

What Would You Want Your Grandchildren to Know?



Proverbs 1:7: (NASB) *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.*



Special Guest: Todd Alexander

(Commentary has been edited for brevity and clarity.

Todd's comments are shown in purple; Rick's comments are shown in blue unless indicated as Jonathan.)

Whether we think about it or not, we all leave a legacy behind us as a result of our life and experience. Sometimes that legacy can be rich with wisdom, accomplishment and example and other times our legacy can be a sad tale of unfulfilled potential, broken dreams and a trail of "if only" and "why didn't I?" The truth is

we choose much of what our legacy will look like! What if you thought about your legacy in the context of leaving something behind of great value to your grandkids? Aside from material things to give them physical comfort in life, what would you want them to learn? What would you want them to know so that their lives could blossom with fulfilled potential and with true contentment? Even if you do not have grandchildren, let's suppose that you do and are writing them a letter with words of wisdom... What will you say?

To deal with such a subject, we had to bring in a good friend of ours and I would say one of - one of the - no, let me rephrase this, the most enthusiastic person I know! We are bringing back Todd Alexander. Welcome to Christian Questions once again.

Hello, Rick, and hello, Jonathan. Hey, it's great to be with you again today. I'm a 57-year-old in Ohio, and I've been at the same company for 40 years. I'm in marketing, advertising and sales, so I understand a lot of things about marketing and advertising as it relates to big-box retail stores, and I understand a lot about the human interaction by selling to other people. *(Todd is also an elder of his local Bible Students church.)*

This idea of writing a letter to your grandchildren was your idea. What provoked the idea?

So often in life our daily activities lead to the mundane, and I wanted to leave something profound and give them some of the knowledge and wisdom I've been able to receive. My objective is to help my two grandsons, and maybe more, to become what they will become, to live up to their full potential. They are going through a process of personal transformation, changing from children into adults. One is four and one is six. I want to help them get





through that passage. It is often a treacherous tunnel of self-discovery, something that develops them into mature adulthood. I want them to be healthy, responsible and live up to what they were meant to become.

I have three grandchildren and am a little older than you. My grandson is ten, and I have two granddaughters that have just turned two. So, we are in that same category, and, I think we'll agree that grandfatherhood is one of the greatest things ever. Jonathan, are you a grandfather?

(Jonathan) No. Only time will tell. My son and daughter-in-law are young. They have been married a little over two years; so we'll see. No pressure.

It is not about grandchildren so much as it is about thinking it through *as if* you want to leave something to your grandchildren, because there is a sense of legacy. That's why we are framing this whether you are young, old, or somewhere in between. Think about it. What would you want your future grandchildren to know?

Our theme text plus two verses:

Proverbs 1:7-9: (NASB) ⁷The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction. ⁸Hear, my son, your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching; ⁹Indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head and ornaments about your neck.

Wisdom is the principal thing in life, and that is the big message I have for my grandchildren. If you want to gain knowledge, you should add one spiritual thing to your life every day. But if you want to get *wisdom*, you should subtract one fleshly thing from your world every day. That's a big idea, especially in this media-crazed world. As a grandfather, I see things in very small beginnings. These Scriptures tell us to take heed of the spiritual leaders in your life.



Already, wisdom is the principal thing. To get wisdom, you need to be subtracting worldly things from your existence, because wisdom is higher than "stuff." Honor and respect for parents, which is totally lost in our society, is really important.

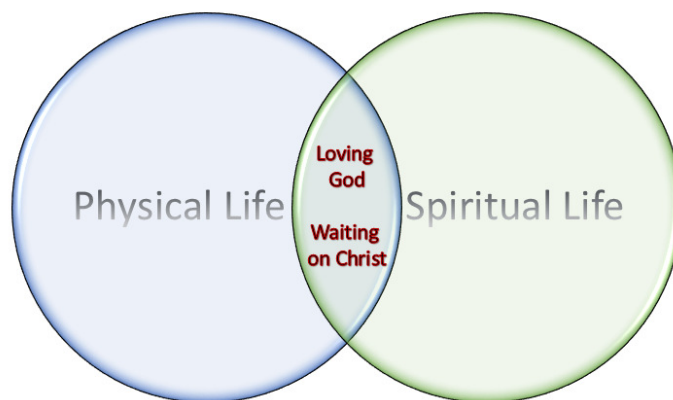
Is the basis of our "letter" scriptural? Directional? Psychological?



It is mainly psychological and scriptural and then directional. A metaphor would be the solar eclipse we enjoyed on August 21, 2017. Scientists knew exactly how long it would happen, how long it would last and the trajectory of the full total eclipse across the United States. But our life isn't that way. I want to provide for my grandsons the wisdom I've learned and from the Scriptures. So it is psychological, it is scriptural, it is directional. It is all of those things.

2 Thessalonians 3:4-5: (NASB) ⁴*We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command.* ⁵*May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.*

The love of God is the keystone to my success. These conclusions came through a life of great struggle. Loving God and waiting for Christ to work in your life is the keystone to success. It provides the structure for your physical and spiritual lives to meet.



That doesn't sound typical, because normally we have the idea that when we call upon Christ, he is just going to answer us. But you are saying you've got to wait for Christ?

Keep in mind the Scriptures tell us we are made in the image of God; so we have some amazing software and hardware we are transporting around with our bodies and our minds. And all of the great men of the Scriptures prove to us that if they waited on God - Joshua, Moses, Joseph, David, Daniel, Nehemiah - they were successful. The love of God and waiting on Christ is the "secret sauce" to a successful life.

Proverbs 16:2-3: (NASB) ²*All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the LORD weighs the motives.* ³*Commit your works to the LORD and your plans will be established.*

Everything we do should be done with the goal of honoring God. If we do that, God promises to direct our minds. All we have to do is submit to God.

We submit; He directs. We don't submit; He won't direct.

He will be far from you, and it won't be because of God. It will be because of you.

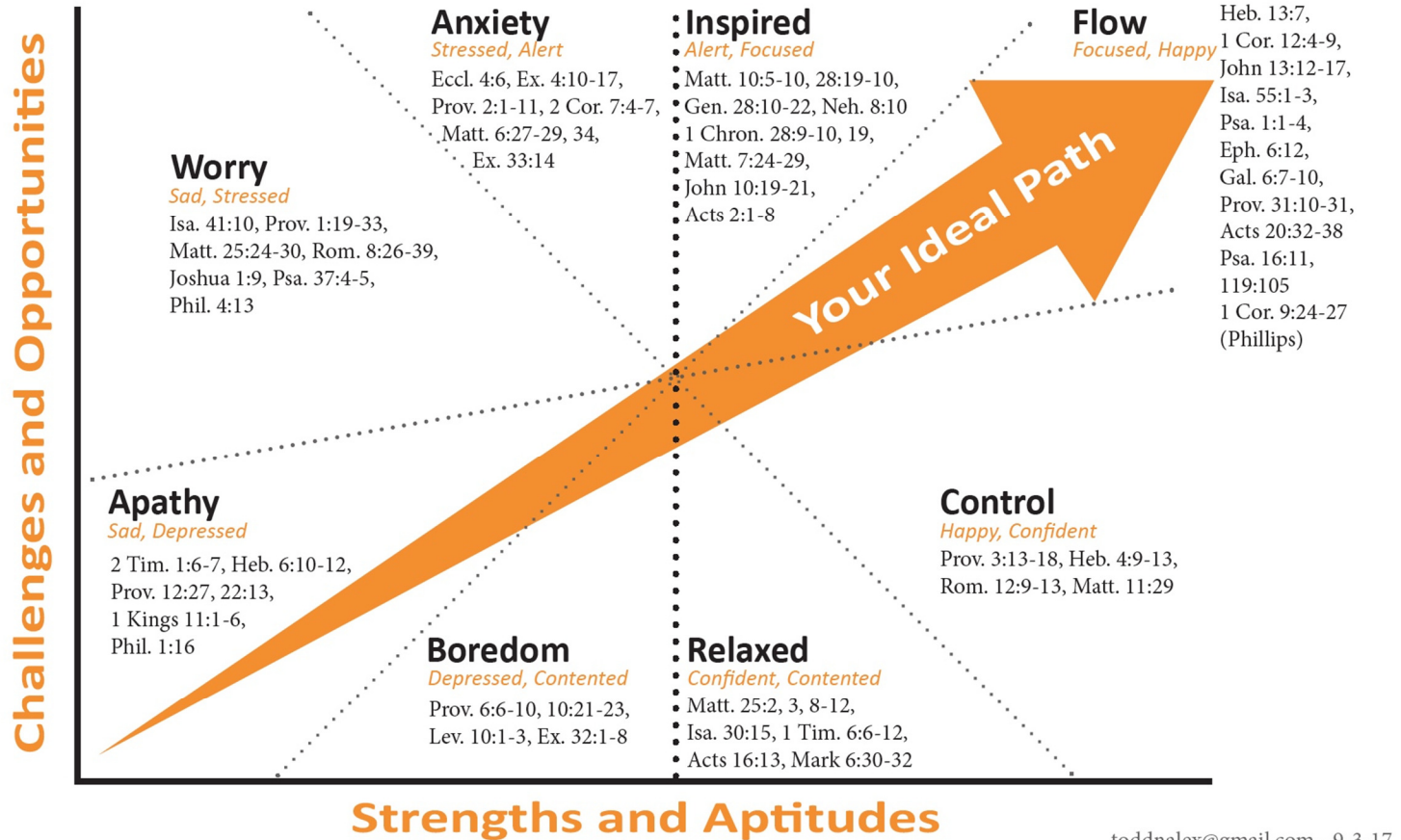
We have to be in the right place in order to be affected by God and His great power, wisdom and overruling.

This Infographic outlines the ability to change your life by your purposeful intentions.

A Letter to my Grandchildren

A prayer for the wisdom of age to be heard by the optimism of youth

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck." Proverbs 1:7-9



toddnaalex@gmail.com - 9-3-17

Concept from Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi: "Flow"

Strengths and Aptitudes

This is a concept I picked up from a psychologist named Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. He's a Hungarian psychologist. He wrote some great books. One is called *Flow* and the other is called *Good Business*. This horizontal line is your ability or power by reason of influence, your authority and also your innate abilities, your talent. It is basically your readiness, your quickness in learning and your unique intelligences.

Strengths and Aptitudes is your ability to address the challenges and opportunities in your life.



Challenges and Opportunities

These are what happen to you in life - things you opt into and things you take on. Your challenges are the projects you are engaged in. Your opportunities are the things that come your way you choose to opt into.

So, on this "X-Y" chart, your horizontal axis is your **Strengths and Aptitudes**. Your vertical axis is your **Challenges and Opportunities**. You live your life along a continuum within that framework.

The whole secret to this is that your strength and aptitude should be equally matched to your challenges and opportunities, and we are going to go through some scriptural examples.

There is one word that is really a key in this whole thing...

It is called FLOW. Flow is that state of happiness and true joy you enter into when you are doing something and you lose track of time and space. You even forget to eat. You are so enthralled in what you are doing and you are enjoying your moment. The reality of it is that your strengths and aptitudes are equal to the challenges and opportunities that exist in your life.

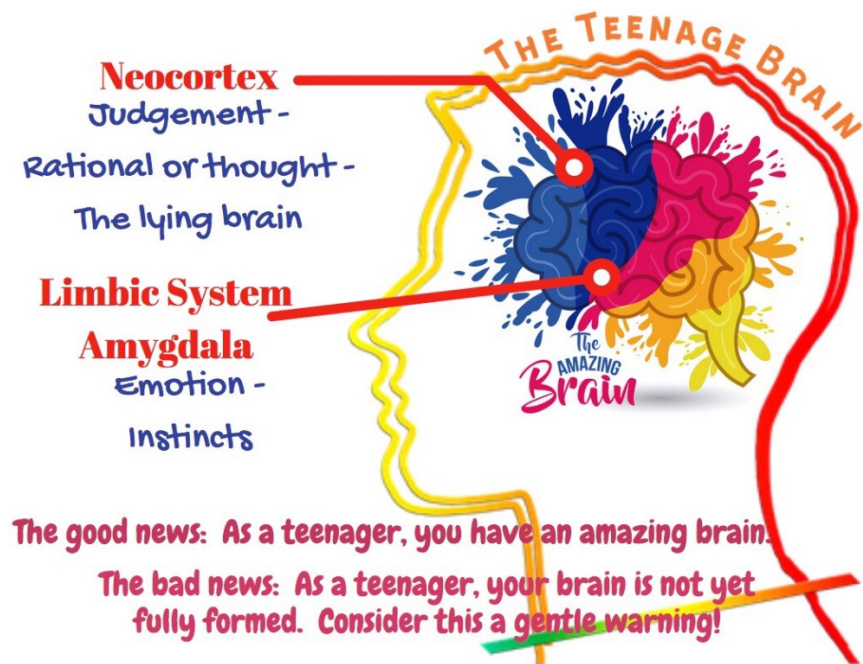


- **Strengths** - Your power by reason of influence, authority, resources, numbers.
- **Aptitudes** - Capability, ability, innate or acquired capacity for something, talent, readiness or quickness in learning, intelligence - the state or quality of being apt, special fitness.
- **Challenges** - Difficulties in a project that is stimulating to the one engaged in it.
- **Opportunities** - A favorable time for attaining a goal.
- **Flow** - True happiness in life that only occurs when your strengths and aptitudes match your challenges and opportunities.
- **Your Future** - In many ways, your future is a blank canvas on which you can paint your own picture.

I see you have notes about the brain. How do the brain, the flow and this letter tie together?

I am considering this a gentle warning to my grandsons. As a teenager, they will have an undeveloped brain. In fact, their brain won't be fully developed until they're in their 20's. The neocortex is the big part of our brain that makes us human. It is what makes us unique from the animal creation and is where thought occurs in our brain. That neocortex is what gives us personal power - the ability to go into the direction that you know you should be going.

My advice to my grandsons is that they put the neocortex in charge of their brain. Now, they have also an emotional side of their brain - the limbic system - and an instinctual side of their brain - the amygdala.



The limbic part of your brain is what governs your emotions. It also governs your body language, either negative or positive. And that's a smaller part than the neocortex.

We have a little almond-sized piece of our brain called the amygdala. That's where your human instincts are. It is at the very top of your brain stem, and it's when we ask teenagers, "Why did you do something that stupid?" They say, "I don't know." It's because they operated out of their amygdala.

The neocortex should rule; the limbic system and amygdala should be subservient. This is very hard to do when you are young, but that's the warning: THINK!

It sounds like "flow" is the thing! So, what is it and how do you explain it to your grandchildren?

As we put this whole "letter to the grandkids" idea together, it really does become important to realize and utilize the power of such a thing. It is powerful to think through and distill down your wisest thoughts and observations for the benefit of those who are just beginning. Let's go with the flow!

So, what is flow, how does it work, how do you get there and how would you describe it to a kid?

Living in a state of "flow" is when your challenges are met by your strengths and aptitudes equally. That's the destination. But how do you get there? How do you manufacture your life in a way that you can get there? It is a combination of your specific and unique intelligence, your unique temperament and the way you interact with the world.

Quick story: I watched my son, the father of my grandsons, play sports in high school. He was always looking out for the little guy, the less quality player,



and he would help them with their skill. I said, "Son, you're a doctor." And he said, "How do you know?" And I said, "Because you are living the life of a healer." He did become a doctor, and he is healing people every day.

We all have people who influence our lives, and there are a lot of different influences that come in. We need to rely on the part of our brain, the neocortex, that does the thinking.

Hebrews 13:7: (NASB) *Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.*

How should we watch those who have influence over us?

There are two things you should watch. Number one, watch their craft. Their craft is the care they put into their daily work. I don't care if it's putting a garbage liner in a garbage can or building a bridge or an architect building a high-rise. Watch their craft.

The second thing is watch their gifts. How are they using the abilities God gives them? Then look for the emotional truth in each of your experiences with your mentors, and also look for the people who give value to others freely. You want to find a "net giver." And by the way, you want to *become* a net giver. You want to lead with value. You want to bring value into everybody's life that you can.

By becoming such a person, it is so much easier to show someone else how to look for those things. There is going to be a lot of "practice what you preach" in this letter to our grandkids.

Exactly. And a good mentor is somebody who can give you wisdom without prejudice.

Let's review **Flow** further.

ired
ocused

5-10, 28:19-10,
10-22, Neh. 8:10
1. 28:9-10, 19,
24-29,
19-21,
-8

Flow

Focused, Happy

Heb. 13:7,
1 Cor. 12:4-9,
John 13:12-17,
Isa. 55:1-3,
Psa. 1:1-4,
Eph. 6:12,
Gal. 6:7-10,
Prov. 31:10-31,
Acts 20:32-38
Psa. 16:11,
119:105
1 Cor. 9:24-27
(Phillips)

Remember, flow is finding that combination of your gifts and what you do so that work seems effortless and becomes a joy and a contentment.

What is the flow message with your own gifts and abilities - what do you look for?

1 Corinthians 12:4-7: (NASB) ⁴*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.* ⁵*And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.* ⁶*There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.* ⁷*But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*

These Scriptures tell us we are all unique and are all given special abilities to do the work of God. That's our job. Now, the problem with our culture today is that most of us live in a *performing* mode when we should be living in a *learning* mode. We should spend 80 percent of our time in learning mode and 20 percent of our time in performing mode. Jesus taught this to us, but sometimes we want to be in a performing mode because we want to experience the world with our physical senses.



Put simply, be willing to watch and listen before you speak. Be wise enough to know that God is putting people in your life for you to learn from. So, learn from them instead of trying to teach them first. It is better to *receive* wisdom than to *impart* wisdom. Only impart wisdom when you are asked for it or where you see a need to build a bridge.

Let's look at another building block for our grandchildren.

After Jesus washed the disciples' feet and taught them to serve each other, he said:

John 13:17: (NASB) *If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.*

Is this a flow message?

Yes, because Jesus is encouraging his disciples to live a life of learning and performance. Knowing his word is learning. Doing them is performance. What Jesus showed us by example is that we are living in a world where almost everything is worthless. There are only a few things that are priceless.

There are certain efforts in our life that bring exponentially more value to our lives. Jesus showed us the way - it is by using our gifts to serve others. That's priceless! He said knowledge is good, but to be truly happy in life, *we must use our knowledge in action.*

What are you going to do if you don't know what your gifts are? We will come back to that.

What about dealing with those around us and our environment - what is the flow message?

Psalms 1:1-4: (NASB) *¹How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! ²But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law, he meditates day and night. ³He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers. ⁴The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away.*



If **Psalms 1:1-4** paints a beautiful, serene picture in your mind, it is because it is using a wonderful, pastoral scene. I like to explain this as a "movie moment:" God is casting the movie. He's giving you waters. He's planting you firmly by the streams of water. Make sure you stay by the streams of water. Make sure you stay hydrated with the word of God. If you do, you will produce the fruit in its season and your leaf will always be hydrated, and whatever you do will prosper. Now, that's only if you stay by the river.

Jesus in our movie moment is the talent director, and in the Apostle Paul's case, the Apostle Paul was the talent. He was obedient to that heavenly vision. He had great sin, but Jesus and God helped the Apostle Paul leverage



that great sin for him to serve the gospel ministry. In essence, he was living in a state of flow every day. His strengths and his aptitudes were equal to the opportunities and challenges of preaching the gospel.

So, there is a *staying away from* in Psalms 1:1-4, and there is a *clinging to* in Psalms 1:1-4. To get to the point of flow requires that we understand the difference between the two. If you are talking to a child about these passages, what do you explain to them in this letter in terms of this message?

God has provided water for you to be fully hydrated and helped in your life. Make sure you stay close to the word of God, and make sure you stay under the power of His hand. It is a gentle, loving, wonderful hand. Stay there.

Stay there even though those other things may seem enticing; stay there.

The next part of understanding flow is our own actions and contribution. We have talked about those with influence around us. We have talked about our gifts and abilities, some of the words of Jesus, people around us in our environment, now our own actions and contributions. What's the flow message here?

Galatians 6:7-10: (NASB) ⁷*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.* ⁸*For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.* ⁹*Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.* ¹⁰*So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.*

How do you focus this in a few words for a child to understand the wisdom being imparted?



My grandchildren will be growing up in a world defined by buying and selling. That is man's economy. It will get you nowhere. Spiritually it will get you to a destitute place. God's economy is one defined by sowing and reaping, sowing righteousness, sowing service,

sowing helpfulness and reaping the spiritual rewards of flow. Now, my advice is to live by design versus living by default. If you live by default, you are living by the precepts of this world. But if you are living by design, you are living by the intentional purpose that God has outlined for you in the Scriptures. Remember, stay close to that water. You are a tree planted by that water. Stay there and flourish.

Instead of buying and selling, which is the way everything works, we should be sowing, spreading forth good, and then reaping benefits from that spreading forth that which is good. Totally different concept, and it is foreign in the world in which we live. But, again, folks, this is a letter to your grandchildren. You want them to have that leg up in life, not in terms of how much they can get, but how much they can become. It is not about buying and selling; it is about sowing and reaping.

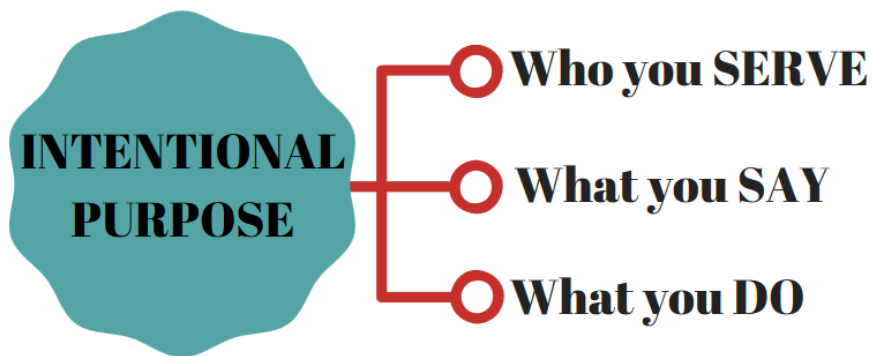


Our desires and intentions - what is the flow message?

1 Corinthians 9:24-27: (Phillips) ²⁴*Do you remember how, on a racing-track, every competitor runs, but only one wins the prize? Well, you ought to run with your minds fixed on winning the prize! ²⁵Every competitor in athletic events goes into serious training. Athletes will take tremendous pains—for a fading crown of leaves. But our contest is for an eternal crown that will never fade. ²⁶I run the race then with determination. I am no shadow-boxer, I really fight! ²⁷I am my body's sternest master, for fear that when I have preached to others I should myself be disqualified.*

Here the Apostle is using an athlete as an example, and in terms of our desires and intentions, what is the key message, and how do you say it to a child?

The Apostle Paul is a great example here. He is living his life with intentional purpose. He says, *I run the race with determination*. He's not a shadow boxer.



We attach meaning to events in our life based on our intentional purpose. If our intentional purpose is to gain things in the world, then we are going to have meaning that becomes disappointment. But if our intentional purpose is to live wholly in the word of God and develop great spiritual fruitage, then everything in our life will be pointing us in that

proper direction. You need a constant beacon; it is a lighthouse in your life. You will keep your spiritual mind focused with that constant beacon, and you need to live in the light of the Gospel and follow the paths of the faithful women and men God has given you and that are closest to your heart.

It is who you serve, what you say and what you do.

It is a clarity of purpose informed by your rational mind. That's your neocortex.

The neocortex must rule. Circling back, what if you are not sure about what your gifts and abilities are, what do you do?

Ask a mentor, that spiritual guide. If you don't have a mentor in your life, look for one who can give you wisdom without prejudice, who can guide you. And say, "Rick, what is my gift? You've known me for ten years. You've seen me act. It's hard for me to be objective when I look at myself. What are my gifts?" Then operate on those principles. There are 20 gifts outlined in the Scriptures.

**We started with where we want to end up - with flow.
How do we get there? What are the steps?**

Remember, this conversation is laying the groundwork for a potentially life-changing letter to your real or imagined grandchildren. There is an amazing amount of learning that can happen within our own individual lifetimes and organizing that learning will benefit us as much as it will anyone else.



One of the great perks to writing this letter is it helps to focus your mind on those things which are most important. The very act of wanting to influence somebody else who is younger and less experienced can change the way you look at things. In my own experience in dealing with lots of people through lots of circumstances, when I'm called upon to try to help someone assess their life and their challenges and I really have to think it through, it makes me look at my life in a better way, a more scripturally-sound way, because I want to give them only what is best.

This is a great exercise for New Year's - think about your grandchildren or your imaginary grandchildren or think about YOU and what you can do to increase the value of your own life.

Amen. The goal of each of us should be to become a spiritual mentor in others' lives. Why? Because we learn 10 percent of what we read. We learn 20 percent of what we hear. We learn 30 percent of what we see. We learn 50 percent of what we discuss and we learn 80 percent of what we experience. But...here's the jackpot...we learn 90 percent of what we teach other people.

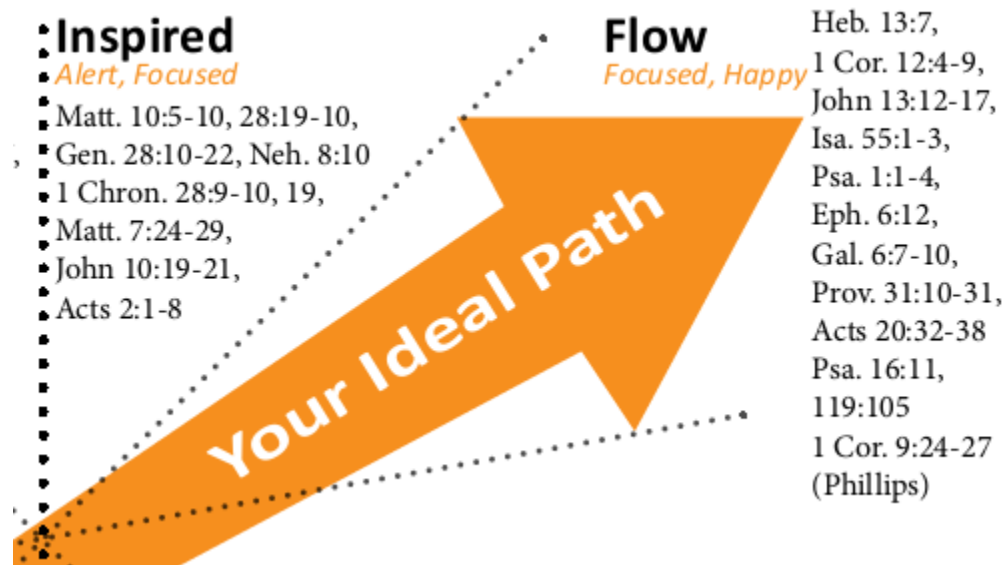
On your Infographic, the words **Inspired** and **Control** are on either side of **Flow**.

What do they represent?

How do they work?

How do you explain them to a kid?

Let's start with **Inspired**.



Inspired has to do with what you called "intentional purpose." This means doing things on purpose with an objective in mind.

What is the "inspired" message here?

Matthew 10:5-10: (NASB) ⁵These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; ⁶but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷And as you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. ⁸Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely



give. ⁹Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, ¹⁰or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support.

Jesus is giving these men a tall order. They were fighting spiritual wickedness. He was telling them to do some amazing things that would be miraculous in our day. But the point is that Jesus believed they could be successful, and he taught the Apostles to have those aptitudes and skills. He gave them the strengths and the aptitudes to be able to meet the challenges in their lives, and they did it as shining stars. And we can see that in the ministries of all of the Apostles recorded in the Scriptures.

The secret here is that we have abilities, strengths and aptitudes, too. If we take a look at our life in the learning mode, we will keep adding strengths and aptitudes to our life. But if we look at our life in the performance mode, we will be blind to the opportunities that God gives us.

Learning mode versus performance mode. We are taught by default to go along the performance road. But in our letter to our grandchildren, what we are saying is, "Don't listen to that. Be a learner."

When your purpose is not clear . . .

- you play social games
- you get caught up in nonessential, destructive activities
- you try to look better to your peers and try to increase your self-importance
- you try to satisfy yourself with fancy cars, big houses and material things to impress your friends and neighbors

Live an
INSPIRED
life **by having a clear conscience**
with intentional purpose

It is not about the stuff; it is the learning. It is about the growing into something. This is what we want our grandchildren to know. Inspired and intentional. How did Jacob show us? Give us the background of Genesis 28:10-15 and we will pick it up from there.

Jacob was going through a certain experience in his life. He decided to go out on his own and commune with God. He found a place to sleep, and God gave him this dream and a promise.

Jacob is looking for God; he is in that learning mode you described. He wants to know and understand. He looked for godly intervention in his life to show him.



Here is what happens:

Genesis 28:16-22: (NASB) *¹⁶Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it. ¹⁷He was afraid and said, How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. ¹⁸So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top. ¹⁹He called the name of that place Bethel; however, previously the name of the city had been Luz. ²⁰Then Jacob made a vow, saying, If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, ²¹and I return to my father's house in safety, then the LORD will be my God. ²²This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.*

Jacob seems to be making a pretty strong commitment to God. But there's an "if" attached in his specific commitment. Is this the right attitude to have? He says IF God is going to feed me and give me clothing and bring me home safely, He is going to be my God.

I don't believe those were the thoughts in his heart, and this is not the point of this Scripture in my thinking. First, Jacob did not freak out; he did not run away scared when God met with him. I believe that Jacob was inspired, because I don't think Jacob believed that his strengths and aptitudes were up to this opportunity from God. He was speaking to the Creator of the Universe - God chose Jacob in this dream, and that is what my grandsons have the opportunity to do.

That's the big message. This experience, yes, was a reach for Jacob. But he was inspired because he was able to rise to the challenge and the opportunity God put before him. And that's the message to my grandchildren - that's the letter: Rise to the opportunity so your strengths and aptitudes, the challenges and opportunities will be there, because God is with you. He will take care of you.

But what opportunity and what challenge? A lot of times we don't even know where we are supposed to go. But going back to what you said before, find a mentor. Find someone who can help you see yourself through eyes that are outside of yourself, because those eyes can often see things that you just simply cannot. Trying to find your place absolutely requires looking outside of your own thoughts.

Let me just give a quick example of that. Twenty years ago, I was very dissatisfied with myself because I knew God gave me an ability to communicate, but I wasn't using it well. It was really upsetting like, "Lord, what am I supposed to do?" Then Jonathan came along with this idea about doing a Christian radio show.

I said it was a crazy idea at first until an opportunity opened up and the Lord put it so close in front of my face that I couldn't look around it anymore. By listening to the idea Jonathan presented a second time, (it would have been great if I had listened the first time, but hey, I didn't) that helped me to take my gifts and put them to work. I think, Todd, that is exactly what you are saying.



Rick, I can tell by the music in your words that you are living in a state of flow on this podcast. Your words indicate the level of inspiration that you live every day.

For me, having this opportunity is the greatest opportunity since sliced bread. There is just nothing better for me; I am so "at home" and so excited, you are right.

"Inspired" and directed - How is Jesus telling us to live inspired? What is he referring to?

Matthew 7:24: (NASB) *Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock.*

Jesus compares hearing and acting on his words to a wise man.

The words of Jesus, the words of the Scriptures, are called metaphorically *a light unto your path*. Those words are a light that comes into your life. Before the light shines *from* you, the light has to shine *in* you. That is a familiar refrain throughout the Scriptures. I can tell you from experience that when I listen and guide my life by the word of God and then serve others and learn from them in the framework of the word of God, I have lived an inspired life.

Let's talk about **Control**. Does this mean I am in control, and what does control look like in finding our personal flow?

Inspired

Alert, Focused

Matt. 10:5-10, 28:19-10,
Gen. 28:10-22, Neh. 8:10
1 Chron. 28:9-10, 19,
Matt. 7:24-29,
John 10:19-21,
Acts 2:1-8

Flow

Focused, Happy

Heb. 13:7,
1 Cor. 12:4-9,
John 13:12-17,
Isa. 55:1-3,
Psa. 1:1-4,
Eph. 6:12,
Gal. 6:7-10,
Prov. 31:10-31,
Acts 20:32-38
Psa. 16:11,
119:105
1 Cor. 9:24-27
(Phillips)

Your Ideal Path

Control

Happy, Confident

Prov. 3:13-18, Heb. 4:9-13,
Rom. 12:9-13, Matt. 11:29

Proverbs 3:13-14: (NASB) ¹³*How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding.* ¹⁴*For her profit is better than the profit of silver and her gain better than fine gold.*

I'm speaking to my grandsons here. This Scripture paints a beautiful picture for me of peace and rest. Let the Scriptures paint pictures in your mind. Drink deeply from the happy, confident feeling you get when you know and feel that God and Jesus are with you. Get the highest possible return from every precious moment in your life. There's going to be a tradeoff between lots of good things and a few great things. **My advice to you is that you favor the great things.** Remember, if you want to gain knowledge, add one spiritual thing to your life every day. But if you want to gain wisdom, subtract one fleshly thing from your life every day.

This is being in that "learning" instead of "accumulating" mentality of life.

How does control manifest itself in the next text - how much control do we have?

Hebrews 4:9-11: (NASB) ⁹*So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.* ¹⁰*For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.*



¹¹Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience.

"Control" sounds more and more like letting go - with a purpose. What else does it require from us?

Romans 12:9-13: (NASB) ⁹*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹²rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, ¹³contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.*

Control here means we are happy and confident that God is with us. This gives us a feeling of safety. It is a point where you submit your life to the word of God, then let the word of God work hard for you by knowing it, applying it and living it in your daily life. Now, I've not always been that way. I've gone through some extreme disappointments, but the point of this Scripture is we can enter into a rest when we know the word of God, when we guide our life by it and when we live it.

So, control really is not about me taking the wheel. It is about me falling in line with that learning ability of life so I can know God is with me because I am seeking Him. And that's...

...being happy and confident. And that will happen in the good times and in the bad times.

In this letter to your grandchildren, whether the times are good or the times are bad, the important thing is that God can be with you in all of those times. And even when they're bad, there is still control. Control really sounds more like letting go with a purpose because - we've heard the phrase, "Let go and let God." It is putting God up on top and in front of all that we do.

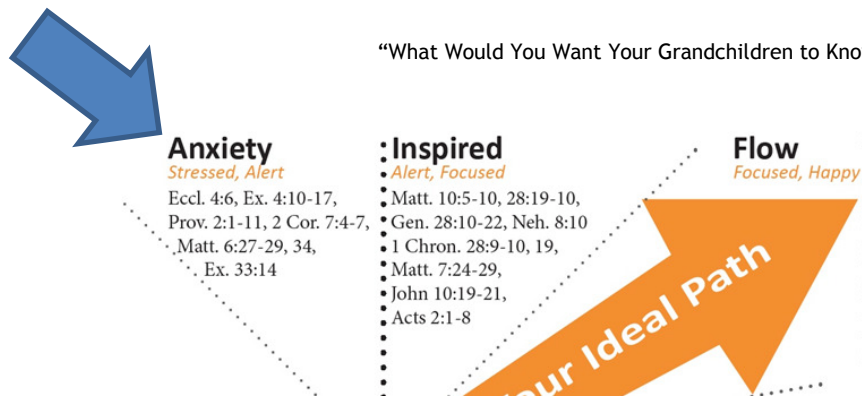
Follow your strengths and aptitudes and look for God to open the doors for you. That's control.

So far it has all been about good stuff.

Does our grandkids' letter include things that can bring you down?

By definition, offering impactful advice to a young mind can be a tricky thing. You do not want to overwhelm them, but you do want to impress them. Part of making that impression is being willing to address the pitfalls of life - what they are, how they work and what can be learned from them.

In this letter to our grandchildren, addressing the pitfalls and the difficulties of life are just as important as saying, "You want to find that flow. You want to have your mentor. You want to be in that learning mode. You don't want to be in the getting. You want to be sowing and reaping, not buying and selling." They have to understand the pitfalls.



Ecclesiastes 4:6: (NASB) *One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind.*

This Scripture tells us anxiety will come to you by owning too much material stuff. As you said earlier, we don't need more stuff. Storage units are full of stuff. We want solutions for our life. We want great strengths, great spiritual bones we can build families on so they can lead happy, successful lives. I have a work associate who has a daughter. I know this is an objective for which he is really striving. He wants to build a great spiritual foundation for his children and a safe haven they can come home to and feel happy with.

Anxiety can tear that all apart, because it pulls us apart, and what you're suggesting is big "things" can lead us to anxiety. And principles lead us to peace.

Exodus 4:10-12: (NASB) ¹⁰*Then Moses said to the LORD, Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.* ¹¹*The LORD said to him, Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?* ¹²*Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say.*

It sounds like Moses is in over his head, or he thinks he's in over his head.

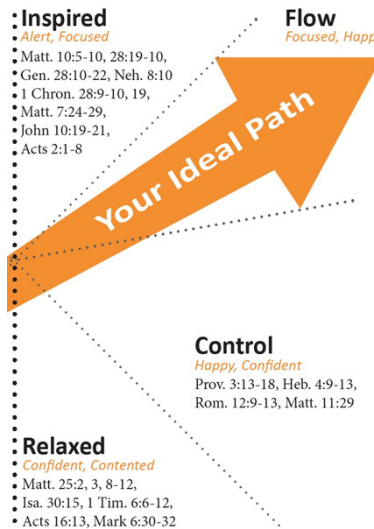
I think this was a mistake by Moses. He didn't think he had the ability to be the public speaker that his brother Aaron was. He petitioned the Lord and pleaded with God to provide him with another means to do his work. I think he should have trusted God. When Aaron made that golden calf, I would imagine Moses regretted not trusting in God to give him the gift of speech. God would have given it to him - that is the lesson. If God gives us the work to do, He will equip us with the strength to do it. The problem with anxiety is that sometimes it's a stepping stone, and we need to treat it as a stepping stone. We need to treat it as a learning opportunity for God to increase our strengths and aptitudes.

When I was in China, I was sitting at a round table in a very noisy restaurant, and asked my Chinese friend, through an interpreter, what he wanted. He asked me to qualify the question. He said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "I want to know what you want." He said, "I want my son to go to high school in the United States of America." And in this restaurant, there were a bunch of Chinese Secret Service goons walking around actually looking at me and this guy. He was wanted by the law because of his journalistic endeavors. But guess what? This is one of the greatest things that my wife Marilyn and I have done in our whole life. We've actually saved this young man.

Was I anxious around that table with one of those big Chinese goons? One followed me in the bathroom. And I was anxious as all get out. But guess what? The Lord gave me the tools to do it. It was His doing not mine. I was just His instrument to do His work. And that's the message. Become that instrument and allow God to work through you.

Sometimes allowing God to work through you says you can take the anxiety and fear and have those become an act of faith, like you said, a stepping stone.

Let's go from **Anxiety** to **Relaxed**.



It sounds pretty mellow, though this next text does not seem to fit:

Matthew 25:2-4,8-9: (NASB) ²Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. ³For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps... ⁸The foolish said to the prudent, give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out. ⁹But the prudent answered, No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.

This is not a relaxed situation. There's tension and disagreement. There's somebody having to tell somebody else "no." Help me here. What does "relaxed" mean?

The secret here is that they were all virgins. That means that they were all consecrated, devoted to the work of God. Some of them were wiser than the others, but they

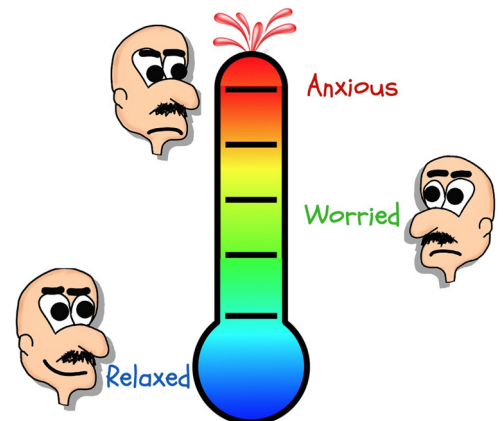
were all consecrated to the work of God, and they were all enjoying a relaxed state. Now, the wise virgins were putting oil in their vessels. That represented the sanctified love of God in their hearts. And the foolish virgins were not doing that. So, what's the message here? Relaxed means that you're confident, you're contented, your faith is at rest. Enjoy this state of relaxation during vacation with your family, but here's the warning: It is a temporary enjoyment. Don't stay there.

Because if you stay relaxed when life requires courage and fortitude, you are not going to be ready for it.

Isaiah 30:15: (NASB) *For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said, in repentance and rest you will be saved, In quietness and trust is your strength. But you were not willing,*

In this verse I can see the relaxation: *in quietness and trust is your strength.*

Yes. The point here is, though, this is a promise that is given to us to claim in prayer. If you find yourself in a life of anxiety, this is a promise you can claim and petition God to help you not be so anxious. Now, beware, the message God gives you might be different than the one you want to hear.





It might require getting rid of stuff. Remember, wisdom is gained by getting rid of one fleshly thing every day. When we downsized our home, it was a tremendous weight off our back, but we got rid of 60 percent of everything we owned. And that is part of what is required here.

So, the relaxed state, then, is being in a place where you find godliness as being the big thing instead of what you own and what stuff you have.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, meaning shall not want any earthly thing.

1 Timothy 6:6: (NASB) *But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.*

The big message here in verses 6 through 12 and the warning that I have is riches prolong the state of relaxation. Your fight is a continuous mission. This is what the Apostle Paul was telling Timothy. He says that they *who would be rich, fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts*. Guess what? Your life is a marathon. It's a fight. It's a continual mission. There will be opportunities in your life - if you look for them - and God will give you strength to be ready for them. And for my grandsons, I want them to know that I have prayed that God will open many doors for them. But it is their job to see those doors as opportunities rather than insurmountable brick walls.

Let me try to sum up relaxation here. You are saying that to relax is a good thing in small doses periodically, because if we seek the state of relaxation, we seek the state of being aloof to what is around us. In such a state, we cannot be content.

Relaxation does not breed contentment. It breeds contempt for the world around you. So, to find contentment means that you treat relaxation with respect and only occasionally.

It is a platform for our faith.

It is a platform for our faith, but it is not the place that you stay. I think of Jesus going to the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. He went there and relaxed, and then he went right back to work.

If you are living in relaxation, you are not looking for the opportunities and challenges God is putting in your life.

Right. I would submit if you are living in relaxation, you are not living.

Let's look at **Worry**.

Proverbs 1:19: (KJV) *So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.*

Worry has to do with knowing that I am not good enough. If you are greedy for gain, it takes away your life because you are living in a state where you know you're not good enough and you are trying to gain material wealth to feel better in your own eyes. But your wheels have gotten in the mud and you are messed up.

Worry

Sad, Stressed

Isa. 41:10, Prov. 1:19-33,
Matt. 25:24-30, Rom. 8:26-39,
Joshua 1:9, Psa. 37:4-5,
Phil. 4:13



I like to claim the promise in Isaiah 41:10: *Fear thou not for I am with thee. Be thou not dismayed. I am thy God. I will strengthen thee.* When I'm worried or sad or depressed, I claim that promise.

You said something interesting. You said, "Worry is knowing that I'm not good enough." If you tell a child, "Look, you worry when you know that you're not good enough." Isn't knowing that you are not good enough admitting that you are not good enough, and if you're not good enough, shouldn't you be worried? How do you overcome that?

But you ARE good enough. If you feel like you are *not* good enough, it is because you don't have your head in the right place. You don't realize the strengths and aptitudes that you have, that your strengths and aptitudes were given to you by God and He has prepped you for those challenges and opportunities.

So, when we say to ourselves, "I know I'm not good enough," you are suggesting to tell yourself that God put you in this place because:

- You have been seeking Him,
- You have been following sowing and reaping rather than buying and selling,
- You have been following that spiritual mentor and looking for godliness instead of things...

and you still come to the place where you're not good enough, just like Psalms 1:1-4, *you are listening to the wrong voices.* You have to plant yourself back by the waters where you can be nourished. If God planted you there, He certainly is going to give you the strength to grow there.

Rick, half our troubles in life are due to saying "yes" too early and "no" not soon enough.

Jonathan, let's go to Joshua 1:9 on this segment of worry in our letter to our grandchildren and helping them understand what worry can do to derail us from that life of flow, of finding our center, if you will.

Joshua 1:9: (NASB) *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*

This is the message I would like to leave with my grandsons. This is a precious promise God gave to Joshua, and we have the ability to claim it in prayer. You can enter into a dialogue with the Creator of the Universe! It is a dialogue with God! We can ask for His help in how we live our life every day. God does 10 percent of the work for you already, and He shows you the path for the other 90 percent. What is my message to my grandsons? Open up that dialogue with God. He is looking for how you decide on the individual things you seek. Be a good decision maker. The Scriptures are a good guide for decision making.

Then I would add, be prepared to go to work. Because if God is going to provide 10 percent and you have to provide 90, that means you have to work. That's the secret of all this. Going to work means learning, absorbing, letting



your neocortex rule instead of the emotions and instincts. That is where true growth comes from. When we are worried, that path can begin to drain away.

Psalm 37:4-5: (NASB) *⁴Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart. ⁵Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, and He will do it.*

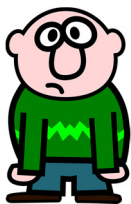
Choice in our day is the main driver of modern life, but it creates something called "decision fatigue." The more choices we are forced to make, the lower quality the choices become. It turns into opinion overload, the idea that we can have it all, we can do it all, and guess what? Everybody in our world is infected by it because they live in man's economy of buying and selling. This is the dream that is sold in advertising. My advice is to have the courage to live a life that is true to yourself rather than the life others expect of you.

What is true to yourself? It is not necessarily what you want, but it is what God, by His overruling, can put in front of you if you are willing to accept it. This is where true contentment and true flow can come.

**We have been working our way backwards -
what are the basic challenges that we come to next?**

The value of this letter to our grandchildren would not be complete if we did not address two of the biggest life-stealers in our world: **Boredom** and **Apathy**. It feels like a struggle to even say the words as they typify a life that is not lived, experienced or appreciated. Plowing through boredom and apathy is a must if we want to paint a comprehensive, life-changing letter to our grandchildren.

Let's look at **Boredom**.



Boredom

Depressed, Contented

Prov. 6:6-10, 10:21-23,
Lev. 10:1-3, Ex. 32:1-8

Boredom is when you really don't know what to do - you are depressed. You are contented but depressed. Compare to apathy, when you are sad and depressed.

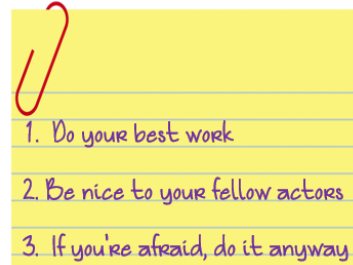
Proverbs 6:6-10: (NASB) *⁶Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise, ⁷Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler, ⁸Prepares her food in the summer and gathers her provision in the harvest. ⁹How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? ¹⁰A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest.*

The ant is a wonderful metaphor. They are really hard workers and guess what? They all communicate and are obedient to the benevolent dictator. In our lives the benevolent dictator is God. Ants do one thing really well - they work like crazy. But there is one thing they do *not* do - they do not major in minor activity. When we are bored, we seem to major in minor activity. The ant tells us how to get out of boredom by getting your first foot in front of the other. I have a friend in Chicago who is extremely challenged





physically, but she teaches physically challenged children how to act on stage. She has three rules:



Be like the ant! It is such a good lesson because it gives you a sense of that willingness to be active. But sometimes it is hard to get there, to take that step out of the lethargy or boredom into activity.

Proverbs 10:21-23: (NASB) ²¹*The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of understanding.* ²²*It is the blessing of the LORD that makes rich, And He adds no sorrow to it.* ²³*Doing wickedness is like sport to a fool, and so is wisdom to a man of understanding.*

your **WORDS** have the power to feed many people.



WATCH what you say

WATCH what you do

This is a precious promise you can claim in prayer: *The blessing of the Lord that makes rich and He adds no sorrow to it.* Verse 23 tells you how to determine if one of your friends is a fool. Surround yourself with wise people because you will become like those people.

Do you know what the definition of a fool is? Somebody who causes trouble just for fun. If you have friends that cause trouble just for fun, they are fools. And if you keep them as your friends, you are going to be a fool, too. You need to leave those people. They are fools.

That's pretty strong stuff for a kid, because that's a hard thing to do. Don't those kids look like the cool ones? There's all the laughing and excitement around that. But what you're saying is, that the truest contentment, the truest growth, the truest goodness in life comes from avoiding such things because those are like a fruit fly. They live for a day, and then they die.

Leviticus 10:1-3: (NASB) ¹*Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them.* ²*And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.* ³*Then Moses said to Aaron, it is what the LORD spoke, saying, By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored. So, Aaron, therefore, kept silent.*

Nadab and Abihu were bored. Do you know what they did? They dishonored God and started entertaining themselves in the temple of the living God. This evil act dishonored the holy things of God. This idea entered their hearts because they were fools. They were fools because they let their boredom take over their life.

Can you imagine what it's like to be bored? I can't anymore, because I never get bored. I have a smartphone - I don't ever have to be bored. But Nadab and Abihu were bored. And don't hang around people who are bored. Don't hang around people who cause trouble for fun. They are fools. You don't want to be a fool.



We are trying to give the strongest, best advice, whether we have grandchildren or not. There are pitfalls in life and one of them is doing foolish things out of boredom. When you get into a habit of being foolish, you become a fool. If you want to live that life that is internally happy, productive and content and accomplishment-oriented, you can't waste your time with things like that, even at a young age.

My grandson is ten-years old and at that age where a lot of things influence him. His dad has done a marvelous job on reeling him in when he has gone off the track where everything is a joke. He has reminded my grandson very carefully that life is full of responsibilities.

I told my grandson, who likes to watch games and things on YouTube, I was doing YouTube videos for Christian Questions called "Moments that Matter" (ChristianQuestions.com/YouTube). He already has a vision of what YouTube is supposed to be. And he looks at me and he says, "Papa"- and he's shaking his head "no." "Papa, you don't do what YouTubers do." It was just so funny. Here I am telling him, thinking he's going to be excited, and he's patting me on the arm like, "It's okay, Papa. I know it's in your imagination, but you're really not a YouTuber." I get such a charge every time I tell that story because it's about us giving them the value of the years of experience and wisdom so they can rise above and say, "Wow, there is something really special here."



Apathy

Sad, Depressed

2 Tim. 1:6-7, Heb. 6:10-12,
Prov. 12:27, 22:13,
1 Kings 11:1-6,
Phil. 1:16

Finally, let's look at **Apathy**.

Apathy is interesting, Todd, because you said you are not bored with a smartphone, but I think they can help us become apathetic because we can get lost in the nonsense that's on that phone. What we may lack in boredom because of technology, we more than make up for in apathy.

Let's get a few Scriptures in line and again, address our grandchildren in terms of how to deal with and avoid apathy.

2 Timothy 1:6-7: (NASB) *"For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.*

The Apostle Paul knew **it takes a lot of effort to overcome the inertia of doing nothing**. That is what happens with apathy - we think so many things could go wrong there is no use even getting started.

My advice is we need to be like a freight train. Have you ever noticed how much play is in the couplings of a locomotive car? Do you know why? Because the engine can only pull one car at a time. With inertia, when that couple meets the next car, it pulls two cars at a time. Then the couple meets the third car, so that play gives the engine a chance. The engine starts to move carrying one freight train car with it at a time, and it adds up to a thousand. That's the secret here. Become like a freight train.





I never thought of it that way. If the freight train was one solid line of 500 or 1,000 cars weighing many tons, that engine could not get it started. But because there is that movement, it can jerk that first car, which can jerk the second car, and that just keeps on moving down the line. It has a chance. To address that in relation to apathy - make the effort and change one little thing, which changes the next little thing which changes the next little thing and creates the strength the engine will display by pulling all of those cars at the same time.

Proverbs 22:13: (NASB) *The sluggard says, There is a lion outside; I will be killed in the streets!*

There are no lions at your door. God gave you the tools to go out and fight lions. A wise man gave me the following advice:

DESPAIR IS A SPIRITUAL DISEASE,
BECAUSE IT DISCONNECTS US FROM THE
TRUTH ABOUT OURSELVES.

You are a child of God. You live in the power of God. If you pray to God and do His will in your life, you are living in the power of God.

- Avoid negative speech.
- Look for the "movie moment" in your life.
- Be like a freight train.
- Don't compare yourselves with others.
- Keep learning.

And remember, you cannot steer a parked car. You need to keep exploring, you need to keep searching, you need to keep moving. When you find that, you will never stop advancing and will always live your best life.



I like that analogy of "you can never steer a parked car," because I remember being a kid and getting in behind the driver's seat and pretending to drive the parked car. We can spend our lives pretending to drive the car just like a kid, or we can grow up and put the apathy aside and say, you know what? It's going to take some time and effort. I've got to earn the money to get the car. I've got to turn the key and drive the car. That takes you out of apathy and takes you into action. You are in that learning mode - in that sowing and reaping mode - instead of the buying and selling mode. Find a mentor for the kid in you to grow up. Have somebody show you what you have going for you.

1 Kings 11:4: (NASB) *For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.*

Sometimes we give up our power to choose bit-by-bit, until we blindly follow another person.



My grandsons, you are growing up in a world that is like two cars traveling down the highway at 100 miles an hour, one inch from each other. The world is living at a frenetic pace.

Your challenge is to not live like the rest of the world.

- Make sure you live in God's economy.
- Stay close to the Scriptures.
- Stay hydrated by the word of God.
- Serve other people.
- Live your life in a learning mode rather than a performance mode. Live by the light of the gospel, and your success will be your honor to God.
- It will be your understanding of your own intelligence, your own temperament, and your own engagement with the world. How will you engage with the world? Will you be a Warrior, a Miracle Worker or a Martyr? The choice is yours.
- Take a note from the ant - start one step at a time.
- Be like a freight train. Pull that first car first, and God will be there.
- Be courageous.

Thanks so much for being with us and our letter to our grandchildren. We really appreciate your thoughts, the power of influence, and what you are trying to do for people. We are talking about not only trying to change the lives of those children in our lives, but trying to change ourselves as we influence them to be the best that they can be. Think about what you would tell that child, the wisdom you would want them to have and know so they can live a life worth living.

***So, what would you want your grandchildren to know?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!***

***Talent is God given. Be humble.
Fame is man-given. Be grateful.
Conceit is self-given. Be careful. — John Wooden***



Join us next week for our January 8, 2018 podcast,
"How Do I Provoke - In a GOOD Way?"