity says, ‘I am accepted, therefore I obey.’”

- ALISTAIR BEGG -

LOOK UP: Romans 8:16 | John 15:15, 16



Good works are a response to the gift of salvation,
not a requirement for salvation.

Good works are evidence of salvation,
not the means of salvation.

The term "*Sola Bootstrappa*" was shared with me
in a conversation I had with my friend Keith and it
stuck. It exposes what we're actually saying when
we tell ourselves or counsel others that the way to
win God's favour is to "try harder" or "pull ourselves
up by our bootstraps." But it's not true.

We don't work to achieve.

We work to say "thank you" for what has
already been achieved for us by Christ.

#itisfinished #grace

Sola Fide
Sola Scriptura
Solus Christus
Sola Gratia
Soli Deo Gloria
~~Sola Bootstrappa~~

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There's little disagreement among us Christians on what "should" be. But there can often be a big difference between "what should be" and what we actually experience each day. There's a gap!

It's here in this gap where we are tested in our faith. It's here in this gap that we do battle with the devil, the world and our own flesh. It's here in this gap where we are in danger of losing the free and full life that Christ bought for us.

The good news is that we're not alone in this gap!! Jesus is with us. His Spirit (the Helper) dwells in us. We also belong to a community of believers who are battling along with us in this gap.

One of the best ways we can help each other in this battle is to open God's word together, allow ourselves to be led back to the TRUTH about who God is, the TRUTH about His love for us, the TRUTH about Christ's work for us and His presence in us. Then, having been captured by the beauty of God and the abundance of His grace we begin to be transformed from the inside out.

So it would be tragic, then, if all we ever did when we were together was simply agree on what "should be" and carry on without minding the gap between what "should be" and "what is."

Here's an exercise for you:

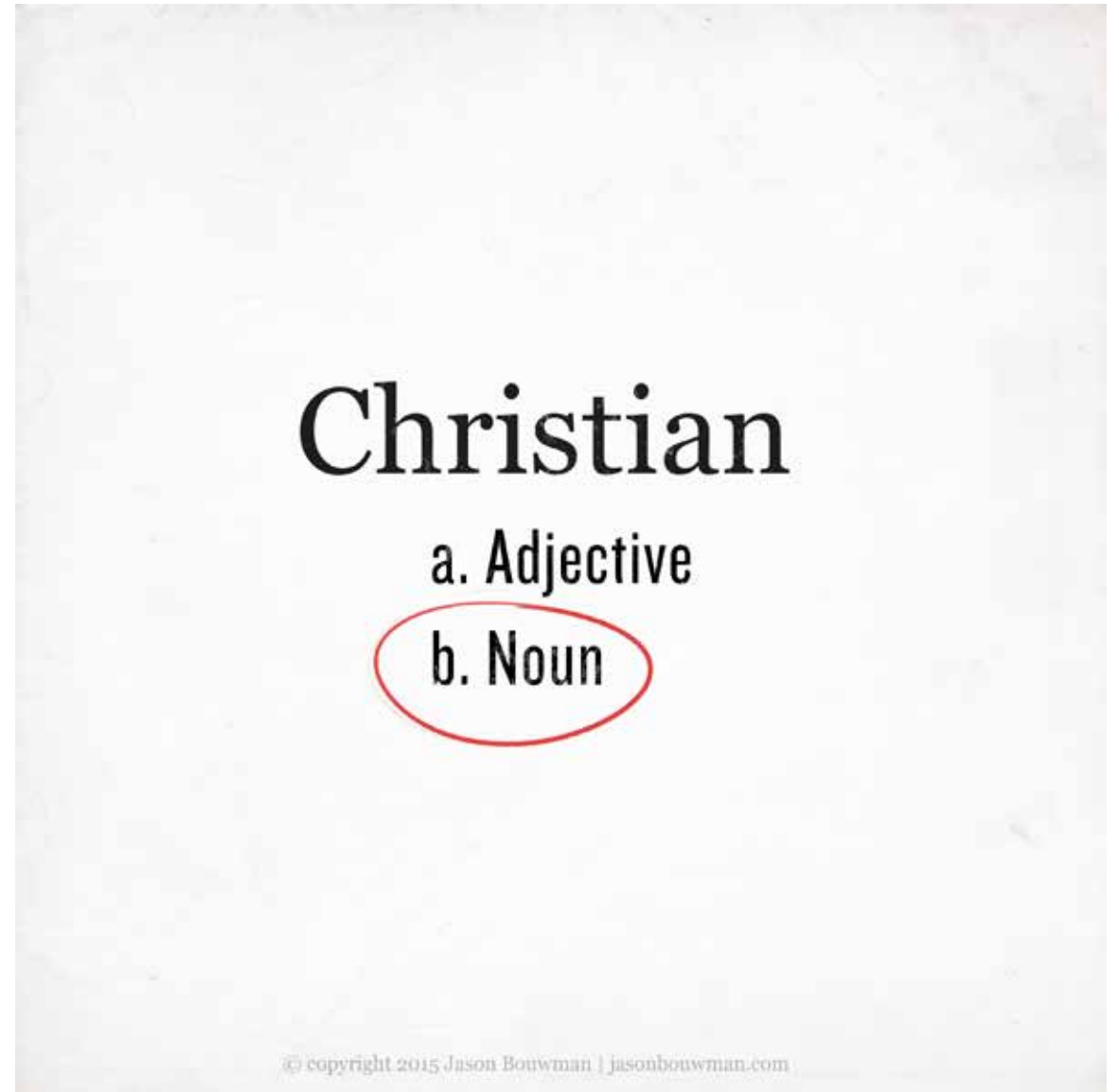
1. Ask:
 - What is the most important thing in my life?
 - What does it look like when this is happening?
2. Now ask:
 - Is that what my life looks like right now?
3. If the answer is "yes" ask:
 - Whom should I thank for that?
 - How might I show my thankfulness?
4. If the answer is "somewhat" or "no" ask:
 - What has gotten in the way?
 - What distractions might I be experiencing?
 - What might God have to say to me about that?
 - Has anyone else experienced this?
 - What advice might I give someone?
 - Whom could I ask to pray with me about this?



How would your view of self and others change if you stopped using the word “Christian” as an adjective? Do we still seek our identity in what we have or do instead of our life in Christ? One says, “I’m a Christian artist,” another “I’m a Christian businessman,” or “I’m a Christian teacher, Christian wife, or Christian dad.” But in all those statements we still identify primarily with a particular role or vocation - church remains a community where we still separate into cliques and groups which we can personally identify with rather than becoming a community that embraces the wonderful diversity of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

Could we not experience 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 more fully if we referred to ourselves instead as “artistic Christians,” “entrepreneurial Christians,” “pastoral Christians,” “married Christians,” “single Christians,” etc...?

“Christian” is a name given to a person who is “in Christ,” This is the only identity through which we enjoy true unity.



*Fruit, NOT trees,
is the end God has in mind.*

- A. W. TOZER -

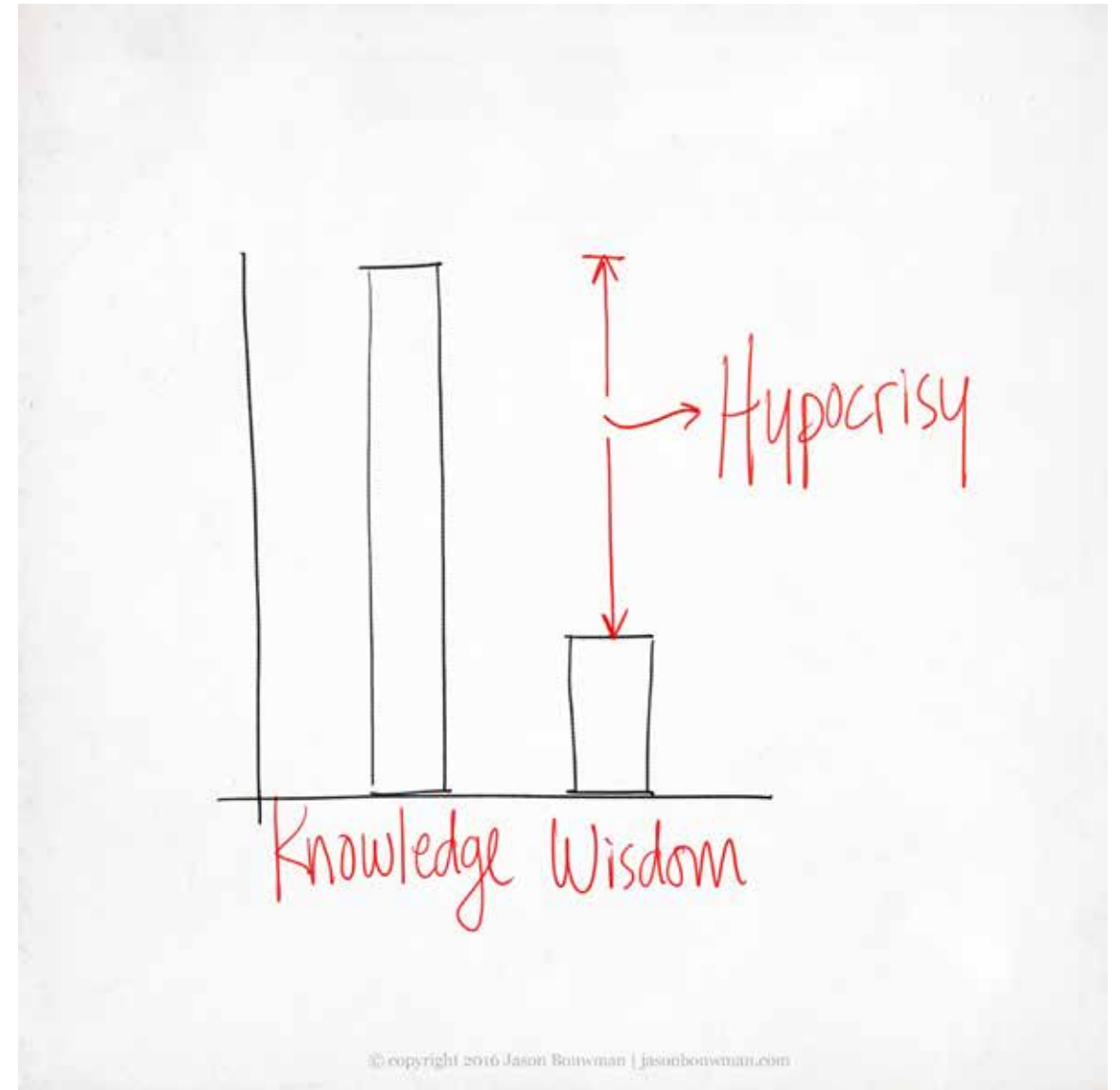
James says that faith without works is dead. The Heidelberg Catechism says it is impossible that those who are grafted into Christ by a true faith would not produce fruits of thankfulness. Jesus says, apart from me you can do no good thing. So when our behaviours do not resemble the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control) then we do well to examine our beliefs or lack of belief as the case may be.

LOOK UP: James 1:22-25 | Galatians 3:1-9 | 1 John 5 | Matthew 7:15-20



“The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives.”

- D.L. MOODY -



Your life is your message.
Actions speak louder than words.

#integrity

LOOK UP: James 2:14-17 | 1 John 3:18



Love does.

so... Do something!

Dream.
Risk.
Try.
Fail.
Learn.
Create.

Many books on business will tell you that ideas are a dime a dozen but it's execution that matters. My mom always put it more simply: "Do Something." We need people with imagination. We need good ideas. Just remember that imaginative \neq creative.

Do something. Create something. Make something of this world.



Forget: "What-you-see-is-what-you-get."
Instead: "Do-what-you-said-you-were-gonna-do."

Be slow to say "Yes"
but be quick to deliver when you do.

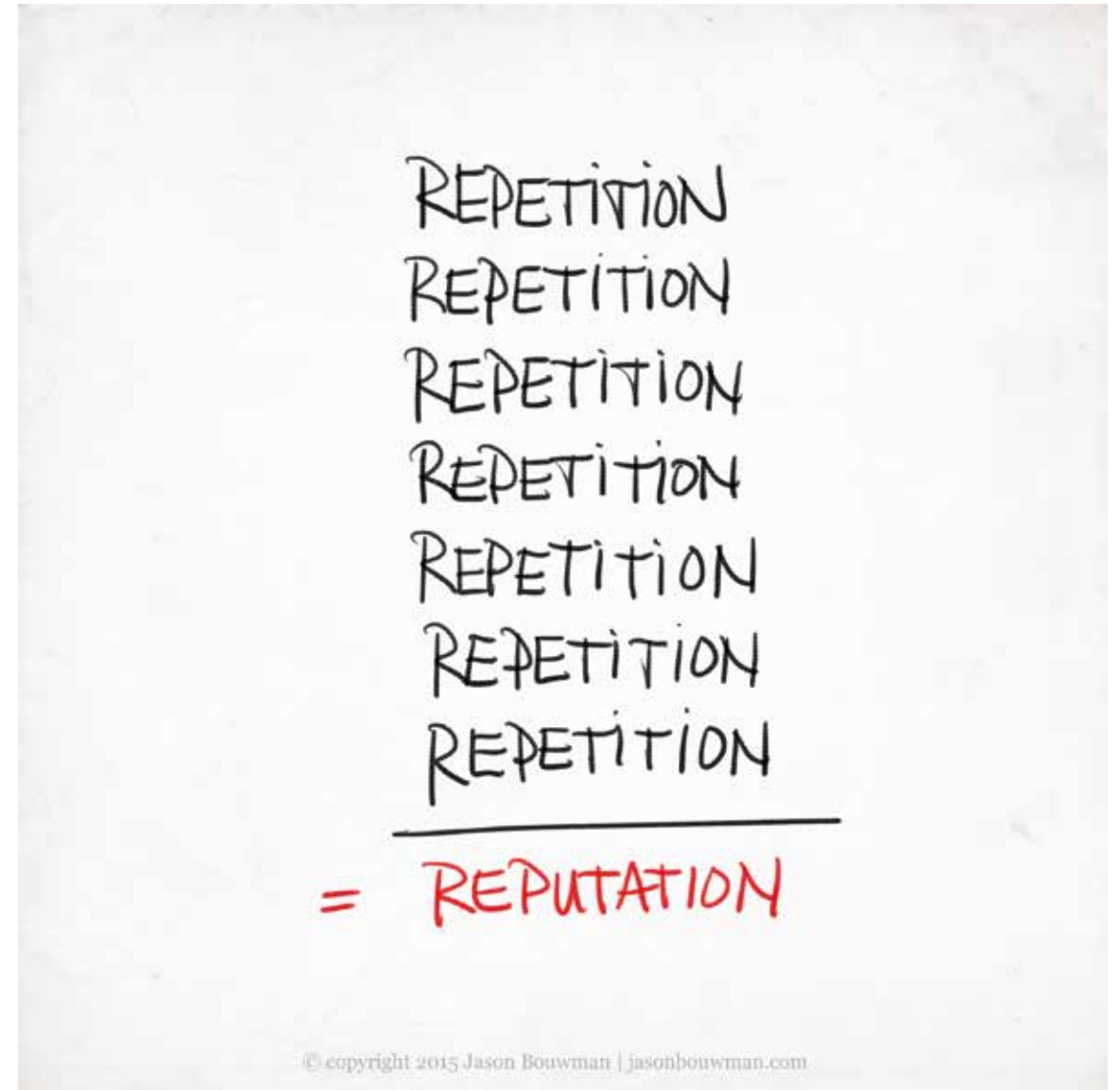
LOOK UP: Proverbs 6:5



| He who cannot be trusted with little
cannot be trusted with much.

People do not automatically owe you their trust.
Reputations are earned, the hard way, over time...
...Sometimes a very long time.

A reputation is built with a thousand little "choices." Therefore some will say, "You are what you repeatedly do." This is not true. We are not what we do. We are who God says we are. And He says we are His children. God is trustworthy. So as His child and image bearer be someone you can trust. Practice doing the right thing. All the time. Even when, maybe *especially* when, no one is watching. Don't do this because you need to prove yourself to God or to others, but do it as a testimony that you believe what God says about you. And do it because as an ambassador of Christ you do not want the name of your trustworthy God to be dishonoured on account of your untrustworthiness.



You can call yourself a Christian...
but it is by fruit that true faith is known.

We do not need to try really hard to pretend we're Christians...
No matter how hard a banana tree tries to produce apples it can't... it's a banana tree.

So no matter how hard we try on our own to be good Christians, we can't. Apart from Christ we can do nothing. But when we are "in Christ"... the fruit of His Spirit appears. And by its fruit true faith is known...

We did not and do not choose Him. He chose us and appointed us to bear fruit. And not just any kind of fruit but this kind of fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Faith clings to Jesus' work alone
And rests in Him unceasing;
And by its fruits true faith is known,
With love and hope increasing.
By faith alone we're justified;
Works serve the neighbor and supply
The proof that faith is living.

LOOK UP: Matthew 7:16 | John 15 | James 3:12



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Fear changes behaviour.
Love changes your heart.

LOOK UP: Romans 2:4 | Romans 8:15 | 2 Timothy 1:7-9 | 1 John 4:18



"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.

Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

- MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. -

LOOK UP: Isaiah 9:2-7 | John 3:19 | 1 John 1:5-7 | 1 John 2:9



ATTITUDE.

"The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, the education, the money, than circumstances, than failure, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company... a church... a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice everyday regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past...we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% of how I react to it. And so it is with you. We are in charge of our attitudes."

- CHUCK SWINDOLL -

LOOK UP: 1 Thessalonians 5:18



If you are reading this, that means you most likely have a device worth at least a couple hundred bucks, or access to one. When we consider that the average yearly income worldwide is about \$9,733, and that a third of the world's population survives on less than \$2 per day (that's less than \$800 per year, which is about the cost of a new iPhone), we begin to see how financially blessed we are.

If you live in Canada or the USA and have a home that you own or rent, and a full time job, and a car, you are richer than 85% of the people in this world. You are exceedingly financially wealthy.

Now consider that if you have any money saved, if you can afford to go on a vacation, if you have a hobby that requires some equipment or supplies, if you have a variety of clothes in your closet, if you have two cars (in any condition), and have a mortgage on your own home, you are in the top 5% of the world's wealthy. This is where I, and most of my friends, fit. Wow!

It is staggering to consider that we are richer than 6,935,000,000 other people. That is, six billion nine hundred and thirty five million people have less than us...

Puts things in perspective doesn't it?

Finally, if you have more than \$500,000 in assets (RRSPs, savings, stuff, a house that is paid in full, land, a farm, a business etc.) you are in the top 1% richest people in the world. You don't have to be Bill Gates to be in the top 1%.

"By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth." - 1 John 3:16-18

Contributed by: Ryan Smith: onechristiandad.com



Did you know that poverty is mentioned in the Scriptures 2,100 times?

Bono, lead singer for the band U2, says
"That's a lot of airtime. And that's not an accident."
One of the ways we show our thankfulness to God is by being generous towards others.
We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19)
We are generous as He is generous.
We provide for the needs of others,
as our needs have been provided for.

We often describe prayer as "giving thanks."
That's appropriate. The chief part of our thankfulness is prayer. But there's also a passage in James where it says:
"If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?"

So as you've been blessed, bless others.
In addition to prayer, share!

Give!
Thanks.

LOOK UP: Psalm 100:1 | Psalm 107:1 | James 2:16



Give Thanks!

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Be Kind. Always.

Why so Random?
~~Random~~ acts
of kindness

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LOOK UP: Job 6:14 | Psalm 145:13, 17 | Matthew 6 | Galatians 6:9 | 1 Thessalonians 5:14

“Worry, like a rocking chair, will give you something to do,
but it won't get you anywhere.”

- VANCE HAVNER -

LOOK UP: Philippians 4:6 | 1 Peter 1:16



Surviving or thriving?

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. ¹⁷ These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

John 15:1-8



Growthrough life.

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No pain,
No gain.

— ROMANS 8:17 —

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**There will be pain.
Either the pain of discipline
or the pain of regret.**

My friend Dave Fretz reminded me of this truth.

We want our lives to be comfortable, successful and predictable, but God is willing to compromise all of these in order to deal with our deepest difficulty: indwelling and remaining sin. Paul Tripp puts it this way: "In love, he's working on your biggest problem, and he won't stop working until the job is done."

I think of John 15 again - we are pruned so that we might bear even more fruit. But oh, how we hate the pruning process sometimes!

No pain, no gain they say.
But oh, how I idolize comfort.
Yet God is not interested in my comfort or my convenience.
He is interested in my character!!

God does not promise to spare us *from* suffering
But He does promise to spare us *though* we suffer.
And He promises that our suffering is not without purpose.
He can, and indeed does, turn all things to our good.

LOOK UP: Romans 5:3-5 | Romans 8 | James 1:2-5

We are, not metaphorically but in very truth, a Divine work of art, something that God is making, and therefore something with which He will not be satisfied until it has a certain character.

- C.S. LEWIS -

I was working on restoring an antique cabinet today and a thought occurred to me. We are all vessels, cabinets, built with care for a purpose. But somewhere along the way we got bumped, scratched and broken. Then maybe someone didn't really like the way we looked so they painted us with a new coat of paint that was more to their liking. It might've even felt good to us to have a new coat of paint and to be liked again. But trends are fickle and sooner or later our new coat of paint wasn't so cool any more. So we got painted again. And again. And we can get lost under those layers of paint - some of which have been meticulously applied.

But the master Craftsman comes along and sees His work all bumped and scratched and covered in layers of gaudy paint. He mourns that His handiwork has been so defaced. He decides to restore the piece He so lovingly made. It will be hard work. It will be messy. But His love for His handiwork is so great that He decides to go ahead.

First comes the heat. Oh, how it burns! We resist. We hang on to our coats. Don't you know how much I like this colour? The paint begins to discolour and blister. Then the scraper is applied. The identity is stubborn in places sticking hard to

the surface to the wood. But the Craftsman keeps working, heating, scraping. Then comes the paint stripper. It oozes in the cracks where there are still deposits of old paint. It stings and irritates and blisters the remaining coatings.

Then comes the sandpaper, first rough, gravely and harsh. Later finer grit is applied. It smooths the rough edges. It is not quite as traumatic, but it still hurts. It's constant. The Craftsman doesn't stop. He is persistent. He whistles while he works.

At long last there is a break.

And then we are anointed with oil. He caringly rubs into our surface the oil He's prepared and works it right down into our marrow. We take on a new shine. We are naked. But we are once again as we were supposed to be. Our unique grain stands out for all to see. Unique. Different. One of a kind.

Not all the other cabinets are pleased...
...but the Craftsman is pleased.

And He puts us in a place of honour in His house.

Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.

- C.S. LEWIS -

"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." - John 16:33

"I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one." - John 17:15

"You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule." - Matthew 5:3

"Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." - Romans 8:17

LOOK UP: Romans 8:18-39



The unchanging God brings about change in us for the express purpose of bringing us closer to the unchanging beauty of Himself.

- MARK WANDERS -

Change isn't hard.
Change is VERY HARD.

But isn't it true that we typically want to change the things that God has given us (our looks, our gifts, our situation) and we resist the change He would seek to bring about in us, namely, our holiness?



LOOK
~~Give up.~~

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GROW
~~Give up.~~

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Amnesia may be a tempting way to deal with our hurts but if we are to learn from our past, no matter how painful it might've been at times, we will need to learn the way of forgiveness. And the capacity to forgive comes from the place of having been forgiven so much ourselves.

In Christ, we are forgiven.
Let us then be ready to forgive.

LOOK UP: Colossians 3:13 | Ephesians 4:32



I don't know how much I've driven in the twenty years since I got my license, but I do know it's a lot, what with all those drives down to the South to visit my family. Here is one thing that has never varied across the hundreds of thousands of miles: When I take my foot off the pedal, the car does not speed up. It doesn't even maintain the same speed. Instead, from the very moment I take my foot off the accelerator, the car begins to slow. Allowing the car to coast is inviting the car to stop. It may take some time, but left on its own, it will stop eventually. It is inevitable.

I've been thinking about this lately because I see in my own life a tendency to coast — to coast in my relationships, to coast in my pursuit of godliness, to coast in my pursuit of God himself. And here are some things I've observed:

I do not coast toward godliness, but selfishness.

I do not coast toward self-control, but rashness.

I do not coast toward a love for others, but agitation.

I do not coast toward patience, but irritability.

I do not coast toward purity, but lust.

I do not coast toward self-denial, but self-obsession.

I do not coast toward the gospel, but self-sufficiency.

In short, I do not coast toward Christ, but toward self. When I stop caring, when I stop expending effort, when I allow myself to coast, I inevitably coast away from God and godliness. And this is exactly why I am so deeply dependent upon those ordinary means of grace, those oh-so-ordinary ways of growing in godliness—Scripture and prayer, preaching and fellowship, worship and sacrament. The moment those sweet means no longer appeal is the moment I begin to slow.

- Tim Challies -



CH
COAST

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“Everywhere you go, preach the gospel.
And if you need to, use words.”

- ANONYMOUS -

“At the end of the day the biggest obstacle to evangelism
is Christians who don't share the gospel.”

- AL MOHLER -

“No man who is full of himself can ever
truly preach the Christ who emptied himself.”

- J. SIDLOW BAXTER -

LOOK UP: Galatians 5:25 | Ephesians 4:29



Outreach ≠ Evangelism.

Outreach simply describes the act of reaching out – making a connection with someone. It's far more considerate to connect with people before you preach to them. To whom could you reach out today?



The words of Agur...

"I am weary... I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One."

What kind of knowledge is Agur talking about? Is there a difference between knowing (even a lot) about someone and really "knowing" them? I believe we will spend eternity discovering more and more about the inexhaustible wonders of our Almighty God.

But do you also know God? Personally? Intimately? Through a relationship with Christ? Are you growing in that kind of knowledge?

Increasing our head knowledge can be a wearisome business. Ecclesiastes says, "Of making many books there is no end and much study is a weariness of the flesh." But being in a relationship with Jesus is never a burden. To the weary Jesus says, "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest."

"Head knowledge" can be tested but "heart knowledge" is measured by testimony. And I believe that testimony spills out of a heart that has been filled to overflowing with joy. I want to know more about God. I also want to rest and delight in Him. I also want to experience His indwelling presence and grow to love Him more. I want you to know Him that way too.

Is your public profession of faith a test or testimony?
I'd say "BOTH."

LOOK UP: Proverbs 30



...over the hills and everywhere.



It is never my custom to use words lightly. If twenty-seven years in prison have done anything to us, it was to use the silence of solitude to make us understand how precious words are and how real speech is in its impact on the way people live and die.

- NELSON MANDELA -

Our words... They carry life or death.

LOOK UP: Proverbs 18:21



*The words of the reckless maim like exploding bombs,
but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*

- PROVERBS 12:18 -

We reap what we sow.
When you speak, sow seeds of life,
not seeds of destruction.
Sow seeds rather than bombs.

LOOK UP: Proverbs 12:6 | Proverbs 13:2 | Proverbs 18:21 | James 3



When you argue with a fool, take care
to ensure he's not doing the same.

Words

Break	Build up
Enrage	Encourage
Hurt	Heal
Provoke	Persuade
Ruin	Rescue
Sting	Soothe
Cut	Comfort
Confuse	Create Clarity

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RULE OF THUMB:

If you can't say it to
someone's face,
don't say it.



We must tell the truth.
Always.
But there's no need to be brutal about it.
Season your words with grace.

The next time someone asks you,
"Can I be brutally honest with you?"
do yourself and others a favour and say:

"NO."
"You can be honest with me. Blunt even. But not brutal."

LOOK UP: Proverbs 16:21 | Proverbs 25:15 | Ephesians 4:15 | Colossians 4:6



~~Brutally~~ Honest

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| *Clarity in communication is an act of love.*

| - DOUGLAS WILSON -

TIPS FOR WRITING:

Love the Truth.

Love Words.

Love your Subject.

Love your Audience.

PREACH
REACH
EACH

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A professor of theology once explained to me that the root of the word discipline is “disciple” and so a complete understanding of the concept of church discipline includes things like encouragement, mentoring, training... In other words: Disciple making.

We shouldn't be so quickly satisfied that we belong to the “True Church” because we expel the odd delinquent every now and then. A True Church should have a noticeably nurturing, encouraging culture where everyday conversations are typically a deeper. It will have more meaningful discourse, seasoned with grace that points to the sufficient and life changing work of Christ. A True Church should be a place where everyone is encouraged/ challenged to (and maybe more importantly, given opportunity to) grow and mature and bear fruit.

LOOK UP: 1 Thessalonians 5:4-11



Be interesting^{ed}

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People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

One way to show you care is to listen. Here are a couple of things that might make us better listeners:

- Talk less
- Mind our posture
- Lose the distractions
- Get comfortable with silence
- Mind our thinking
- Ask questions

Talk less - Common sense. God gave us two ears and one mouth. We should use them in that proportion.

Posture - Open and inviting. Nod. Tilt head to one side. Smile. Raise eyebrows. Lean in (at times). Eye contact. Studies show that 93% of communication is non-verbal. Posture (including facial expressions, gestures) accounts for 55%.

Lose the distractions - Turn off the phone! Put it away. Outta sight. Phones are helpful but can be extremely distracting.

Seek to understand before
seeking to be understood

- STEPHEN COVEY -

Get comfortable with silence/long pauses. Some folks might need [much] more time to summon the courage to speak. Constantly filling dead air with more talking will not afford them the opportunity.

Mind our thinking. Can we park our own thoughts for the moment? Rather than busy ourselves with formulating our answers or comments, can we really try to fully understand what someone else is saying? Don't be a "me monster."

Lead with questions as opposed to answers.

This one is huge! You don't have to have all the answers, but have a few good questions and you'll lead yourself and others to the answers. The brain cannot leave an unanswered question alone. So ask good questions and watch the creative fireworks begin.

Could it be that if we talked less, positioned ourselves to really listen, freed ourselves from distractions, allowed for long moments of silence and parked our own thinking while others spoke.... Is it likely that we'd come up with better follow up questions? Let's try it!



Listening is an art.

L - Lean a little

I - Incline your ear

S - Sit still

T - Take notes

E - Eye contact

N - Nod your head

LOOK UP: Proverbs 18:21



Have you noticed how some people seem really quiet and reserved while others always seems to be talking? Did you know that there are two types of people?

Some people need to think before they can speak.
Others speak as a way to process their thinking.

Which one are you?

It was a big revelation to me when I first learned about introversion and extroversion. I suddenly understood myself and others more clearly. I've since seen a lot of material on the subject. But the wisest thing I read came from Tim Challies who warned that introversion is not an excuse to be unsociable and extroversion is no excuse for dominating every social interaction. Rather, introverts must learn to socialize and extroverts must learn to listen every now and then and think a little before they speak. However the thing both need to be most mindful of is this: Energy levels.

An introvert will need times of solitude to "recharge the battery."
And an extrovert will need to be with people to re-energize.

So it's not that we get to embrace our introversion or extroversion. It's not about one being better than the other. It's not that we don't have anything to learn from each other... But we best recognize that people are both a source of energy for extroverts and a major power drain for introverts.

Be aware of what drains your batteries and re-charge appropriately.



"Quiet people have the loudest minds."

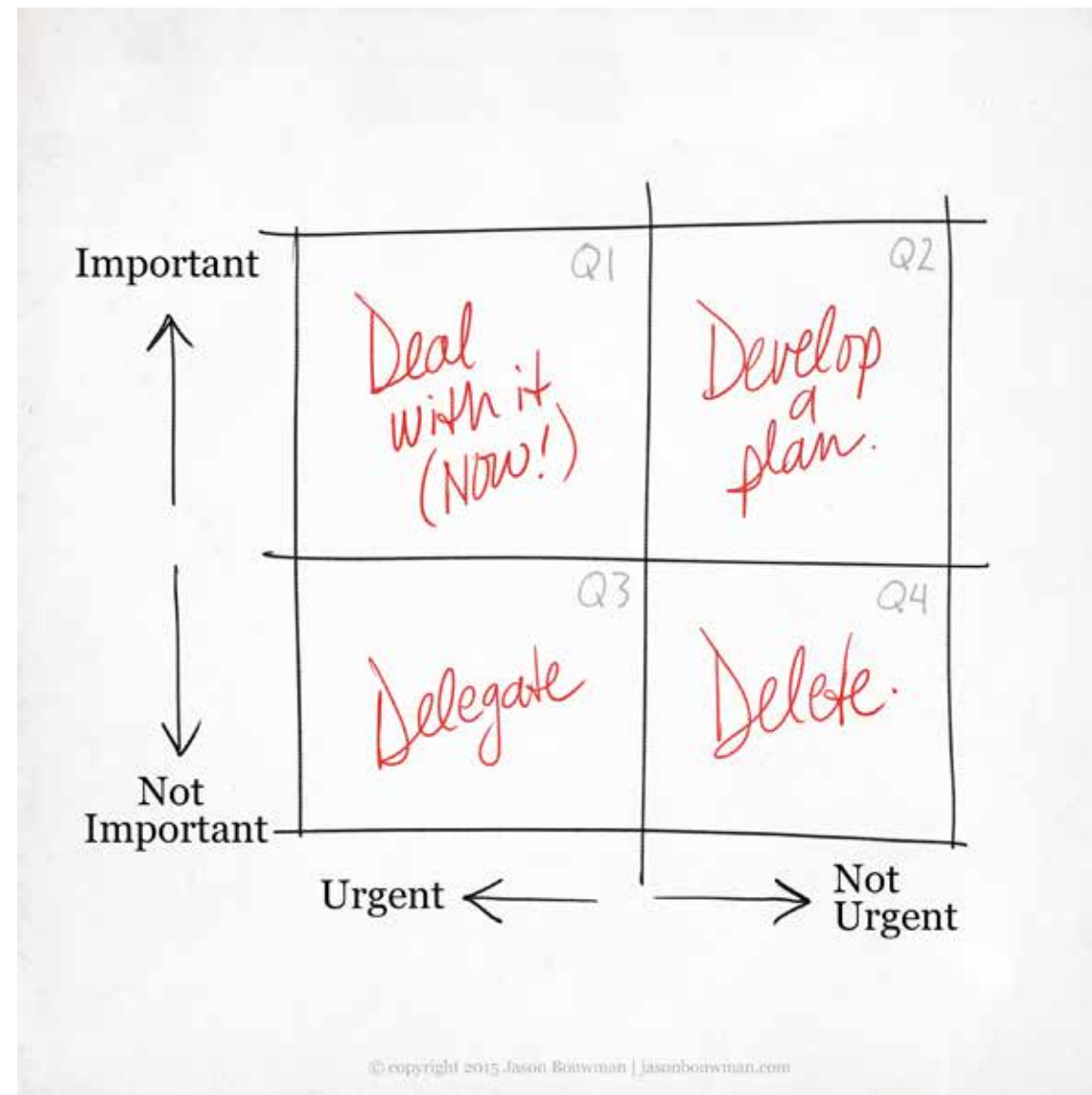
| *All progress starts
with telling the truth.*

There will be no perfection this side of heaven... but with God's grace we can experience growth and progress and sanctification.



“The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.”

Here's a little variation on Stephen Covey's quadrants.
Essentially, you want to be spending lots of time in Q2 and little to no time in Q4.



First comes thought...

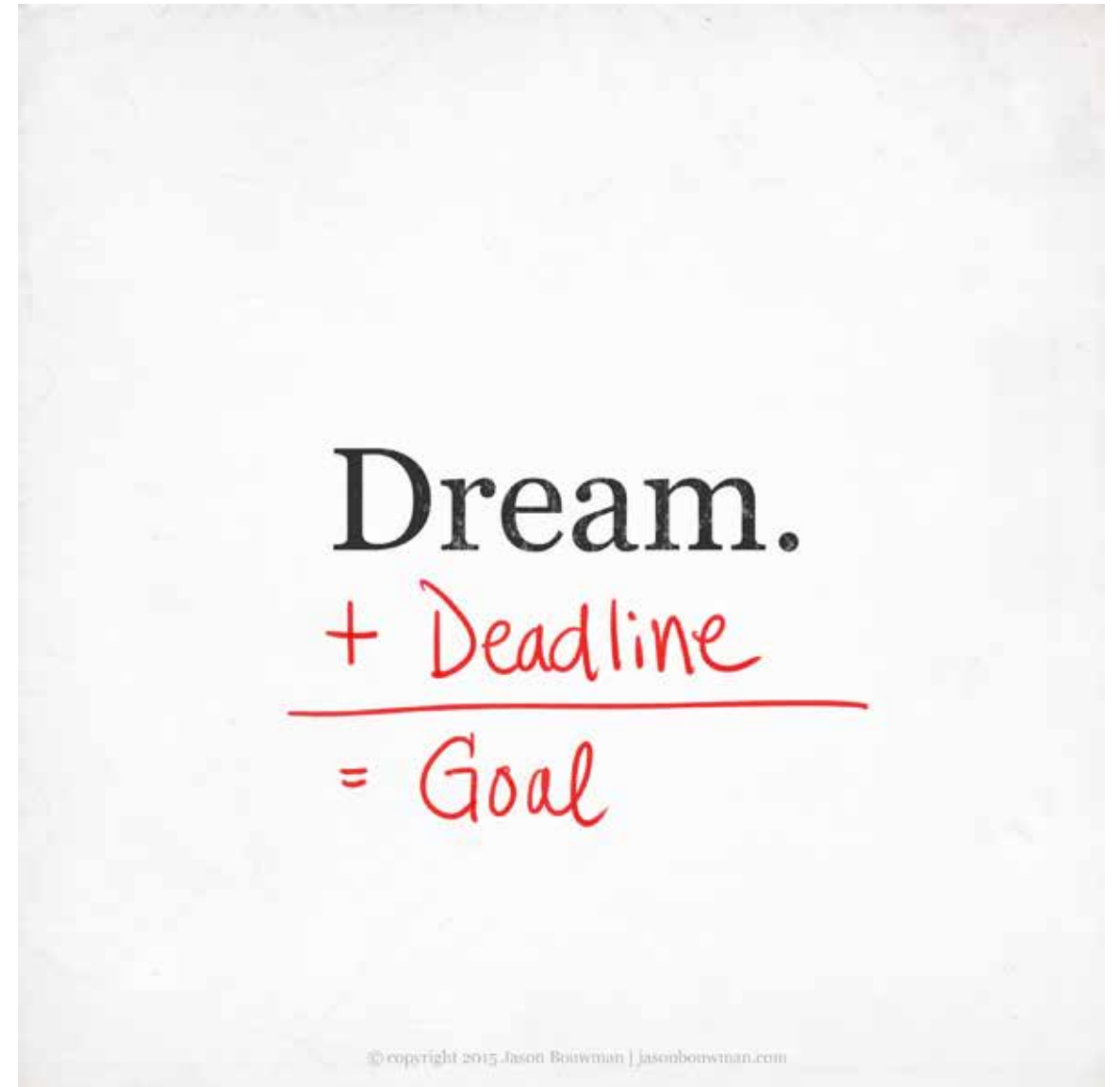
Then organization of that thought into ideas and plans.

Then transformation of those plans into action, reality.

The beginning you will observe is in your imagination.

- Napoleon Hill -

LOOK UP: Romans 12:2



Try not. Do. Or do not. There is no try.

- YODA -

“I will ~~try~~ DECIDE.

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*Dreaming and scheming
cost nothing, but you must
pay the price of commitment
in order to deliver results.*

In a breakfast of bacon and eggs, the chicken is involved but the pig is committed. A Kamikaze pilot with 50 missions under his belt is involved but not committed. Many are willing to be involved. Few are truly committed.

Some might say I'm not doing a great job of selling the benefits of commitment.

But there's no "sell" here.
Only sacrifice.
The benefit of which belongs to others.

#wwjd



committed
Get ~~involved~~.

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Everybody wants to save the earth;
nobody wants to help Mom do the dishes.

- P.J. O'ROURKE -

God comes first.

Others second.

I am third.

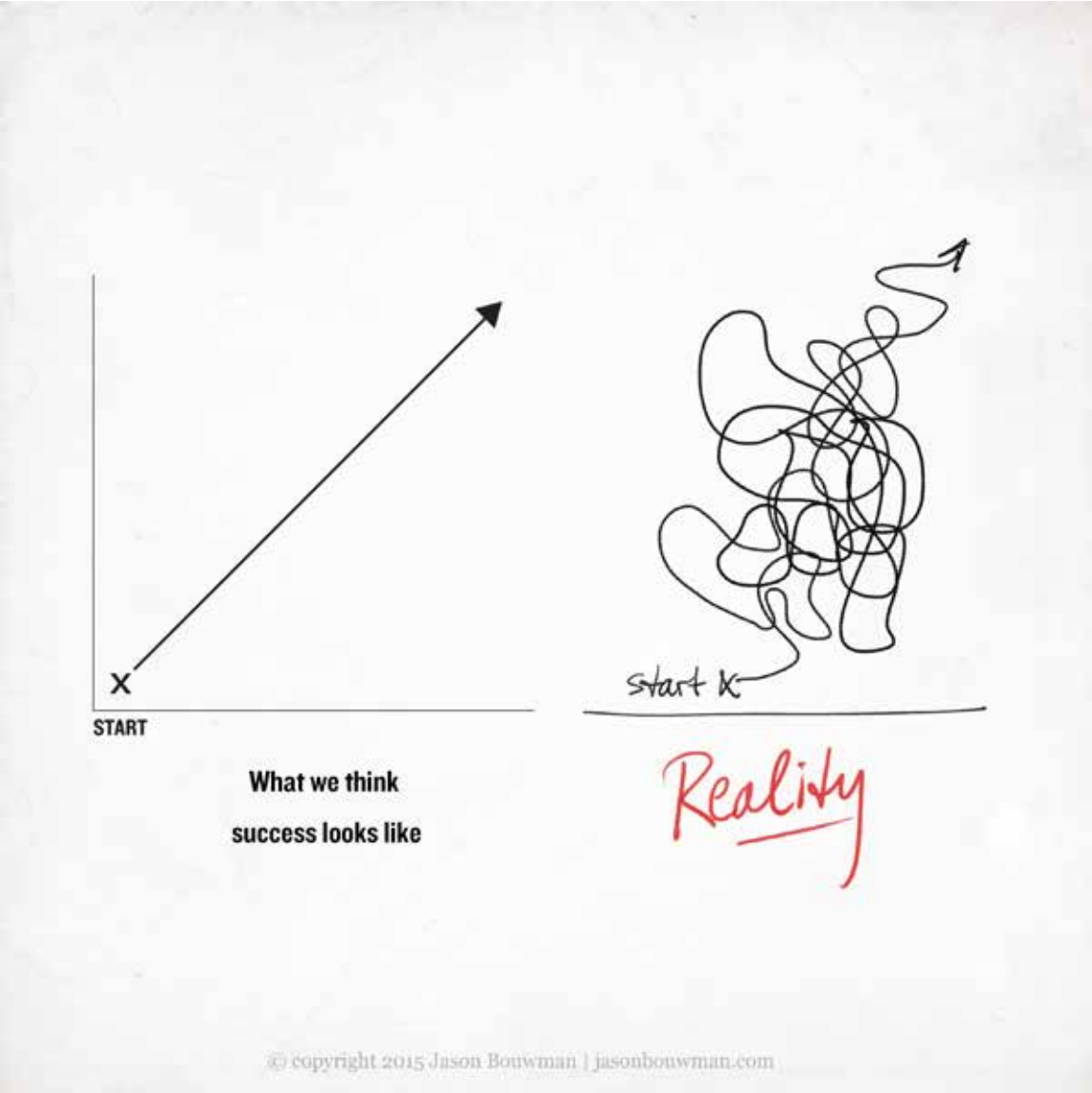
#servantleader



Interruptions & detours.

"The great thing, if one can, is to stop regarding all the unpleasant things as interruptions of one's 'own,' or 'real' life. The truth is of course that what one calls the interruptions are precisely one's real life -- the life God is sending one day by day."

- C. S. LEWIS -



We cannot control our situation but we are given the ability to respond. The more ably we respond to different situations the more "response ability" we'll likely be given. And the way we respond is determined by the condition of our heart.

LOOK UP: Jeremiah 17:5-8



Responseable

The way to always be doing what you love is to make the choice to love what you're doing (Eccl. 9:10). Perhaps it should also be said: "Love who you do it for!"

We have a philosophy at work. It is expressed simply as this: "Live artfully." This simple idea challenges us to a more intentional way of life and to season our work with beauty and love. To "live artfully" is to care deeply and to bring joy to others. The great thinker C.S. Lewis said it something like this: "Art, like friendship, has no survival value but rather is one of those things that gives value to survival."

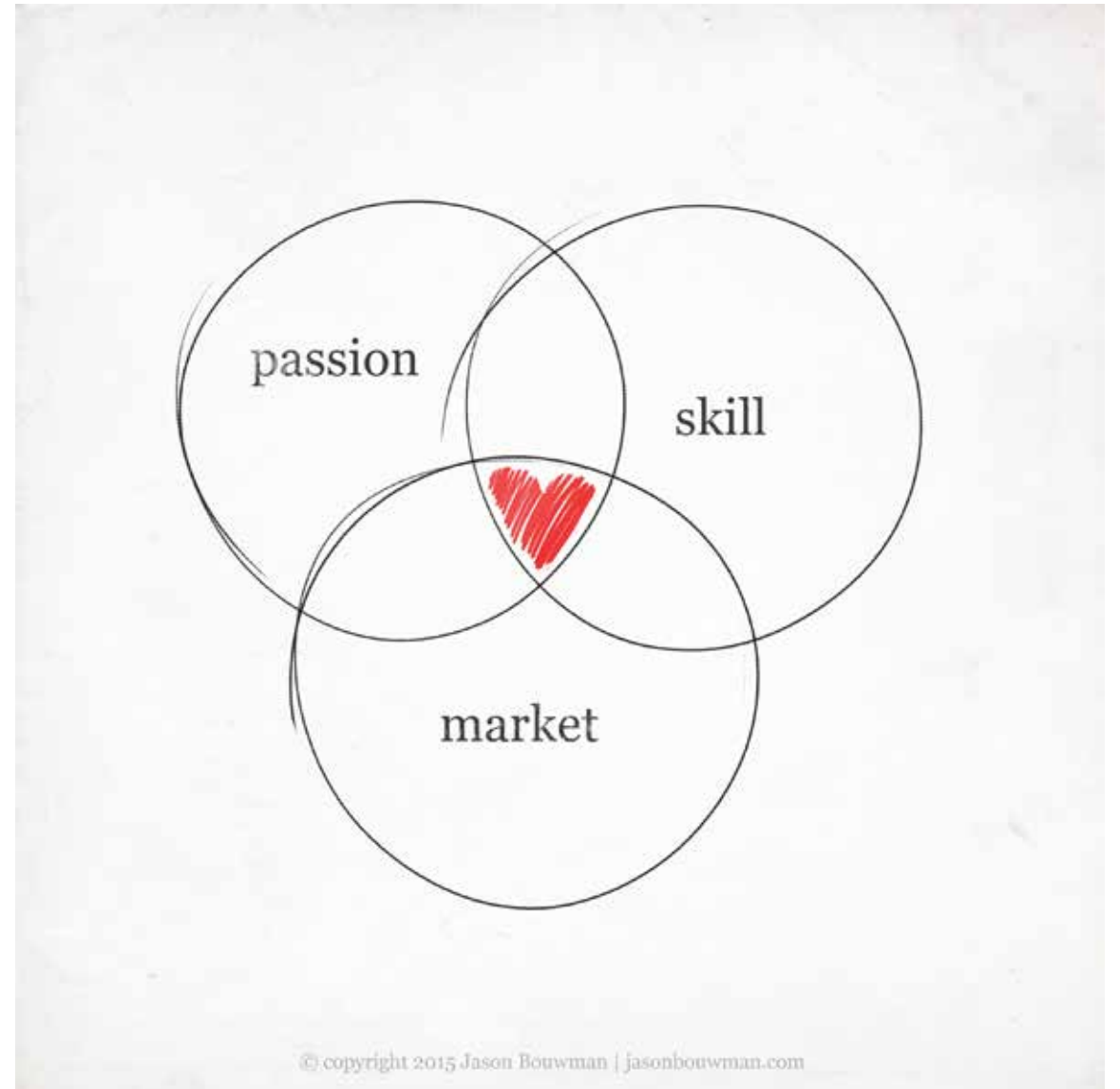
To "live artfully" is also to share the gifts we've been given. Those gifts aren't necessarily wrapped in colourful or glittery paper. Most often they come wrapped in humility and dedication. Perhaps our greatest opportunity to give gifts is not on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning but rather everyday by choosing to love our work and by doing our absolute best.



Do what you love.

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Don't follow your passion. Take it with you.
Choose to love what you do.



If at first you don't succeed then try and try again.
(Then give it up. There is no need to make a fool of yourself.)



1 THESSALONIANS 4:11

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:10-13

If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good.



Vincent Van Gogh once said, "There is nothing more truly artistic than to love people." Make your work your art by doing it with all your heart.

LOOK UP: Colossians 3:23



KIDS SPELL "LOVE"

t i m e

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Callused
Hands.
Soft
Heart.



WARNING:
DO NOT GET
THESE TWO
REVERSED.

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Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.

- THOMAS EDISON -

Ultimately, success isn't something we achieve. It's a gift. We should not be so driven to succeed as we are to obey. This is not to say we should not work hard.

Read the 4th Commandment closely. In addition to prescribing a day of rest each week God also instructs us to a life of work. "Six days you shall labour." Later, Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, instructs the church to "warn the idle" and to "work with their hands." It's clear that God wants us to be busy, but we should not assume that our busy-ness is what determines our success in this life. We are to be busy out of thankful obedience, but success remains a gift for God to give or withhold in his good pleasure.

LOOK UP: Psalm 127:1-2 | John 15:4-5 | 1 Thessalonians 5:14 | 1 Thessalonians 4:11



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It's easy to keep busy. But there's an art to being productive. It requires being selective. God calls us to work but he does not ask us to do everything. Here's a quick checklist to go through every time something is demanding your time.

When things aren't adding up in your life - try subtracting.

Ask yourself:

- Can I do this?
- Is this important?
- Is this part of my responsibility?
- Is this a valuable use of my time?
- Will this tap into a unique ability or interest of mine?
- Will this restore or deplete me?
- Is there someone else who could do this equally well or better?
- What is motivating me to say yes?
 - Fear of man or fear of God?
 - Trust in God or trust in self?
 - Love of others or love of self?



Busy ≠ Productive

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We are all designed to be kingdom builders.
We should all be busy building.
But the question is:

Whose kingdom are we building?

Understanding full well that in God's Kingdom God has called some to be apostles, and some teachers, and some businessmen, and some farmers, and some...

The question isn't, "Who can be a kingdom builder?" or "Can I become a kingdom builder?" The question is: "How are you building the kingdom right where you are? At your place of work? At school? At home?"

Too often, it seems, we go to work with the goal of making money so that we can fund "kingdom work" but miss all the opportunities that are right in front of us. These opportunities would be more apparent if we would only bring a different perspective to our daily vocation.

The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.
Let's get busy! Right here. Right now.



It's better to build a man
than to repair one.

- AoM blog -

We often pray for good, strong men who will lead with integrity.
But, says Chuck Swindoll, God doesn't give us men. He gives us boys.

Love them.
Teach them.
Challenge them.
Train them.
Equip them.
For manhood.

LOOK UP: 1 Corinthians 16:13







Leaders are readers. LOOK UP: Psalm 119



I have not failed. I've just found
10,000 ways that won't work.

- BENJAMIN FRANKLIN -

A mistake is only so if you fail to learn from it.
And it's less painful to learn from the mistakes
of others. Read history. Those who don't know
their history are bound to repeat it.

LOOK UP: Proverbs 24:16 | 1 Corinthians 10:11



You're not garbage.
You're a treasured possession.
Treat yourself accordingly.

LOOK UP: Deuteronomy 7:6 | Psalm 139



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"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

Hebrews 4:13



| *A good person leaves an inheritance
for their children's children.*

- PROVERBS 13:22 -

Many will have you believe that money is a complicated thing. It's not. Managing your behaviours regarding money, on the other hand... Well, that can indeed get complicated. That's because "money matters" too are a reflection of what is going on in your heart. More on that later.

All you really need to know about money is this:

Don't spend any more than you earn.

That's it.

If you really want to take things further...

- Focus on earning.
- Budget annually.
- Maintain an emergency fund.
- Save.
- Avoid debt!
- Avoid debt!
- Avoid debt!



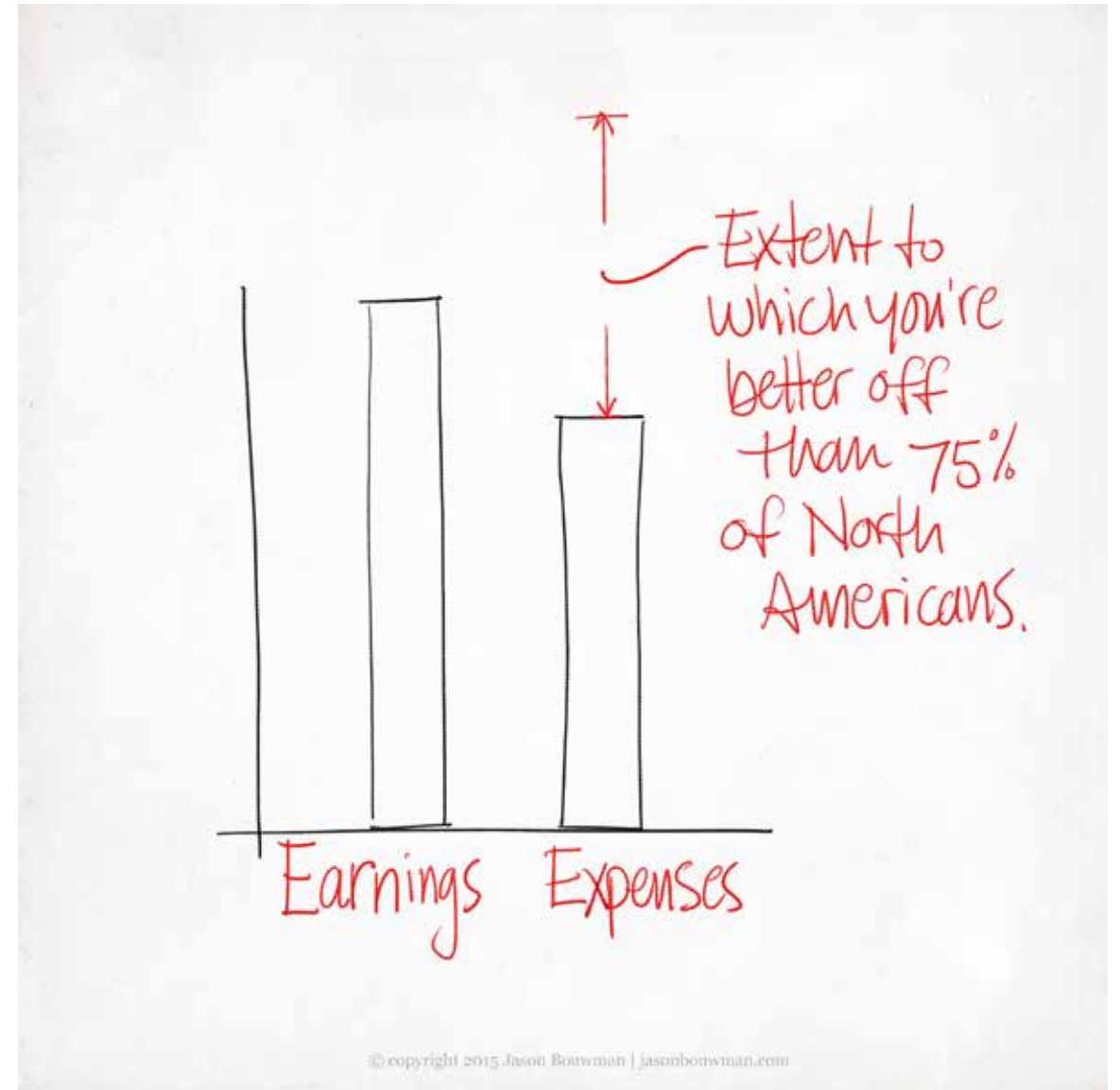
Act your **w**age.

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If you live a few years like most people won't,
you can likely live the rest of your life like most others can't.

- PROVERB -

Work
Earn
Give
Save
Spend (wisely)



Look to the Cross
Think of the Cross
Meditate on the Cross
...and then go and set your affections on
the [things of this] world...
...IF you can.

- J.C. RYLE -

The reason it's hard to put our money where our mouths are sometimes is because money flows to where our heart is. We spend time and money on the things we love. If we don't have money for the people, causes, or things we say we're committed to then perhaps we should examine who or what has captured our hearts.



LOOK UP: Proverbs 21:17

*Our life always expresses the result
of our dominant thoughts.*

- SOREN KJERKEGAARD -

We spend time and money on the things we love. If we don't have time for the people or things we say we love, we may want to examine who or what it is that has actually captured our hearts.

Show me your budget and your calendar and I'll tell you what your values are.

Q: Where does the time go?

A: Where you tell it to go.

LOOK UP: Luke 10:27



God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you.

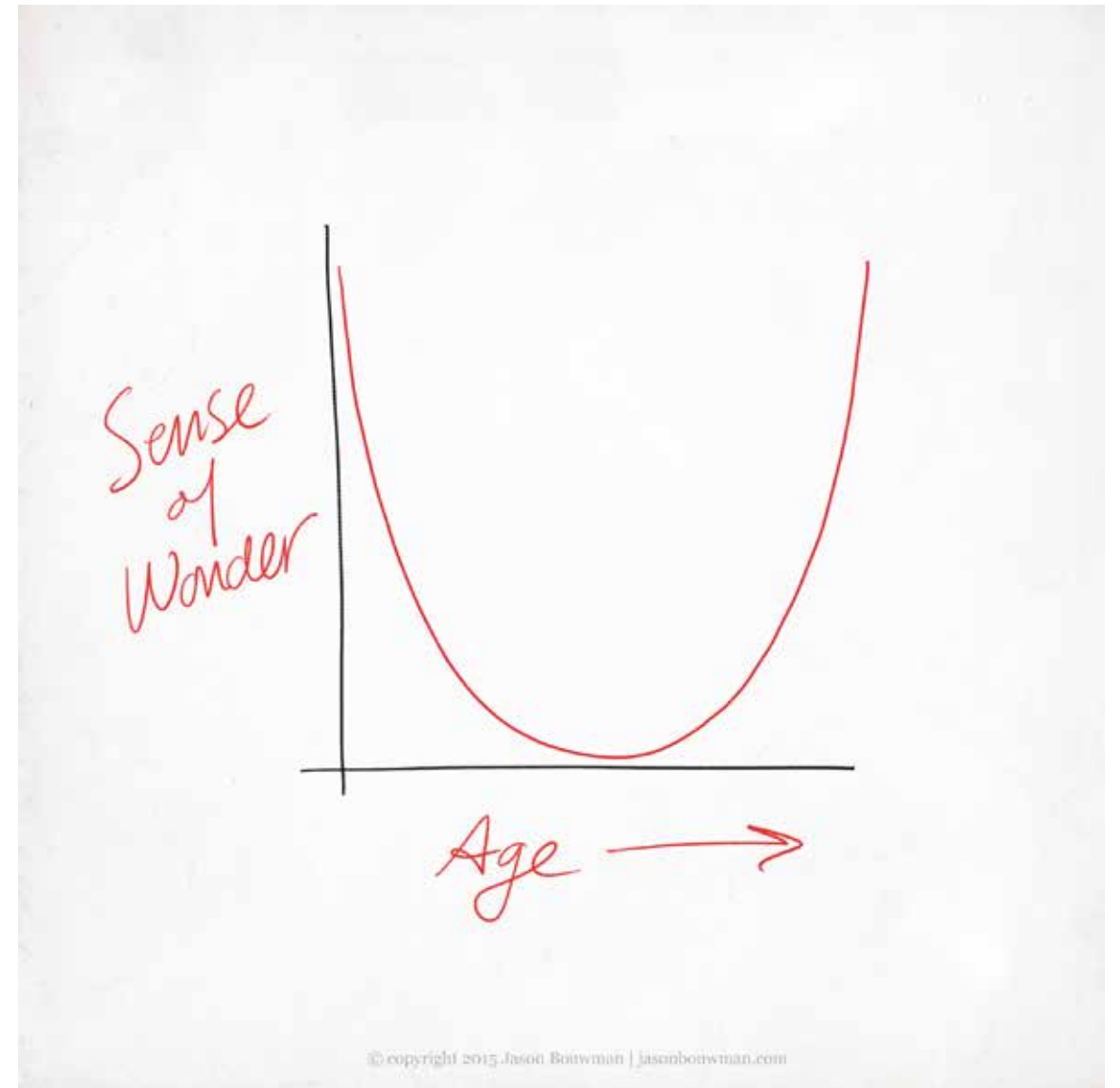
- ST. AUGUSTINE -

Ordo amoris

"Ordo amoris" was the philosophy of St. Augustine. It can be translated as the "order of loves" or the "order of our affections." It means this: Our capacity to enjoy the good things that God has given us, including human friendships and relationships, rests on whether or not God remains at the centre of our affections.



Some people describe midlife as “going over the hill”
but I think it's more like going through a valley.



LOOK UP: Psalm 92:12-15

Seeing is *not* believing. Believing is being sure of what we do not see. Yet, when we believe we start to “see” things clearly. Only faith puts our surroundings and circumstances in the eternal perspective. Only through the eyes of faith do we truly see things as they really are.

“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” - John 20:29

Seeing is believing.



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The book of John records many of Jesus' miracles. These are included so that we might believe! While the Jews tried desperately to write Jesus off as a raving lunatic, a sinner, Jesus and the people around Him point us to the miracles and ask:

"Does God listen to sinners?
Can sinners do such miracles?"

No.
Jesus is God.
Jesus makes the blind see.
He makes the lame walk.
And in chapter 11 He makes a dead man live again.

He does the same for us.

The apostle John would have us believe that Jesus is the Son of God. The sacrificial lamb. The Chosen One. The Messiah. Our Saviour. And that by believing in Him we begin to see ourselves and our world more clearly. We move with a strength and confidence that is not ours. That's because by believing in Jesus our dead hearts are made ALIVE!!! and beat with love for the one who sent Him. We begin to live life to the full (John 10:10). Then those who have been made ALIVE in Christ are to restore each other gently. We are to remove each other's "dead clothes" (John 11:44).

That is to say we are to remind each other as fellow Christians that we are no longer dead. Our "dead clothes" include labels, false identities, shame, bad reputations, bad habits, remaining sin, etc. The most beautiful thing we can do as a church, as a family of believers, is to remove each other's dead clothes and call each other to remember the glorious truth of the gospel.

Remember!
You are alive!
You are a new creation!
A full life is available in Jesus!
There is hope!
There is joy!
Believe!
...and Receive!
We are forgiven.
Justified.
Sanctified.
Equipped to do the good works that were prepared in advance for us to do.
Heirs to the kingdom of God.

All because of Christ!!

Be empowered by the Spirit as a forgiven sinner to get going on living a life of thankfulness by loving God and your neighbour.



“The challenge we face as followers of the Incarnate One is to move from the posture of a tourist to the posture of a pilgrim. Tourists are escaping life; pilgrims are embracing it... Tourists are trying to forget; pilgrims are trying to remember.”

- LEN HJALMARSON -



The Station

On a certain day, we will pull into the station.
Bands will be playing and flags waving.
Once we get there, our dreams will come true
and the pieces of our lives
will fit together like a completed jigsaw puzzle.
Restlessly we pace the aisles,
damning the minutes - waiting,
waiting, waiting for the station.

"When we reach the station, that will be it!" We cry.
"When I'm 18." "When I buy a new 450sl Mercedes Benz!"
"When I put the last kid through college."
"When I have paid off the mortgage!"

"When I get a promotion." "When I reach retirement,
I shall live happily ever after!"
Sooner or later, we realize there is no station,
no one place to arrive.
The true joy of life is the trip.
The station is only a dream.
It constantly outdistances us.

It isn't the burdens of today that drive men mad.
It is the regrets over yesterday and the fear of tomorrow.
Regret and fear are twin thieves who rob us of today.
Regret is reality, after the facts.

So stop pacing the aisles and counting the miles.
Instead, climb more mountains,
eat more ice cream, go barefoot more often,
swim more rivers, watch more sunsets,
laugh more, cry less.

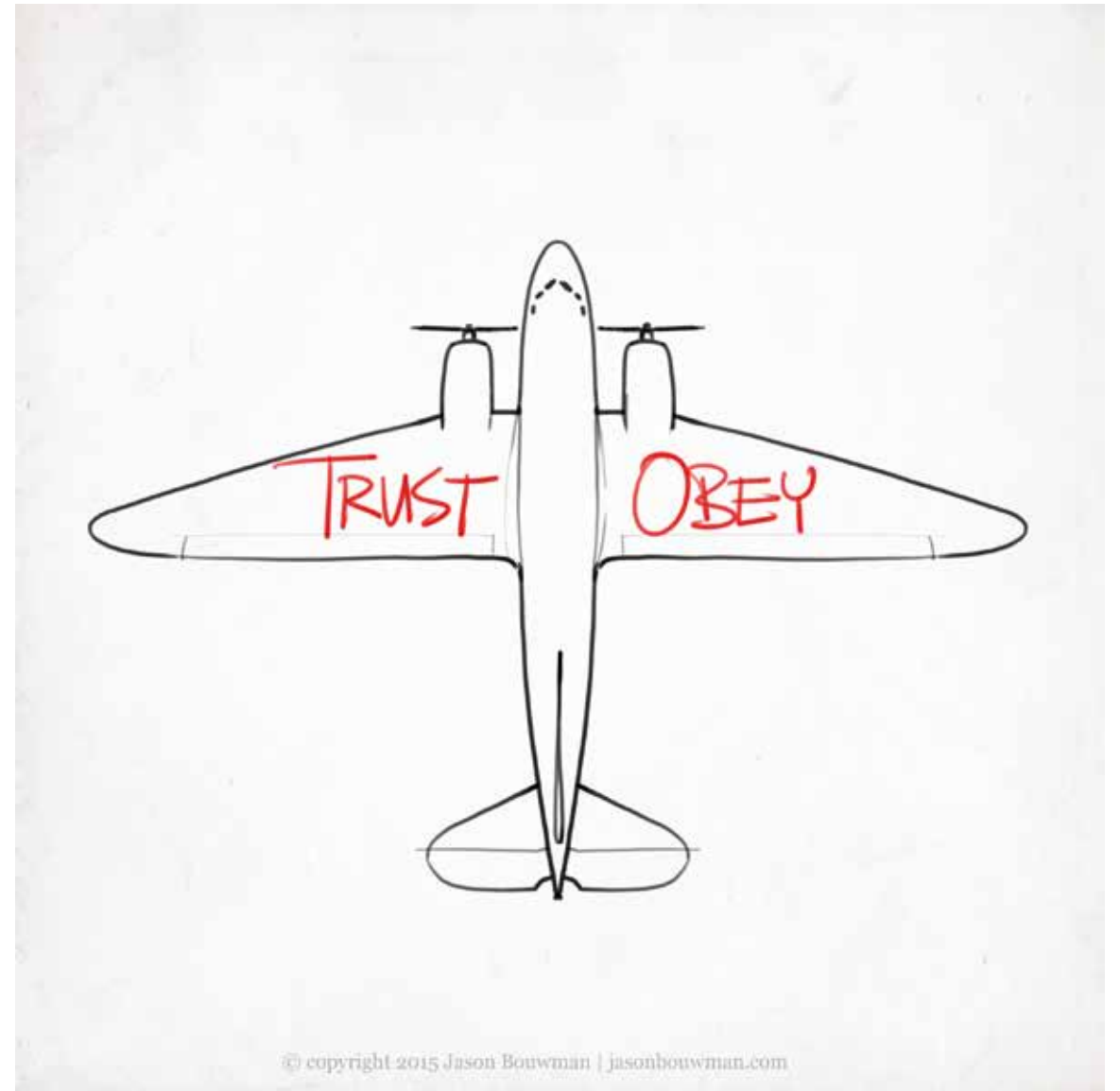
Life must be lived as we go along.

- Robert J. Hastings -

We don't live "for the moment" as some say. But we do live *IN* each moment. We are pilgrims here and we are on our way to a glorious future. So we look and plan ahead. Yet we must also consider that Christ died that we might live, freely, abundantly, right here and now *IN* these present moments that add up to life on earth.



In the Christian life the principles of trust and obedience are as inseparable as the wings of a plane. You can't fly without one or the other. I can't think of a better reminder as we taxi down the runway of life, picking up speed and preparing to lift off.



Church isn't a place to go to feel comfortable. The reading of the law reminds us of our shortcomings. The elders ask probing questions. Our brothers and sisters disagree with us or disappoint us. The messes in our own lives are exposed. We become more aware of the sufferings of others and of burdens that need to be carried. Yet the church is where we are continually reminded of the truth that the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ is now ours through faith. It's where we're reminded of our true identity as children of God and co-heirs with Christ. It's where we experience the communion of saints (not "communion of sinners," by the way) and where we share hope about the future. Is church comfortable? No. But the church is where we'll always truly belong and the church is where we'll find true comfort for whatever is ailing us.

LOOK UP: 2 Timothy 4:3



I started this book by saying that we are at war. Spiritual war. We need to be battle ready at all times. Here's a cautionary acronym to remember because the enemy strikes when and where we're weakest. Are you hungry? Angry? Lonely? Tired? Then Halt! Exercise caution. Be extra alert and even more on guard against temptation.



ONE LAST THOUGHT...

Before you pray - Believe
Before you speak - Listen
Before you spend - Earn
Before you write - Think
Before you quit - Try
Before you die - LIVE!

"Be true to yourself, help others, make each day your masterpiece, make friendship a fine art, drink deeply from good books — especially the Bible, build a shelter against a rainy day, give thanks for your blessings and pray for guidance every day."

- JOHN WOODEN -

FOLD HANDS
~~Cross your fingers~~

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Let the conclusion of all of these thoughts be heard:
Fear God and obey his commandments,
for this is what it means to be human.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 (ISV)

S. D. G.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jason Bouwman is a perennial creative, endlessly dreaming up new ideas and giving shape to them on white boards, sketchbooks, iPads and napkins if need be. He has an uncanny ability to think and play with ideas, formulate his thoughts and share them in a way that infects all those listening to come along for the ride. His personal philosophy to “live artfully” sits at the heart of Compass Creative - a marketing agency which Jason founded in 2005. As a big-picture thinker he's not one for small talk. However he can be engaged easily by a thought provoking question or two. He is often found discussing the deeper issues of life around the water cooler.

Jason began his career as an illustrator and designer. His art has appeared in magazines, on packaging and on several commemorative coins released by the Royal Canadian Mint. Even with almost 20 years of experience as a creative professional, Jason's career is ever buttressed and influenced by his upbringing in a blue-collar family. His first job saw him working in greenhouses at the age of 12. He put himself



through college working alongside his brothers in the family construction businesses. He has operated heavy machinery, can swing a hammer and finish concrete but spends most of his time these days hunched behind a computer or drawing tablet. When he's not working or writing Jason enjoys painting landscapes on location outdoors. Jason lives in rural West Lincoln, Ontario, with his wife of 20+ years, their 4 children, a dog, a cat, and a compact tractor.

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