

DISCIPLESHIP

Lesson w/Answers

GFW: God, Family, Work

I think a lot about the importance of studying God's word, because of the impact it can have in our lives and the lives of those around us. And this week I once again realize it's not always easy living the Christian life.

Life itself can bring with it struggles, pain, hurt, and loss all of which distract us from its real purpose. Perhaps just as important, blessings, success, joy, and a good life can also do the same. Having a job you enjoy, a hobby or friends, a close family - all good in and of themselves can distract us from our walk with Christ as easily as painful times sometimes do.

This week, I thought it would be good for us to reflect on our walk. What struggles, pain, joy, and blessings are you experiencing and are they distracting you from your walk with Christ?

I find that to outline, study, and prepare a lesson each week takes between six and twelve hours. Some shorter, some longer, but a few good evenings of study and preparation are needed each week. Load this on top of a desire to have some quiet time with the Lord, a daily reading perhaps, and some time for prayer; and suddenly things can get overwhelming pretty quickly.

Compounding my desire to have a strong walk with Christ is my desire to be a good dad, a good husband, a good friend, and now a good granddad. Then, there's the work I enjoy and my desire to excel at it, as I try to do with everything in my life. Squeezed in there somewhere are also hobbies - I really enjoy photography and golf, and a need to have some rest....and oh yes, there's the hour and a half drive to work each day -- and the same or longer coming home.

Man, I'm exhausted just thinking about it ... and then I remember ... wait a minute...there's that church committee meeting, Sunday School meeting, or ministry activity at church that also needs attention, and the lesson from the preacher that we'll be judged on our works as Christians. Boy, I'll be so exhausted I might doze off on Judgment Day! - Sorry, bad humor; but you get my point.

So this week has been no different, and as I headed in to the office earlier in the week, I saw a common bumper sticker that we see here in the Washington DC area: a white oval with the bold black letters "OBX" on it -- which stands for a popular east coast vacation spot in North Carolina called the Outer Banks. It reminded me of a Promise Keepers sticker I had purchased years ago with three black bold letters on it - GFW. Perhaps you remember it, or even have one.



The GFW stands for God, Family, Work – and they're meant to show the priority of our life's activities – God first, followed by Family, followed by Work. It's a good one for getting our thinking and our priorities refocused.

So for this week let's give some thought to the verses below and do the following analysis.

1. Read Genesis Chapter 2. Where exactly did God place Man when He created him?

- a. ANSWER: In the Garden of Eden, a garden it says that "The Lord had planted".

2. What was God's purpose for placing Man in the Garden of Eden?

a. ANSWER: Gen. 2:15 tells us that He put man there "to work it and to take care of it."

3. What was God's intent for Man and Woman?

a. ANSWER: Clearly, from reading chapter 2, God's intent was for man and woman to raise a family and to work in the Garden of Eden. He intended for them to be well fed, to live in a healthy environment, to have many, many children and to have meaning and purpose in their lives.

4. Based on your reading, would you agree that GFW was God's intended priority list for Mankind?

a. ANSWER: Absolutely. Above all, God wanted a relationship with man and woman -- his creation, and He wanted them to have a relationship with him.

5. Take the GFW letters and assuming this order represents the ideal reorder them in every possible combination. Then jot down some thoughts about what each of these would represent in a person if that order represented their life:

a. GWF

i. ANSWER: I would think that full-time Christian workers run this risk, as would those of us who, when not at work at our secular jobs, are at the church or doing "church" work. The difficulty here is that we can easily justify all of the activity that keeps us from our families as "we are out doing God's work". The difficulty is that it doesn't leave much if any time for family, and the time we have left for them is normally second best.

b. WGF

i. ANSWER: I see this as the flip or reverse of the man or woman above. Here, the "Type A" man or woman throws himself/herself into their work, then takes that same ethic into the work that he or she does for the church. Often however, God isn't in the work - but their drive and determination push them ever onwards, gain leaving the family in the dust.

c. WFG

i. ANSWER: In this combination, work becomes our first priority, followed closely by family, and God takes 3rd place behind the other two. In this arrangement, we sometimes miss going to church or Bible study on a Sunday just to have more time with family, believing somehow that this is keeping our priorities straight by putting aside time on Sundays for the family. Sometimes even the occasional Sunday at worship is missed so that we can do more work either from home or in the office. Again, God gets the leftovers of our lives, rather than being God of our lives.

d. FWG

i. ANSWER: Here we see the person who goes to work simply to earn a paycheck; the real priority is the family. The highest priority is family, even if we occasionally need to miss work or leave work early so that children and spouse have the top priority in our lives. This runs counter to God's plan, but we rationalize that family should come first above everything - even if it means giving less than required to our employer or cutting out our quiet time, worship or Bible study - all seemingly for the right goal - quality family time.

e. FGW

i. ANSWER: This person sees work as the least important priority in life, and family as the highest. In fact, if they could skip work altogether, they would be happier for it. (Who needs or wants to work anyway?!) It is way more important to spend time with family and church/God. Again, as we look at Genesis chapter 2, this runs completely counter to the priorities God has set for us. It turns out that we really do work to provide purpose and meaning in our lives, even beyond having a family. God has a specific purpose for each of us, and He expects us to strive to fulfill that purpose. Avoiding work, or making it something we do grudgingly, is not what God's will is for us.

6. The one assumption in looking at the GFW sticker is that God matters in one's life; if the letters were only WF or FW, it would represent a lost person. What observations can we make about lives with these two combinations?
- a. WF
 - i. ANSWER: This person attempts to find meaning in their work and in their family. Independent and driven, this person succeeds because of his or her own efforts and believes that success, and passing those successful traits on to their family, is the real purpose in life.
 - b. FW
 - i. ANSWER: This person not only believes family comes first, but may also be one who believes that the family's heritage, family name, or family business is what is the most important. Maintaining a good family name, continuing a long family tradition, or creating a lasting heritage for the family through work and other efforts typically drive this person.
7. There is one more possible scenario for a lost world and that is simply a single letter W. What can we observe about this life?
- a. ANSWER: In the "W" world, it's all about now, all about effort and commitment to succeeding, and its all about the individual's personal strength, talents and determination. There is nothing outside this life, and all that matters is succeeding each and every day in each and everything you do.
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Where are you this week? Where are your priorities, and what excuses are you using to justify that combination if it's not GFW?

Take this week and consider the GFW priorities in your life.

I pray that all of you are having a blessing filled week, but I know that some are not and I pray for you as well. Holidays don't stop pain, suffering, illness and even loss – but Christ is our great comforter in all of these things. May he greatly comfort you this week.

In Christ,

Wes