Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.  
*James 1:17*
Jim Stoval did NOT write the Bible Basics… The Ultimate Gift Study Guide. In no way do we imply that this book was written by Jim Stovall, authorized, endorsed, or affiliated with the author.

The Bible Basics… Ultimate Gift Study Guide was written by lay-people who love God; written for lay-people who love God.

The Bible Basics… Ultimate Gift Study Guide was written to coincide with the The Ultimate Gift written by Jim Stovall to enhance the reading and study of Mr. Stovall’s book, which we highly recommend.

Thank you,
Osten Aune
Bible Basics… Layers of Understanding

www.bible-basics-layers-of-understanding.com
1. Take notes; write in this book!

2. This is not the all-comprehensive study book; it’s up to you to write the new chapters!

3. Some chapters are shorter than others. This does not mean that they are less important! It is your turn to add to them!

4. Ray shared The Ultimate Gift with us at Bible Basics. Now it is our turn to share with you. Many gifts are more valuable not kept to ourselves, but shared with others!

- Osten
The Ultimate Gift

I. In the Beginning
II. A Voice from the Past
III. The Gift of Work
IV. The Gift of Money
V. The Gift of Friends
VI. The Gift of Learning
VII. The Gift of Problems
VIII. The Gift of Family
IX. The Gift of Laughter
X. The Gift of Dreams
XI. The Gift of Giving
XII. The Gift of Gratitude
XIII. The Gift of a Day
XIV. The Gift of Love
XV. The Ultimate Gift
What “The Ultimate Gift” Did To Me

For years and years, I have been an avid reader. Mostly fiction, mostly adventure, serials. Good authors could paint a very vivid picture and away we would go to far off lands and new scenarios. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think that a little book like *T.U.G. (The Ultimate Gift)* would take me on my wildest and most meaningful ride ever.

*T.U.G.* came into my hands after my wife, Shirley, had read it. She had gotten it from a fellow teacher who had gotten it from a student of hers whose parents were friends of the author. (Whew, already gone a few places haven’t we?) It looked to be a very quick read, as it really isn’t very thick, so I proceeded to read while trying to go to sleep.

I need to regress here for a moment and paint YOU a picture of where I was in my life. I had had extensive cancer surgery a few months earlier, I was having difficulty swallowing solid foods, I could not get comfortable in bed, life really was a very deep inhalation of air. HOWEVER: I was still around, alive and kicking, with a good probability of a good future in front of us. My family and friends of my family, my friends and friends of my friends, my church family and friends of our church family had done some serious praying to help guide us through some pretty rough times. And the prayers were working. My body just wasn’t going to respond the way I wanted it to (those who know me well, know that I don’t have a lot of that word that doctors and nurses have, but is spelled differently), but I was told to “Cowboy Up” (similar to “Git-R-Done”).

So, anyway, there I am on my first night’s read of *T.U.G.* Oh my gosh! I could not put it down! I read until the wee hours of the morning, going back over a paragraph or chapter, just to ensure that I had really read what I was seeing. How much had I overlooked in my life? How much did I take for granted? I had “known” before that God had given me my life to live on for hopefully many years. But when I read *T.U.G.* I realized that I hadn’t yet begun to appreciate what I had. Each chapter was like a cartoon light going off over my head. While not as self-centered, selfish, and spoiled as Jason, I certainly could be accused of not seeing what was right in front of me. I hadn’t thought of how much of my life was a gift. I hadn’t thought of my life AS a gift. I eventually dropped off to sleep that morning, ready to try to take on the new day with a new attitude. I couldn’t wait for night to come so I could keep on reading. Yep, finished it that second night. I re-read it a couple of times to absorb the lessons of *T.U.G.*
Since then, Shirley and I have widened the circle of T.U.G. by giving copies to other family members in other cities, friends in other cities. We have given copies to my surgeon and oncologist. We covered it with our Sunday School class that has been together for 20+ years. You could see ‘lights’ going off over their heads also. Then I had the opportunity to start taking it even further in our church by covering a chapter a week in another, younger, class. After approximately 30 weeks of covering this with two groups of adults, I had firmly gotten my head around what lessons were not only from T.U.G., but also from God. Yeah, right!

Osten asking me to bring these lessons to the weekly Bible Basics class was a fantastic opportunity to continue spreading through our church. Through all of these sessions, I learned so much more than what I was reading, what visualizations I had in my mind. I have learned this from the interactions with those who have open minds, open eyes, and open hearts. We would read a chapter or two a week and then discuss how we had seen the same things in our lives and of those around us. We discussed readings from the Bible, a NON-fiction book that said exactly what this fictional story was telling. Shirley and I had the opportunity to meet and talk with the author (but that is another story) who has been blind since his late teens/early twenties.

So, like Jason in the end, I also did not think that The Ultimate Gift was going to be $GREEN$, because he and I already understood that The Ultimate Gift, your life, is golden.

May your life and those around you be touched by your understanding of the meaning of this book.

Ray O.
The Gift of Work

Rest for the Weary
“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”
Matthew 10:28-30 NIV

Pleasures Are Meaningless
Ecclesiastes 2:10-11 NIV
I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

- Do we really understand and relate to any of this scripture?
- What does this scripture mean and say to us?
- The Bible is filled with scripture about work and money; perhaps because we have so much trouble with them!

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for man. Since you know that you will receive your inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord you are serving. Colossians 3:23-25 NIV

- How do we work for God and not for man?
Work * Idleness * Laziness * Slothfulness

Old Testament

Warnings Against Folly

Proverbs 6:4-11

4 Allow no sleep to your eyes,
   no slumber to your eyelids.
5 Free yourself, like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter,
   like a bird from the snare of the fowler.
6 Go to the ant, you sluggard;
   consider its ways and be wise!
7 It has no commander,
   no overseer or ruler,
8 yet it stores its provisions in summer
   and gathers its food at harvest.
9 How long will you lie there, you sluggard?
   When will you get up from your sleep?
10 A little sleep, a little slumber,
   a little folding of the hands to rest-
11 and poverty will come on you like a bandit
   and scarcity like an armed man. [a]

Footnotes:

a. Proverbs 6:11 Or like a vagrant / and scarcity like a beggar
3 The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry
   but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.
4 Lazy hands make a man poor,
   but diligent hands bring wealth.
5 He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son,
   but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.
   – Proverbs 10:3-5

4 The sluggard craves and gets nothing,
   but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.  – Proverbs 13:4

9 The LORD detests the way of the wicked
   but he loves those who pursue righteousness.
   – Proverbs 15:9

13 Do not love sleep or you will grow poor;
   stay awake and you will have food to spare.
   – Proverbs 20:13

• Verse 3 says, “The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry
  but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.” Is this always true?

• Why do the righteous suffer while the wicked prosper?

• Does working hard always guarantee success?
New Testament

10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;
11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;
12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;
13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality

— Romans 12:10-13 King James Version

28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. — Ephesians 4:28

11 Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you,

— 1 Thessalonians 4:11

10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. 12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.

— 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12

- What about handicapped, elderly, sick people who are disables and cannot work? Who cares for them?

8 If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 1 Timothy 5:8

- How do people in your family care for one another?
- How do you and your friends care for one another?
- Should we be self-sufficient or inter-dependant???
10God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.

11We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. 12We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised. - Hebrews 6:10-12

17Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. – Hebrews 13:17

- Who in your life has taught you your work ethic?
- What does work and sacrifice have to do with each other?
- When did you give your best and worked your hardest?
- When did you work hard and fail?
- What is worth working for?
- When did you work hard with no desire to be paid?
- Do we always relate working hard with money?
- Do we need rest; do we need the Sabbath?
- Is being lazy always bad? When is it all right to be lazy?
- What makes “work” satisfying, meaningful, and fulfilling?
- Why do we sometimes hesitate to do “good works”?
- What are the enemies of doing “good works”?
- Jesus washed his disciples feet; is there work that we consider to be beneath us? Consider caring for the incognizant, elderly, Alzheimer, etc.?
The Gift of Money

For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.

1 Timothy 6:10 NIV

…Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Other wise I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God. – Proverbs 30:8-9

God know your needs.

“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father know that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Matthew 6:31-33 NIV

“You cannot serve both God and Money.”

Matthew 6:24 NIV

“Watch out!
Be on your guard against all kinds of greed,
a man’s life does not consist in the
abundance of his possessions.”

Luke 12:15 NIV

You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.” But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant….

Deuteronomy 8:17-18 NIV
One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.  
_Proverbs 11:24 NIV_

The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern.  
_Proverbs 29:7 NIV_

The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously.  
_Psalm 37:31 NIV_

Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbor, “Come back later; I’ll give it to you tomorrow” – when you now have it with you.  
_Proverbs 3:27-28 NIV_

But for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.  
_Psalm 73:2-3 NIV_

The blessing of the Lord brings wealth, and adds no trouble to it.  
_Proverbs 10:22 NIV_

MAKE ALL YOU CAN - SAVE ALL YOU CAN  
GIVE ALL YOU CAN  
_ John Wesley_
• Jesus gives us many parables and lessons in the Bible about money; perhaps because money so often gets us into trouble! Money has the ability to do “good” and money has the ability to do “bad”. How is this true?

• Christ tells us that if we are responsible/good with the small things He will entrust us with greater things/responsibilities. How do you see this?

• When have you gotten in trouble with money?

• When have you “done good” with money?

• How much money is enough? (enough to share?)

• Do you “SAVE” money?

• Do you “EARN” money?

• Where do you spend your TIME and your MONEY? What do you THINK about? - This is where your HEART is!

• What type of money problems do you have?

• How do your money problems compare to others?

• How often do we see that heaven and earth and everything in them belong to God. We belong to God. Apart from God we can do nothing! Every thing we have achieved – God has given to us. If everything belongs to God; who’s money is it? Do we ever really understand that we are the caretakers/stewards of God’s money, church, earth…?

• We often hear the word “stewardship in church. What does “stewardship” mean to you?

• What does “tithing” mean to you?
The Gift of Friends

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

*John 15:15*

9 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work:

10 If one falls down,
   his friend can help him up.
   But pity the man who falls
   and has no one to help him up!

11 Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone?

12 Though one may be overpowered,
   two can defend themselves.
   A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

*Ecclesiastes 4:9-12*

8 "But you, O Israel, my servant,
   Jacob, whom I have chosen,
   you descendants of Abraham my friend,

*Isaiah 41:8*

19 Even now my witness is in heaven;
   my advocate is on high.
20 My intercessor is my friend
   as my eyes pour out tears to God;
21 on behalf of a man he pleads with God
   as a man pleads for his friend.

*Job 16:19-21*

- Discuss Ecc.4:10-12  How do we mutually help one another?
Jesus the Friend of Sinners

33For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' 34The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners."' 35But wisdom is proved right by all her children." Luke 7:33-35

What a Friend we have in Jesus

Joseph M. Scriven 1855

What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.
Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?
In His arms He'll take and shield you; Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Sing the song to God;
(sing it like you’re the only person in the room and nobody is listening!)

• What are some of the friendships and fellowships you see at church, at school, at work, etc.?

• Can friendships be destructive?

• When are friendships truly important?

• How do you relate with Jesus as being your friend?

• If we strive to have a close relationship with God: God as “Abba, Father” – God as being “Daddy”?
The Gift of Learning

Love the LORD Your God

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

1 These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, 2 so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. 3 Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you.

4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

• In today’s world how do we comply with Dt.6:4-9?
  o Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.
  o Impress them on your children/friends/peers
  o Talk about them home, walk/work, lie down, get up.
  o Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads & Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.
  • How do we remind ourselves that we belong to God?
Wisdom & Knowledge

7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

9 Now, LORD God, let your promise to my father David be confirmed, for you have made me king over a people who are as numerous as the dust of the earth. 10 Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

11 God said to Solomon, "Since this is your heart's desire and you have not asked for wealth, riches or honor, nor for the death of your enemies, and since you have not asked for a long life but for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people over whom I have made you king, 12 therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you. And I will also give you wealth, riches and honor, such as no king who was before you ever had and none after you will have." – 2 Chronicles 1:9-12

6 For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

7 He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,

– Proverbs 2:6-7

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.

– Proverbs 3:5-7

• When are we too smart for our own good?

• Why is it so humanlike not to want to be corrected when we are wrong?
Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom.
Though it cost all you have, get understanding.
— Proverbs 4:7

The way of a fool seems right to him,
but a wise man listens to advice.
— Proverbs 12:15

He who walks with wise men will be wise,
But the companion of fools will be destroyed.
— Proverbs 13:20 New King James

Stay away from a foolish man,
for you will not find knowledge on his lips.
The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways,
but the folly of fools is deception.
Fools mock at making amends for sin,
but goodwill is found among the upright.
— Proverbs 14:7-9

A wise man fears and departs from evil,
But a fool rages and is self-confident.
— Proverbs 14:16

A fool spurns his father's discipline,
but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.
— Proverbs 15:5

Folly delights a man who lacks judgment,
but a man of understanding keeps a straight course.
— Proverbs 15:21
19 Wisdom makes one wise man more powerful than ten rulers in a city.
20 There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.
21 Do not pay attention to every word people say, or you may hear your servant cursing you-
22 for you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others.
23 All this I tested by wisdom and I said, "I am determined to be wise"— but this was beyond me.

— Ecclesiastes 7:19-23

A Time for Everything
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

1 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:
2 a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot,
3 a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build,
4 a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,
5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain,
6 a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away,
7 a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak,
8 a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.
Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.
—Matthew 5:48

11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.
—1 Corinthians 13:11

Two Kinds of Wisdom

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. —James 3:13-18

- Why is it so hard for us to learn from other people’s mistakes?
- If someone told you that the flame on a candle was hot and that you could burn yourself; would you have to find out for yourself?
  - For most of us Probably!
- If all of our friends ran off a cliff; would we run and follow right after them?
  - Hopefully Probably Not!
Ask, Seek, Knock

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Matthew 7:7-8
Luke 11:9-10

5If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. – James 1:5

• When it comes to learning from Jesus are you paying attention?
• Are your eyes really open? Are your ears really listening? Are you hearts and minds open to receive God. Are you ever just too busy???
• What are some things you would really like to know about?
The Gift of Problems

… If God is for us, who can be against us?

Romans 8:31

2Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

12Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. — James 1:2-4,12

6Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. — Philippians 4:6-7

7Turn all your troubles over to him, because he cares for you and is watching over you.

1 Peter 5:7 Worldwide English Version

“The very hairs of your head are all numbered.”

Matthew 10:30

So, if you are depressed by worry, instead of brooding on yourself and your woes, fill your mind with the Lord and all His works. You will not remain depressed for long: 3Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. — Isaiah 26:3

16So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

— 2 Corinthians 5:16-17
Hypocrites, like the proverbial sow, can go back happily to wallowing in the mire. – 2 Peter 2:22

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. – Galatians 5:22-23

3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue…. – 2 Peter 1:3

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, – Ephesians 1:3

- Can you name some insurmountable problems that you have overcome?

- Do you really believe that with a little faith (the size of a mustard seed) that you can move mountains?

- What are some of the mountains that people need to move?
  Mountains of forgiveness; perhaps forgiving someone.
  Mountains of debt.
  Mountains of prejudice.
  Mountains of discrimination.
  Name your Mountains that you need to overcome?
The Gift of Family

“Strangers are family you haven’t met yet.”

*The Five People You Meet in Heaven*
By Mark Albom

15 But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” – Joshua 24:15 NIV

4For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5he predestined us to be adopted as his sons (and daughters) through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. *Ephesians 1:4-6*

• Do we really realize that we are loved and adopted as children of God?

• Unfortunately some people have had abusive parents or guardians; how can these people relate to a loving and kind God the Father Almighty?

• None of us have perfect parents; we are all imperfect. But do you see God-like qualities in your parents and in others?
The Gift of Laughter

Make a joyful noise unto the LORD,
all the earth:
make a loud noise,
and rejoice,
and sing praise.

Psalms 98:4

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. – Philippians 4:4-7 NIV
Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth;
sing the glory of His name;
give to Him glorious praise.
Say to God,
”How awesome are your deeds!”
*Psalm 66:1-3a*

When we did our first Bible Basics… the Ultimate Gift Study when it came to the chapter on laughter we used a real-life person from Northgate UMC. We used Carey Marsalis’ dad, Carl Marsalis! Carey and Carl both are a great inspiration of humor; laughing in the face of great adversity. After reading Carey’s tribute to his dad we took turns reading Carl’s Joke of the Day. Did you know that this link is on the NUMC website under “links”?

[www.carlmarsalis.net](http://www.carlmarsalis.net)

What makes God smile?
Chapter 9
Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren

- Can humor and laughter help you in a bad situation?
- Sometimes we laugh; sometimes we cry. How do you cope?
A Smile For You!

Smiling is infectious; you catch it like the flu, when someone smiled at me today, I started smiling too. I passed around the corner and someone saw my grin when he smiled I realized I’d passed it on to him.

I thought about that smile then I realized its worth, a single smile, just like mine could travel around the earth. So, if you feel a smile begin, don’t leave it undetected, let’s start an epidemic quick, and get the world infected!

*Your smile, your good deeds don’t just go around the corner, they travel through all eternity!*
The Gift of Dreams

Your eyes have never seen,
your ears have never heard,
you cannot imagine
(you have never dreamed)
the greatness and wonders
God has in store for you.
1 Corinthians 2:9 Adapted

27 Then you will know that I am in Israel,
that I am the LORD your God,
and that there is no other;
never again will my people be shamed.

The Day of the LORD

28 "And afterward,
   I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
   Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions.

29 Even on my servants, both men and women,
   I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

Joel 2:27-29

- Dreams are our hopes and expectations. What are your dreams for yourself and for others?

- Are you working to make your dreams come true?

- Have yours or others dreams been crushed?

- Can you live God’s dream-life right now?
The Gift of Giving

Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written:

“He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little.”

2 Corinthians 8:13-15 NIV

“From everyone who has been given much, much more will be demanded; and from on the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” - Luke 12:48 NIV

- When do you tend to be more giving?
- When do you tend to be more self-centered and selfish?
- Is it truly better to give than to receive?
- Tithing… giving to God your time, talents, and treasure. How do you give to God? How do you serve? What are your gifts and talents do you offer to God?
- Do you offer yourself as a living-sacrifice-gift to God???
- When did you give something valuable to someone? It doesn’t have to have a monetary value on it. Sometimes a hug is much more valuable than money!
- How often do you sacrifice and give your “TIME” for others?
- See: The Jesus Habits by Jay Dennis Chapter 23: Giving
The Gift of Gratitude

In everything give thanks.
Be joyful always, pray continuously,
give thanks in all circumstances,
for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 adapted

Ten Healed of Leprosy
11Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.
12As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance
13and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"
14When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.
15One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.
17Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" 19Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

• Have you ever forgotten to say thank you?
  o Join the rest of us!

• Saying “thank you” takes such a little amount of time; Why do we forget?

• Remember, it’s never to late to say thank you and you can never say “thank you” too many times?

• When have we forgotten to say “thank you”?

• See: The Jesus Habits by Jay Dennis Chapter 10: Thankfulness
The Gift of a Day

This is the Day the Lord has made;
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Psalm 118:24

Let the morning bring me word
of your everlasting love,
for I have put my trust in you.
Show me the way I should go,
for to you I lift up my soul.
Psalm 143:8

In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice;
in the morning I lay my requests before you
and wait in expectation.
Psalm 5:3

- The greatest gift of a day that you can give someone is simply the gift of yourself… giving your time and attention to a person!
  - What stops us from doing this?
  - How can we make a change for the better?

- Sometimes the greatest gift you can give a person is just being there!

- Sometimes the greatest gift you can give a person is just listening!

- Sometimes the greatest gift you can give a person is just having patience with them!

- Sometimes the greatest gift you can give a person is just giving them a smile!

- Sometimes the greatest gift you can give a person is just a simple prayer!

- A great day is a day spent with God and with His People; serving God and serving His people. This is a great day!
A Prayer For This Day
Prayer of Hope

O God we pray this day:
For all who have a song they cannot sing,
For all who have a burden the cannot bear,
For all who live in chains they cannot break,
For all who wander homeless and cannot return,
For those who wait for loved ones in vain,
For those who live with hunger
    and for those who will not share their bread,
For those whose words of love are locked within their hearts,
    and for those who long to hear those words.
Love us, O God, and fill our hearts with courage and hope.
Reveal through us the power of your magnificent grace
as we live out the faith of Christ.
Amen
The Gift of Love
1 Corinthians 13:1-13 NASB

1If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

2If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

3And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

4Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,

5does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,

6does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;

7(Love) bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.

9For we know in part and we prophesy in part;

10but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

11When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.

12For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

13But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.
But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

*Galatians 5:22-23*

- See: *The Jesus Habits* by Jay Dennis Chapter 9: Love
The Ultimate Gift

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

*John 3:16-17*

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

*James 1:17*
What are some of the *Gifts of God*, which are *NOT* mentioned in this book?

- The Gift of Forgiveness
- The Gift of Mercy
- The Gift of Grace
- The Gift of Prayer
- The Gift of Worship & Fellowship
- The Gift of learning from mistakes
- The Gift of Patience
- The Gift of Walking Humbly with God

Can you name more *Gifts*?

The Ultimate Gift is a book of fiction but often we can find real-life examples. Did some of the characters in the book remind you of someone you know?

Jason had a year long learning the Gift’s Test. Jason could have quit at any time. If Jason had failed or messed up at any time; the Ultimate Gift would be over. Jason completed the entire test successfully and won/earned the Ultimate Gift. Happy ending!

I think about my life… I am not perfect. I fail. I make mistakes. I get discouraged and quit. I feel that if I had been the one taking the Ultimate Gift Test, I imagine that I would have stumbled. I believe that I probably would have failed somewhere along the way. How about you?
We should be very thankful that God is a loving God, and that God does not give up on us. We have a God of forgiveness; a God of many Second Chances.

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

Matthew 18:21-35

21Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"

22Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.\footnote{Matthew 18:22 Or seventy times seven}

23"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.

Footnotes:
Matthew 18:22 Or seventy times seven

You could make an argument that Jason “earned” his Ultimate Gift. To be sure, we cannot earn, work, or buy our way into heaven. The Ultimate Gift – Jesus Christ is a Gift of God’s Grace. In your own words: how does this work?

Good works do not “earn” our salvation. Good works are just a by-product of being a believer in Jesus Christ. Put this into your own words!

Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

John 13:17
Bible Basics
Layers of Understanding

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www.bible-basics-layers-of-understanding.com

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