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STUDY TO SHOW YOURSELF APPROVED

(episode 026)

theme: The study of God's word is essential for the Christian life0 **scripture:** II Timothy 3:16 **quote:** "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;" II Timothy 3:16 **summary:** Timothy has just received a letter from the Apostle Paul. Nit Whitly joins Timothy to get some insight into what Paul wrote. In the letter, Paul encourages Timothy (and us as well) to study God's word. This is why:

First of all, it is inspired by God. So the words are not simply the words of men, but they are the very words of God.

Secondly, studying God's word is very valuable to us. It teaches us about God, His character and His actions. It teaches us about right and wrong, what things are good for us and what things are bad for us.

It corrects us when we are wrong. Before we take any action or even speak any word we should test it against the word of God to see if God would approve of it or not. It is a good tool to train us to live holy lives. Not everything God says is easy to do, but it is good for us.

The more we study it and know it, the more we will be able to implement what It says into our lives.

PERFECT LOVE CASTS OUT ALL FEAR

(episode 028)

theme: When we are assured of God's love for us, we have nothing to fear. **scripture:** I John 4:18 **quote:** "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear..." I John 4:18a **summary:** Georgie has to walk through a dark forest to help his sick Grandmother. He's afraid, but as he walks he reminds himself of God's promises to him. As he recites verses from the Bible his faith begins to build up within him. He soon remembers that God's hand is always upon him and that God is sovereign over all the earth.

We are never promised in Scripture that we won't be in situations that can cause us to be anxious or afraid. We are promised that God will never leave nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). As J. I. Packer wrote in his book *Knowing God*, "There is no moment when His eye is off me, or His attention distracted from me, and no moment therefore, when His care falters." These thoughts give us great courage.

FAITH

(episode 049)

theme: Faith is a gift from God. **scripture:** Hebrews 11:1 **quote:** “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not

seen.” Hebrews 11:1 **summary:** Nit Whitley travels to the laboratory of Professor Dwight Beamer. Professor Beamer is attempting to produce faith. But, as Nit points out, faith is not something that we can be produced in a laboratory or anywhere else.

Faith, as Scripture points out, is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen. By saying we have faith in God, we are saying that we trust Him to be true to the things He has said, even though they haven't come to pass yet, or we can't see them. God said He created the heavens and the earth. We are acting in faith when we believe that even though we didn't see Him do it or even have any pictures of Him doing it.

Faith is a gift from God. It's not something we can produce on our own. Our faith increases as we exercise it. The more we trust God the stronger our faith becomes.

We can trust God for all kinds of things. We trust that the wisdom He gives us in the Bible is true, and that His ways are indeed the best ways. The ultimate exercise of faith is where we trust His provision for our salvation. We believe, by faith, that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and that, by trusting in His work, we have our sins washed away and we one day we will be with Him in heaven.

Let us exercise faith in the big things as well as the little ones. Take God at His word because your faith in Him is well-placed.

INTERVIEW WITH THE TONGUE

(episode 056)

theme: The tongue is a powerful thing for good or evil. **scripture:** James 3:1-13 **quote:** “With it [the tongue] we bless our Lord and Father; and with it we curse men.”

James 3:9a **summary:** Nit Whitley's subject for this report is one who is quite capable of speaking for himself. It is the tongue. It is a small part in our body but yet it has a lot of power. The power to bless and the power to curse. The writer of the book of James compares it to a rudder on a ship. The rudder of a ship is small, yet it controls the direction the ship takes. The same is true of our tongue.

As small as it is it has the power to take us in many directions. We can use it for good or we can use it for bad. The interesting thing is that we all, at different times, use it for both. We may bless God at one time, and then, maybe moments later, curse men.

We should always strive to control our tongue. This is not an easy thing to do, but, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can become better and better at it. What a great thing it is when we use our tongues to bless God and bless men.

BELIEVING VS. TRUSTING

(episode 064)

theme: Our faith should cause us to not just believe in God, but to trust Him as well. **scripture:** James 1:6-8 **quote:** “Let him ask in faith without any doubting.” James 1:6a **summary:** The famous Kolbas Brothers lend Nit Whitley a hand in demonstrating this Reality Check. The Brothers try to illustrate for us the difference between believing in someone and trusting them. They attempt to walk across Niagara Falls on a tight rope. Many people in the crowd gathered to watch may believe they are able to do this feat, but how many trust them enough to climb on the back of the one going across?

There are times when our faith in God will be tested in how much we trust Him. It's easy to talk about our confidence in God's word and our belief in what He has promised us. It is another thing to have to take a step of faith and trust that what He says is true, putting ourselves on a sort of “tight rope.”

The best way to build our faith in this area is to practice trusting God in the little, easier things. This will increase our faith, strengthening it for the harder things that will follow.

Let's not be like that double-minded man mentioned in James 1. His doubting makes him like the surf of the sea. He is driven and tossed by whichever way the wind blows him. Let's practice trusting God and anchor all of our hopes on Him.

HOPE

(episode 067)

theme: Our hope is founded in God's sovereignty **scripture:** Romans 5:1-5; Jeremiah 29:11 **quote:** "For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord,'Plans for welfare and not for evil to give you a future and a hope.'" Jeremiah 29:11 **summary:** The hope that a Christian has is not based upon a dream of what we would like to happen, or a wish that we would like to see come true. It's based on the sovereignty of God. It's based in God's power, and His control over the whole of creation. It is also based upon the trustworthiness of God. That He will do everything He has promised to do. If we have an understanding of the greatness and the goodness of God it is easy for us to have hope, even in the worst of situations.

Romans 5:1-5 tells us that the problems in our lives are opportunities for us to be strengthened. As we persevere through our trials we develop godly character and this godly character leads to hope. How can we be sure this is true? Because God tells us. In Romans 8:28 it says, "We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

It's the unchanging, awesome power and love of God upon which all our hope is based.

THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE

(episode 083)

theme: A life built upon anything besides Jesus is destined to ruin. **scripture:** Matthew 21:42; Ephesians 2:20 **quote:** "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." I Corinthians 3:11 **summary:** Nit Whitly takes us to a construction site to illustrate this Reality Check. One team of builders is building upon a weak and faulty foundation. The other is building upon a solid one. The second team, in fact, is using as their cornerstone one that was rejected by the first. We can understand the necessity of building a house or other building upon a solid foundation. Without this, the building is in danger of falling. Bad weather, shifts in the earth and time itself can spell doom for any structure built upon a weak foundation.

The same can be said of our lives. Jesus Himself, quoting Psalm 118, in speaking of Himself said, "The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief cornerstone; this came about from the Lord and it is marvelous in our eyes" (Matthew 21:42).

Any life that does not have Jesus Christ as its foundation is in big trouble. Not just in this world, but more importantly in eternity. All philosophies and theories that reject Jesus Christ are faulty and at some point will fail. The greatness of that fall will depend upon at what point and to what degree they digress from the word of God. But even if someone were to make it through life without any major disasters with a faulty foundation, they will have to face eternity without the only foundation that can save their souls.

Set your life on a solid course. Have Jesus Christ as your foundation, and build upon that foundation with a life lived for the glory of God.

SOWING & REAPING

(episode 084)

theme: Whatever we plant, that's what we'll get. **scripture:** Galatians 6:7-9 **quote:** "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will

also reap." Galatians 6:7 **summary:** If we wanted to grow corn in a garden, we certainly wouldn't plant watermelon seeds or tomato seeds. We would plant corn seeds. This is a pretty simple concept that we can all easily understand.

When it comes to our lives, many of us act like this principle doesn't apply. Everyone wants to have a happy, healthy, fulfilling life. We all want to succeed in whatever we set our hands to. No one wants to have all their plans and hopes dashed into failure. But, we don't always do the things necessary to make that a reality.

If a man or woman wants to be a doctor they know they will need to get the training and experience necessary to become one. The person who spends his days watching television or playing video games is not likely to one day wake up and be a doctor. If he never does what is necessary (sows) he will never become a doctor (reap).

In the same way, although salvation is a free gift, there are many benefits of salvation that we can miss if we are not willing to sow the right seeds. God won't answer our prayers if we never pray to Him. We aren't likely to have a deeper understanding of God and His character if we don't spend time studying His word and listening to and applying His teachings. We certainly aren't going to enjoy the benefits of a godly life if we sow seeds of ungodly actions.

In this Reality Check episode, Farmer Brown's neighbor learns the consequences of sowing the wrong seeds the hard way. Let's learn from his example and sow seeds of righteousness so we can reap the blessings.

THE LURE OF TEMPTATION

(episode 087)

theme: Many times sin looks good, until it hooks us. **scripture:** James 1:12-15 **quote:** "When sin is accomplished, it brings forth death." James 1:15b **summary:** A fisherman will put a worm or some other kind of bait onto his fishing hook as a way to catch fish. This bait is a way of luring the fish to bite into the hook. The fish sees the bait and it promises a good meal to him. If he knew the hook was waiting there to catch him he probably wouldn't take the bait, but because it's hidden he doesn't see the danger.

Sin is much like that. It promises a lot of fun or pleasure, or maybe a way of getting something without having to work for it, or a way of getting out of trouble. At any rate sin lures us in with a promise to make our lives easier or more pleasurable. But don't be fooled. Beneath that bait there lies a hook waiting to snare us.

Jesus said that whoever sins is a slave of sin (John 8:34). Sins' ability to put us into bondage is one of the things that makes the resurrection so necessary. Jesus broke the power of sin on our behalf. Through His death and resurrection sins' power has been broken over our lives. We are no longer slaves to it, but have been set free.

This doesn't mean that we can't be enslaved again. If we, even though we are Christians, practice sin, we can find ourselves in bondage again.

Don't fall for the lure of sin. It's pleasure is only short-lived and then follows the consequences and the slavery. Let's fortify ourselves with the word of God to be able to recognize the lure of sin and let's pray for the strength to resist its temptation.

BUFFETING THE FLESH

(episode 090)

theme: We must constantly work to keep our flesh under control. **scripture:** I Corinthians 9:24-27 **quote:** "And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things."

I Corinthians 9:25a **summary:** Self-control and discipline are vital for those who wish to compete in athletic games. The God-given talents and abilities an athlete has must be developed in order for him to succeed. This requires a great deal of self-sacrifice. Saying “no” to things that others are free to do. For example, an athlete how’s competing in a big game must be well-rested. So he must say “no” to staying up late and depriving himself of rest.

This is also true in regards to our walk with the Lord. As Christians there are things that we know are not beneficial to us. Things that will hurt our walk with the Lord and our usefulness for His service. Others may not feel the need to keep themselves from certain video games, but as believers we know there are some of these that are not good for us. We must show self-control and discipline and say “no” to something we may want to do.

The Apostle Paul wrote: “I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.” Let’s run this Christian life in such a way as not just to finish, but to win.

PERFECT LOVE AND BULLIES

(episode 092)

theme: Don’t be intimidated by evil - do what is right. **scripture:** I John 4:18; II Timothy 1:7 **quote:** “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and of a sound

mind.” II Timothy 1:7 **summary:** Nit Whitly finds himself on a playground where a bully has been intimidating the other children to do as he wishes. Even though the other children are in the right, the bully has successfully made them fear him and his threatened “sock in the nose” that no one dares to stand up to him.

Many times in our lives “bullies” will show themselves. They may not always be people though. In fact, many times they aren’t. Anything that causes us to fear and keeps us from doing what is right is the same as the bully in our story. Sometimes it’s a fear of being the only one to stand up against a wrong idea. The fear of ridicule or exclusion will keep us from doing what is right. It may be a fear of financial loss, or fear of social standing.

Whatever shape or form the bully takes, we must not be intimidated or fearful. We must take our stand on what is right. Many times we will find that by taking a strong stand that “bully” loses all its power and simply withers away. Sometimes our stand will embolden others who, maybe like us, were fearful of being the only ones to stand firm.

But even if we do suffer a “sock in the nose” from a “bully,” it is worth it to know we have done the right thing and that even if we lose the approval of man we have the approval of God, which is much more desirable anyway.

A LESSON IN SELF-CONTROL

(episode 096)

theme: Without self-control we become prey to all sorts of sins that can enslave us. **scripture:** Galatians 5:22,23 **quote:** “Like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit.” Proverbs 25:28 **summary:** Derrek was a good kid. He worked hard in school, he was kind to other children and respectful to adults. He had a lot of good qualities going for him. He also really liked chocolate.

One day one of Derrek’s classmates, seeing that Derrek was so good at math, asked him for help with the subject. Derrek agreed. As a sign of his thankfulness, the classmate gave Derrek the chocolate bar from his lunch. The next day he asked Derrek for help again, and again Derrek agreed, and again Derrek got a chocolate bar. Soon other kids, when they say how much Derrek’s tutoring had helped their classmate, wanted Derrek’s help as well, and gave him their chocolate bars as their way of saying thanks.

Before long Derrek found that all this gratefulness from his classmates had made him pretty large. Too large to get out of his bedroom and go to school. It took the fire department to get him out of the house and a special program to get him back to his normal size.

All of us will have areas of our lives where we will have to be diligent to exercise self-control. Things that are not in and of themselves sinful can become so if we overindulge or become so consuming as to cause us to forget about and lose interest in other things. Let us be careful to do all things in moderation and to keep ourselves under control.