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*Press On, Grow Strong, Stand Firm*

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Scott R. Bowers

# Remind Me Again

I am impressed with the simplicity of Peter's message to us in the first chapter of his second letter and a principle he employs. Basically, he says "***I am happy to remind you...***" of select biblical truths (i.e. virtues). Why? Because we need to be reminded that they need to be ***cultivated!*** How profound is that?

He is not flashy. He is a fisherman turned apostle who is being helped along by Mark to express his thoughts. In my reflection of decades of ministry, (really, as far back as 1977), but in a full-time ministerial capacity since 2001, God has impressed upon me a handful of meaningful truths that bear remembering.

I too, am happy to write them down and share them with anyone who is willing to read them. To help illustrate these reminders, I am including some of my personal images and stories.

It's my hope and prayer that you find them helpful simply by "being reminded"; so that, *they draw you closer to the Lord* and make you and your ministry more impactful.

***Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.***

***Scott***

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**FOCAS Ministries** – The legal name of our 501 (c) 3 in Ohio is Foundation of Compassionate American Samaritans or FOCAS for short. We also operate in Cincinnati by a Trade Name Lord’s Gym Ministries Greater Cincinnati Tri-State Area or Lord’s Gym Ministries for short.

Dedicated to the Body of Christ whom God has used as staff, board members, volunteers, and ministry partners to help people know Christ and to grow strong in the Lord.

### Thanksgiving and Prayer

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. Philippians 1:3-5 (ESV)

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## Introduction

What's in a name? Samaritans?

Before I begin discussing “Reminders”, let me tell you a little about FOCAS. FOCAS or Foundation of Compassionate American Samaritans is a faith-based non-profit in Cincinnati, Ohio established in 1986. My family went with them in 1999 on a short-term mission trip to Haiti, and it was this life-changing experience that God used to recalibrate my heart. A few years later, God would call me into a full-time role with FOCAS Ministries serving Haiti (at the time) and the inner-city of Greater Cincinnati. The word, “Samaritans” really resonated with me, but I really didn't understand it – until I better appreciated the backstory. Read Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37.

### The Parable of the Good Samaritan (NIV)

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’<sup>[a]</sup>; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii<sup>[a]</sup> and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

The man from Jerusalem was likely a Jew. He was the subject of five encounters who each had a different attitude. 1 – To the expert in the law, he was just a topic of discussion. 2 – To the robbers, he was a someone to exploit, hurt, and rob. 3 – To the religious men, he was a problem to be avoided. 4 - To the innkeeper, the wounded man was customer to profit from. 5 – To the Samaritan, the wounded man was a human being worth caring for and loved.

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Here is what convicts me; it is a scenario involving hatred between two groups of people. Go ahead and pick two groups that you can think of or part of: Left vs Right, Black vs White, Rich vs Poor, Conservative vs Liberal, Jew vs Gentile, etc.

In this example, the Jews and Samaritans hated each other. The Jews saw themselves as pure descendants from Abraham, and the Samaritans were a mixed race – Jews who intermarried when they were in exile. The pure verses the impure. Notice that the expert in the law could not even bring himself to call the person a Samaritan when he answered Jesus’ question. He refers to him as, “The one who had mercy on him.”

I am convicted when the one guy sets his hatred aside and shows compassion on the person he hates – or is supposed to not like. Terribly inconvenienced, he gets personally involved, doing what he can, using his own time, talents, and treasure. He makes a huge difference. Wow – God gives me a whole radical perspective on who my neighbor really is.

Jesus, God, is telling us that our neighbors are people of any race, creed, nationality, or socio-economic background. God is saying we don’t have excuses not to help or show love to people. When you serve or volunteer at FOCAS Ministries, or many distressed places outside our comfort zones, this parable comes to life. It will transform you!

You get to find out if you’re religious, or a Samaritan.

Stand Firm.

Scott

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## Reminder #1 – Make Every Effort, Faith is Worth Growing

Why do we need to be reminded of what we already know?

Peter understood something about the human heart—we drift. That’s why he urges believers to “make every effort” (2 Peter 1:5, ESV) and later promises, “*I intend always to remind you of these qualities... to stir you up by way of reminder,*” (2 Peter 1:12–13, ESV). The call is not to earn grace, but to cultivate evidence of it.



He does not mention accomplishments or trophies as evidence of our progress. Not at all! Peter lists the virtues—faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, and love—and says, “*If these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful*” (2 Peter 1:8, ESV). Notice the word **increasing**. Growth is the mark of genuine life.

Over decades of ministry in hard places—I’ve seen this truth lived out. When virtues are neglected, faith withers. In ministry, I’ve seen men and women transformed not by dramatic moments, but by increasing virtue—steady self-control, growing perseverance, deeper love.

When they are intentionally cultivated, even through adversity, strength emerges. Like training for a long bike ride, consistency matters more than intensity. Small, daily obedience produces spiritual endurance.

Peter isn’t calling us to manufacture faith; he’s calling us to cultivate what God has already planted. Earlier he reminded us that God’s “*divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness*” (v.3, ESV). The power is His. The effort is ours.

**And why the repetition? Because we forget. Peter says, “I will always remind you of these things”** (v.12, NIV). *Growth requires intentional remembrance.*

Fruit doesn’t appear overnight. It increases.

**Call to Action:** Examine your life honestly. Are these virtues increasing? Choose one area to intentionally cultivate this month. Invite accountability. Pray daily. Make every effort—and trust God to confirm your calling through growing fruit.

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## Reminder #2 - What Do You Want to Be Remembered For?

For me, it's pursuing God and helping others grow strong in the Lord.

When the noise fades and your race is finished, what will truly remain of the life you lived?

After years of ministry—Haiti's crushing poverty, Cincinnati's broken streets, planting churches, leading mission groups—I've watched countless people come and go. When I'm gone, what will they remember? They'll remember if I pointed them to Jesus, helped them press on, grow strong (in the Lord), and stand firm.



That question clarifies everything: What do you want to be remembered for? Pursuing God and helping people grow strong in the Lord.

If I'm honest, I want to be remembered for helping people grow strong in the Lord by inviting them to trust God beyond what feels safe. Growth rarely happens where life is comfortable. Yet because God is faithful, love—not fear—becomes the motive for stepping forward. Paul captures this posture: “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14, ESV). And we do not grow alone, but together— “rooted and built up in him” (Colossians 2:6–7, ESV).

What endures is rarely what we expect. Reputation is what people say about us for a season; legacy is what God produces through us over time. Titles fade. Faithfulness lasts.

Paul faced death knowing his legacy was secure: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7, ESV). Not buildings or budgets—faithfulness. Not personal achievement—spiritual fruit in others. His supreme goal? “That I may know Him” (Philippians 3:10, ESV).

Years among the poor and overlooked have shown me that strength is formed when people are gently called beyond comfort into obedience. It's who you become in Christ and who you help become like Christ. Every person you disciple, every prayer you pray, every time you choose God over comfort or convenience—that's eternal. Train yourself for godliness (1 Timothy 4:7, ESV.)

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**Call to Action:** Reflect on the question, “What do I want to be remembered for?” When you have clarity on your answer, ask the follow up question, “How am I doing concerning it?”

## Reminder #3 – God Desires a Relationship and Fellowship with Us

Here is an understanding that leaves me in awe and wonder.

What kind of Being doesn't merely rule the universe—but wants your company because He loves you?

That question checks me in my tracks! The stunning and incomprehensible truth of the Christian faith is not simply that God saves sinners, but that He

desires *relationship* and *fellowship* with them – i.e. us! This is not because we are impressive, faithful, or worthy, but because God is gracious, holy, and unchanging. The self-sufficient Creator moves toward us—not out of need, but out of love.

I've witnessed this truth sitting on a curb in the inner city beside a man most people avoided, and on dusty roads in Haiti where despair seemed to have the final word. Again, I realized God was already present—inviting fellowship in places the world had written off. Scripture declares, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man” (Revelation 21:3, ESV). Jesus makes it deeply personal: “I have called you friends” (John 15:15, ESV).

Like endurance cycling, walking with God is sustained not by intensity but by daily consistency and pursuit one revolution of the pedals at a time. Fellowship with Him strengthens us mile by mile.

**Call to Action:** Pause for five quiet minutes. Acknowledge God's nearness. Thank Him that fellowship begins with His grace—and rest there.



## Reminder #4 – It’s Beyond Comprehension that God Pursues Us

This too is A stunning and incomprehensible thought.

Week two of my cross-country bicycle ride. Fatigue setting in, chilled from the rapidly dropping temps, soaked from rain, as I climbed the Appalachian Mountains in the freezing sleet. I saw a little a note on the side of a mailbox and personalized it: “Scott—Free Water. Eph 4:32.” Later, a store clerk asked to buy me a hot chocolate. Strangers pursuing me with kindness.

That day reminded me: **It’s beyond comprehension that God would chase us through history, write down His expectations and send us His Son and Holy Spirit JUST to have a relationship with us.**

In my years of ministry in Cincinnati and Haiti, I’ve shepherded in “dark pastures” where the spiritual warfare is wickedly real. I’ve seen lives like Lacy’s, where every step seems a retreat from grace. Yet God’s “chase” never falters. He gave us His Word to reveal His character, His Son to bridge the chasm of our sin, and His Spirit to sustain us in the inner city or on the trail.

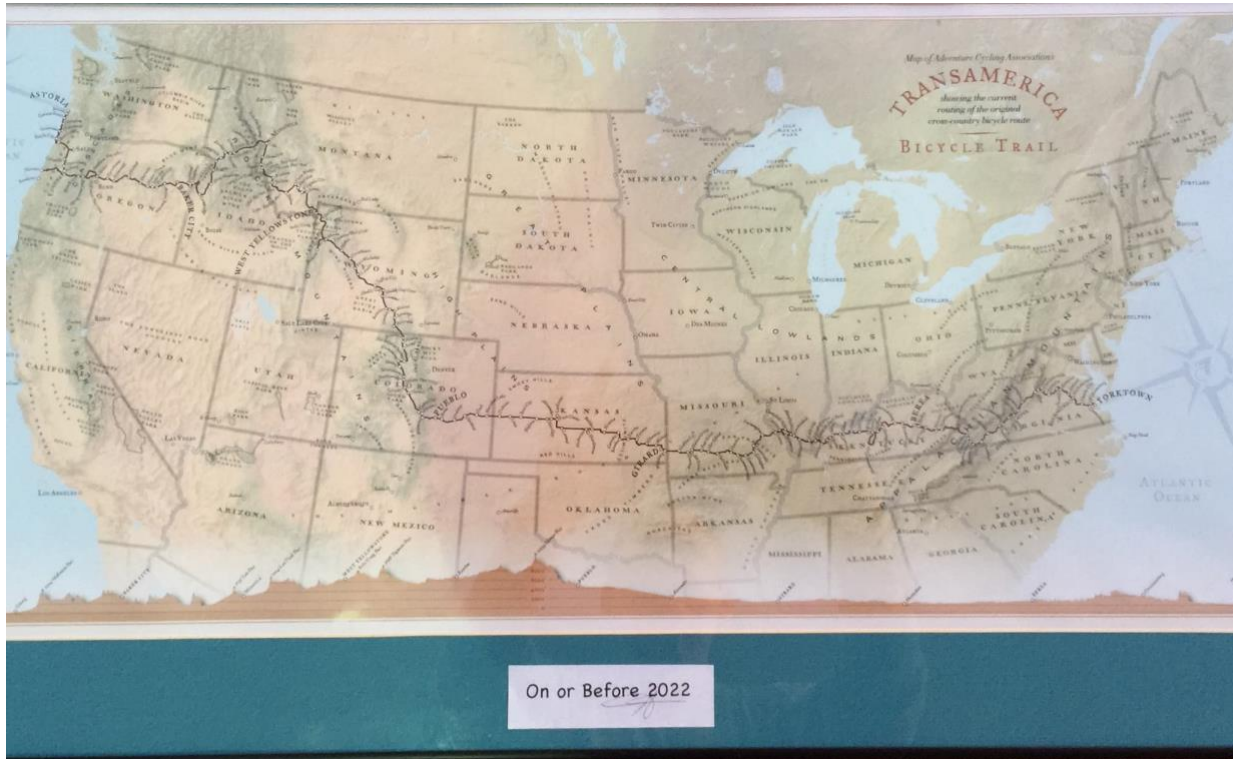
It is truly beyond comprehension: the Sovereign Lord of all uses His Church, the ultimate “Support Crew”, just to bring us home to Him. Not because we earned it. Because He *wants* us.

The Creator orchestrated centuries—patriarchs, prophets, Scripture, Incarnation, Pentecost—so we can know Him. *“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children”* (Romans 8:16, ESV). He sent Himself because relationship with you matters that much.

**Call to Action:** Give God 15 minutes. Just sit quietly. Thank Him for pursuing you. Tomorrow, open your Bible and read one passage as His letter to you. Just one. Start there.



## Reminder #5 - We Must Take God on His Terms, Not Ours



Above is the map/route and elevation of my bicycle ride across the United States in 2021.

We can meet the Holy God who reveals Himself! However, what if the greatest obstacle to closeness with God is our quiet insistence on reshaping Him to fit our preferences?

A deeper walk with the Lord begins when we accept a humbling truth: we must take God on *His* terms, not ours. God has not left us to imagine who He might be or to negotiate the conditions of relationship. He has revealed Himself clearly—through His Word, His Son, and His Spirit—and true fellowship grows only as we respond in trust and obedience.

Let that settle.

The Lord declares, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways” (Isaiah 55:8, ESV). Yet this same God extends a gracious invitation: “Draw near to God and he will come near to you” (James 4:8, ESV). The God Whose ways are higher than ours is the very God Who invites us close.

I’ve learned, both on long rides and in uncertain seasons of ministry, that ignoring the map doesn’t make the road shorter—it **makes it harder**. God’s revealed way brings clarity, peace, and life.

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**Call to Action:** Ask: Where might I be reshaping God to be more manageable rather than more holy? Open His Word, yield afresh, and remember—His terms are always an invitation to life.

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## Reminder #6 – God Loves Us Enough to Die for Us



Holiness, justice, and goodness is on display. What kind of love would satisfy justice and still move a holy God toward the cross—for me? For YOU?

God loves us and desires a meaningful relationship with us enough to die for us—not because He overlooks sin, but because His holiness demands justice and His goodness provides mercy. The cross is not a contradiction of God’s character; it is the clearest expression of it. There, justice is satisfied, sin is addressed honestly, He is the propitiation for our sin, and grace is extended freely.

***This changes everything!***

Scripture declares, “But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8, ESV). At the same time, God remains “just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:26, ESV). The cross does not merely forgive sin—it restores access to God and makes true fellowship possible.

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I have watched people in broken places, at ALL socio-economic levels settle for cheap love because they believed costly love was impossible or just did not consider it! **The cross tells a different story. *Your life matters!*** Sin is serious. Grace is real.

**Call to Action:** Linger at the cross. Give thanks that nothing more is required of you—Christ has already paid the cost. Let His holiness deepen your reverence, and His love draw you nearer.

## Reminder #7– The Same Power That Raised Jesus Christ from the Dead Is Available to Us



What if God never intended you to sustain faith through willpower alone?

The story of relationship does not end at the cross. The same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is available to us—not just to save us, but to sustain us. Resurrection power is God’s provision for the long road of obedience, faithfulness, and love when quitting would be easier.

Let that settle.

Marcus came to the Lord’s Gym Ministries strung out, convinced he’d never break free. “I can’t do this,” he whispered, hands shaking. I looked him in the eyes: “You’re right. You can’t. But God can.” Six months later, he led a recovery group.

What changed Marcus? This truth: **The same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is available to us.**

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Paul prayed we'd grasp this: “the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead” (Ephesians 1:19-20, ESV). Not similar power. The **same** power. The power that conquered death lives in you.

I've watched this power break addictions, heal marriages, transform hatred into love. It's not self-help—it's resurrection power. “I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”

This power does not eliminate hardship; it enables perseverance. I've seen it on long, solitary miles when the body wanted to stop, and in resilient lives learning to stand again after repeated setbacks. Resurrection power is rarely dramatic—but it is relentless.

**Call to Action:** Identify where endurance—not intensity—is required. Ask the Holy Spirit for resurrection strength to remain faithful. You are not powering this journey alone.

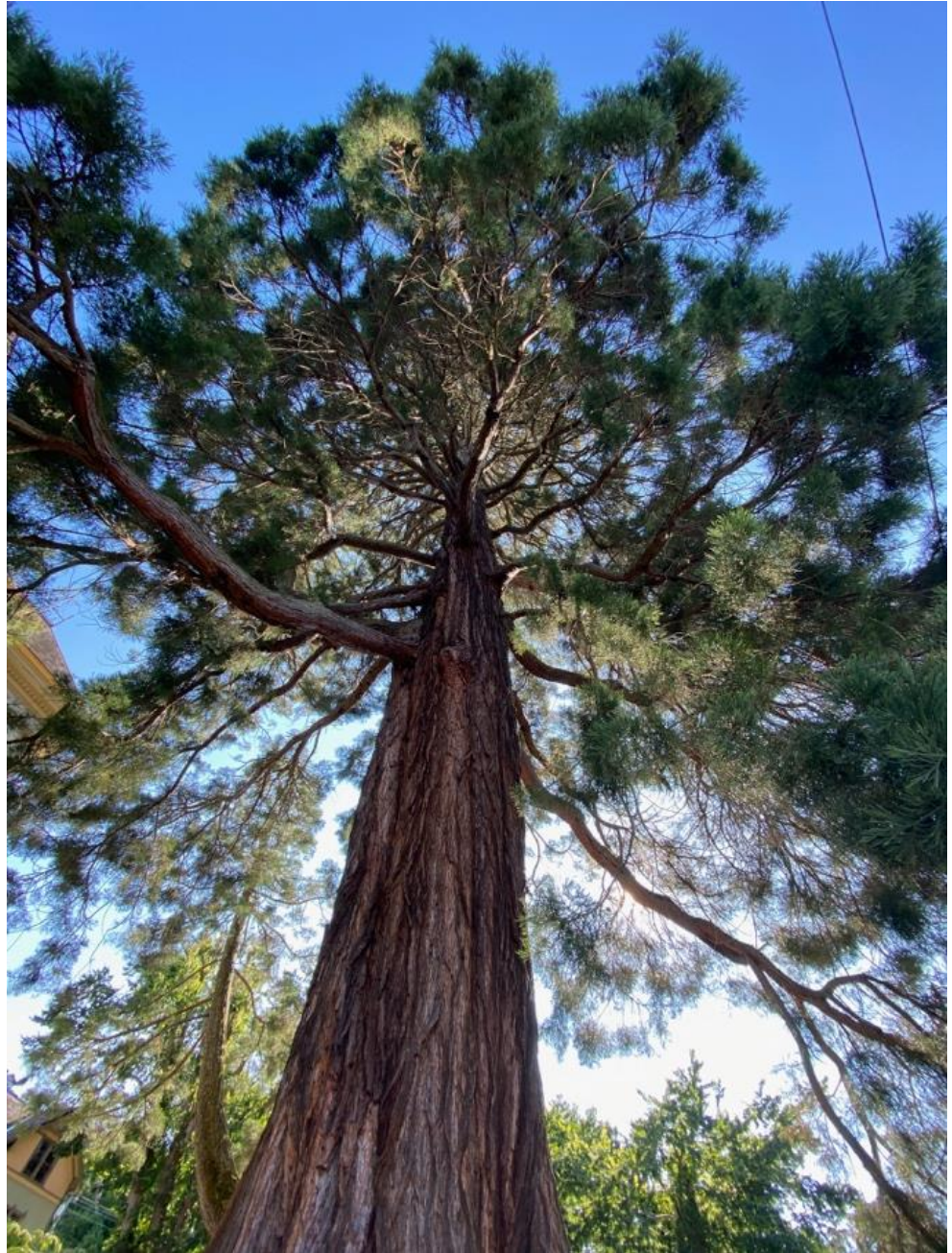
## Reminder #8 - God Will Transform Our Bodies—Now and Forever

Have you noticed how your body quietly reminds you it was never meant to last—while your heart insists eternity must be real? There is hope for weak bodies and faithful souls.

At 64, cycling across America, my body screamed on those 80 mile days. Knees aching, muscles burning, every pedal stroke a battle against aging flesh. Yet each morning I rose and rode again, knowing this body—though failing—serves a greater purpose until God transforms it.

That daily struggle taught me this: the Christian hope is not escape from the body, but **redemption of it**. God renews our hearts now through sanctification, and He will one day renew our bodies through glorification. This is not wishful thinking; it

is the settled promise of God. Paul knew this reality; consider what he says: “He will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body” (Philippians 3:21, ESV). *Lowly* means weak, worn, and limited. *Glorious* means restored, whole, and unbreakable. Even now, “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.” (2 Corinthians 4:16, ESV). What Christ began in salvation, He will complete in resurrection.



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*"He Who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit Who dwells in you"* (Romans 8:11, ESV). God's transforming work begins **now**—renewing strength, sustaining us, conforming us to Christ. But it culminates in glorification.

One day this week frame of ours will be recreated. *"We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye"* (1 Corinthians 15:51-52, ESV). No more pain, no fatigue, no decay. A body fit for eternal worship and service. God's sovereignty ensures it. His Spirit guarantees it. Christ's resurrection proves it.

I've felt this truth on long rides when strength faded and grit carried me forward. God uses bodily weakness to loosen our grip on this world and deepen our longing for the next. Our future is resurrection—embodied, redeemed, and eternal.

If a small pinecone can be buried in the ground, sprout, and grow into a Douglas Fir tree, totally unrecognizable from the cone that was planted, God can raise our bodies into something amazing that surpasses a tree.

**Call to Action:** Offer your weakness to God without shame. Thank Him for present renewal and future glory. Let the promise of resurrection steady you and strengthen you for the road ahead.

## Reminder #9 - God Only Requires Belief

Jesus said, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16, ESV). God requires belief. Not perfection. Not polished performance. Belief.

But biblical belief is more than agreeing with facts. It is entrusting your whole life to Christ—resting in His finished work. *“Without faith it is impossible to please God”* (Hebrews 11:6, NIV). Faith is surrender.



You can know every right verse and still never truly believe.

There is an illustration I like. It shows a trapeze artist pushing a wheelbarrow along a highwire 200 feet above the ground – with no safety net or line. He does it multiple times, and then he asks, “Do you believe I can do it again?” You reply, “Yes!” You have seen him do in multiple times. He then says, “Get in!”

Pisteuō means to stake your life on Him. When Scripture says in Acts 16:3: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.” Biblical belief is not intellectual agreement or casual acknowledgment. It’s not “I believe He existed.” It’s not “I believe in God.” Even demons believe God exists — and tremble. (James 2:19)

Over the years, I have watched people of all socio-economic levels walk through our doors broken by addiction, prison, and pride. Some admired Jesus. Others entrusted themselves to Him. When God opened their eyes, belief became dependence—and dependence became transformation. *“For it is God who works in you”* (Philippians 2:13, ESV).

Jesus never invited people to admire Him. He called them to follow Him. Biblical belief stakes your life on Christ—trusting Him as Savior, submitting to Him as Lord, relying on Him completely.

### **Call to Action:**

Where are you still negotiating with Christ instead of surrendering to Him? Today, stop admiring Him from a distance. Stake your life on Him. Remind your heart: God only requires belief. “Get in.”

## Reminder #10 - It's God's Call

What do you do when you know it's God's call—but everything in you wants to stay comfortable?

I remember standing at the window of my corporate office after 16 years in human resources. Stability was on one side of the glass. Obedience was on the other. The nudge toward full-time ministry, to the streets of



Cincinnati and the poverty of Haiti, did not come with guarantees. The thought re-occurred to me over a six-month period. It came with clarity. Betsy, my wife, said, “Maybe God is speaking to you.” It turned out to be God's calling on the next 25 years of our lives.

I told Dick Taylor, the founder of Foundation of Compassionate American Samaritans (aka FOCAS) and Lord's Gym Ministries in Cincinnati, Ohio, that I was in, and my faith journey soon began a new direction – totally outside my comfort zone. Yet a peace ensued.

Scripture says, “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them*” (Ephesians 2:10, ESV). God's call is not random inspiration. It is rooted in His sovereign purposes, prepared long before we recognized them.

I've seen Haitian pastors preach under tin roofs amid unrest. I've watched men in Price Hill turn from addiction with trembling resolve. Obedience rarely feels safe—but it is always secure. “*He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it.*” (1 Thessalonians 5:24, ESV).

When it's God's call, the outcome belongs to Him.

**Call to Action:** Where have you delayed obedience? Write it down. Pray over it today—and take one decisive step this week.

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**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #11 - We Are the Hands and Feet of Jesus

Grow Strong  
Chasing  
Your  
Dreams...

There's a moment on a long-distance ride when your body aches, the landscape is the same, and the road stretches endlessly ahead. You can't quit—you just keep



pedaling. Ministry is much the same. You see the brokenness, the poverty, the addiction, and you whisper, “Lord, do something.”

And He does. He sends His people. I must remind myself of this.

Paul reminds us, “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them*” (Ephesians 2:10, ESV). That word *walk* implies movement. Intentional action. Obedient steps. Jesus makes it even clearer: “*As you did it to one of the least my brothers, you did for Me*” (Matthew 25:40, ESV).

In Haiti after the earthquake and in the hurting neighborhoods of Cincinnati, I watched God move—not through grand platforms, but through faithful presence. A meal served. Coffee poured. A Bible opened. A young man mentored. A prayer whispered over trembling hands.

We are not the Redeemer. But redeemed people become His visible expression in a hurting world.

**Call to Action:** Today, ask the Lord: “Whose life can I encourage?” Then move. Even one small act of obedience becomes holy ground when Christ works through your hands and feet.

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**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #12 - Share the Vision in the Power of the Spirit and People Will Respond

“Where there is no prophetic vision, the people cast off restraint...” (Proverbs 29:18, ESV).

After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, I stood before a small group of exhausted pastors. Rubble still blocked roads. Grief hung heavy. Volunteers only had so much time to spend there. We had no grand strategy—only prayer and a clear conviction that Christ was building His Church. As we opened Scripture, *they* cast a vision for rebuilding both walls and souls. Something shifted. Hope returned. Not because of eloquence—but because the Spirit moved.

There is a difference between ego-driven vision and Spirit-breathed vision. One depends on charisma, numbers, and control. The other rests on sovereignty. *“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth”* (1 Corinthians 3:6, ESV). God alone awakens dead hearts. God alone sustains weary saints.

When vision is surrendered to Him, people respond—not to personality, but to divine authority. *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope”* (Romans 15:13, ESV).

Vision will cost you comfort, reputation, and certainty. But it is never yours to carry alone.

**Call to Action:** Kneel before you speak. Seek God’s heart, proclaim His Word, obey without fear—and leave the results to His sovereign hands.



## Reminder #13 - Everyone Suffers

Some suffering makes headlines. Other suffering never leaves the kitchen table.

I have stood in Haiti after the earthquake and walked Cincinnati streets where addiction and violence leave visible scars. But I have also sat with faithful believers carrying quieter burdens—strained marriages, wandering children, job



disappointments, aging bodies, and long seasons when God felt silent. Over the years, I've learned that suffering, even borne out of trauma, is not a detour in the Christian life—it is often the classroom.

During childhood and into my teen years, my family endured a father who struggled with alcohol. It was especially hard at times when he was demonstratively impaired; it impacted the whole family. Some would say traumatic in today's vernacular, but that wasn't a popular concept in the 60's and 70's. Suffering includes trauma too, it's nothing new really.

The odd thing to me though, looking back, I think my father did the best he knew how to parent. I was fortunate to be able to tell him that I forgave him for all the difficult times. In fact, he was the best man at my wedding. Lastly, in my endeavors of serving in the field of addiction, I am impressed with all those individuals who find the "courage" to own their weaknesses and address them. But I digress – sorry!

Job had to suffer. Paul too. Jesus was clear: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33, NIV). We live in a fallen world, yet we do not suffer alone. "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance" (Romans 5:3, ESV). The One Who calls us to endure is the same Savior Who first suffered for us.

Hardship can harden the soil of our hearts—or deepen our roots. Did you know that roots grow deepest in drought. In God's sovereign hands, trauma or even ordinary disappointments shape us into Christ's likeness. And one day, suffering will be swallowed up in glory.

**Call to Action:** This week, bring your burden honestly to the Lord and ask Him to form endurance—and hope—through it.

**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #14 - We Must Be Thankful, Patient, and Faithful

During the 30 years FOCAS served in Haiti, (1986 – 2016), we saw devastating weather patterns and their lingering effects. After a tropical storm in Haiti, I saw palm trees bent nearly to the ground. Days later, many still stood tall. Their strength was not in what was visible—but in what ran deep beneath the surface.

Storms reveal roots. The good news – roots can be powerful forces and move substantial barriers.



I am reminded where Paul writes, *“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”* (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 ESV). Some of you are thanking God through tears. Some are weary of being faithful with no visible fruit. Gratitude can feel unnatural. Patience can feel like delay. Faithfulness can feel unnoticed.

When I cycled across the Rockies in my 60s, there were miles of thin air and grinding climbs where the summit was nowhere in sight. Don’t forget the mosquitos. No applause. No shortcuts. Yet every revolution of the pedal mattered. So, it is with us. God is not reacting to your storm—He is ruling over it. *“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good”* (Romans 8:28 ESV).

Your quiet obedience today may become someone else’s strength tomorrow! Let that sink in.

Thank Him in the trial.  
Trust Him in the delay.  
Follow Him in the unseen.

**Call to Action:** Write down one hardship and thank God for His sovereign purpose in it. Choose one area where you have grown impatient and surrender it again in prayer. Then commit to one simple act of faithful obedience. Roots grow in the dark—but harvest comes in due season.

**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #15 - Don't Get Married to Your Buildings

In 2012, I was visiting Bob “Robert” Lupton, Founder of Focused Community Strategies (FCS) Urban Ministries, in Atlanta, Ga. He had just published his book, *Toxic Charity, or How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help* [Harper Collins Publishers]. It circulated in the same company as *When Helping Hurts* by Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert [Moody Publishers]. I asked Bob, after his many years of ministry in the inner-city of Atlanta, what advice he had for me as he was signing a copy of his book for me?

“**Don't Get Married to Your Buildings,**” he said *without hesitation*. Not exactly what I was expecting, but the more I thought about it, the simpler yet profoundly wise this gentleman's advice sounded.

After years in Cincinnati and Haiti, I have thanked God for every facility He entrusted to us. I have also stood after tropical storms, watching winds flatten communities and weaken walls we once depended on. In one season, a ministry space we relied upon was suddenly unavailable.

We wondered how the work would continue. Yet in borrowed rooms and crowded hallways, men repented, children were disciplined, and Christ was exalted. The Lord was reminding us: He builds His Church. In another season, our Dashboard data revealed we needed to move on to new pastures. You can't measure faithfulness in square footage and attendance.

“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain” (Psalm 127:1, ESV). “Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands” (Acts 7:48, ESV).

Buildings age. Programs shift. Neighborhoods change. But the gospel does not break, crumble, rot, or rust.

When our identity becomes tied to what we built, we quietly compete with the One who builds all things. We are merely stewards of bricks, mortar, and stuff. He is the Redeemer of souls.

**Call to Action:** Hold every structure loosely. Invest where storm, moth, and time cannot touch—into the eternal work of transformed lives.



## Reminder #16 - It's God's Ministry, We Are Just Stewards

Who gets the credit  
when things go well?  
And who carries the  
blame when they  
don't?

If we're honest, both  
questions expose  
what we truly believe  
about ownership.

Over the years—  
whether mentoring  
people in the inner  
city or discipling  
pastors abroad—I've  
felt the quiet  
temptation to think,  
*This is ours. We built*



*this.* But Scripture dismantles that illusion: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth” (1 Corinthians 3:6, ESV). And just in case we missed it, Paul adds, “Neither the one who plants, nor he who waters is anything, but only God Who gives the growth” (v.7, ESV).

Anything? That humbles a leader. It humbles me!

We plan, preach, mentor, write, and fundraise. We promote it and share the stories. We show up early and stay late. Yet we cannot regenerate a heart, produce repentance, or manufacture fruit. WE CANNOT CHANGE ANYONE! PERIOD. Only the sovereign Lord does that. Press pause and let that sink in. Again - **Only the sovereign Lord changes someone through the Holy Spirit.** The ministry was His before we arrived—and it will be His long after we are gone.

Stewards don't own the field, the pasture, or the sheep they are assigned to. They serve unconditionally and answer to the Owner.

And that truth frees us—from pride when success comes and from despair when results seem small.

**Call to Action:** Lay down the burden of ownership. Serve diligently, pray expectantly, and entrust the outcomes to God. It's His ministry. Be found faithful.

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**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #17 - Expect Spiritual Warfare

Why does conflict often intensify the moment you lead your family closer to Christ?

*“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood...”* (Ephesians 6:12, ESV). The enemy’s strategy is not subtle—he sows division between spouses, whispers accusation into weary minds, magnifies financial strain, and isolates fathers and mothers, and sometimes children, in quiet discouragement. Sleepless nights. Sharp words. A sudden heaviness in the home.

As I was contemplating accepting the job offer from Dick Taylor, the founder of Foundation of Compassionate American Samaritans (aka FOCAS) and Lord’s Gym Ministries in Cincinnati, Ohio, I was discussing it with my pastor at the time, David Hansen, of Kenwood Baptist Church in Cincinnati, and author of *Long Wandering Prayer* (along with other books too I might add). He warned me that if I took the position in ministry, I should expect an increased assault on me through attacks on my family. I have since shared this advice with other people, to include volunteers.



Yet hear this: no attack enters your home without first passing through the sovereign hand of your Father. *“The Lord is faithful, and he will establish you and guard you against the evil one”* (2 Thessalonians 3:3, ESV). The cross has already secured the final victory. Satan may harass, but he cannot overturn Christ’s finished work.

Do not retreat. Kneel before you stand. Pray with humility. Lead with gentleness and conviction. *“Put on the whole armor of God”* (Ephesians 6:11, ESV).

**Call to Action:** Tonight, gather your family—even if briefly. Pray aloud. Speak blessing over your home. Refuse isolation. Resistance is often the evidence that righteousness is taking root.

## Reminder #18 - Pray for Expansion of Borders (Ministry) at God's Timing

Have you ever asked God to expand your impact—not for recognition, but because the need is overwhelming?

I have. After three decades in urban Cincinnati and Haiti, I have prayed that prayer often. When you watch addiction destroy men, or see children trapped in generational poverty, or babies not surviving childbirth, you stop praying for comfort and start praying for capacity.



In seasons of serving both Cincinnati's inner city and the villages of Haiti, I have asked the Lord to widen our reach. When doors didn't open as quickly as I hoped, I wrestled with impatience. The need was real. The resources were limited. But so was my understanding.

Jabez was "more honorable than his brothers," though his name was linked to pain (1 Chronicles 4:9–10). His prayer was bold: "Oh that You would bless me indeed and enlarge my border, and that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep me from harm..." And Scripture simply says, "God granted what he asked" (ESV).

Notice the order. Blessing. Expansion. Presence. Protection. Jabez did not ask merely for territory—he asked for God's hand upon it.

In ministry, I have felt the tension of wanting wider influence while carrying the weight of limitations. Yet "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:6, ESV). Expansion is not engineered; it is ordained. Even our works were "prepared beforehand" (Ephesians 2:10, ESV). We ask for reach. God looks for readiness. We want wider borders. God builds deeper where we are planted.

On my ride across America in 2021, I watched farmers cultivate fields they could not control. They worked the soil but trusted the season and God’s provision. Wide fields mean nothing without deep roots.

Psalm 75:7 (ESV) reminds us, “It is God who executes judgement: He brings one down, putting down one and lifting up another.” Promotion is not seized; it is assigned.

I cannot fall into the trap of measuring fruit by size alone, while God measures fruit by depth and character.

The Prayer of Jabez is not about ambition—it is about availability. It is a request that God enlarge our capacity to serve, while guarding our character.

After years of ministry, I have learned: God rarely enlarges a platform before He enlarges a heart.

**Call to Action:** Pray Jabez’s prayer for your ministry—but ask God first to purify your motives, deepen roots, your character, and prepare you to steward greater Gospel impact for His glory alone. Surrender the timing. Ask God to enlarge your influence only as His hand remains upon you and His protection guards your heart.

## Reminder 19 - The Poor Will Always Be With You

Why keep serving if the need never disappears?

I have asked that question myself. After 30 years in Haiti and in neighborhoods like Over-the-Rhine, West End, East Price Hill, Harlem, Portland, etc., there were moments I wished the poverty would simply end. The brokenness feels relentless. We are engaging the one whom Jesus said to seek after by leaving the 99.

Yet Jesus said, *“For you always have the poor with you”* (John 12:8, ESV). That is not resignation—it is sovereignty. In a fallen world under God’s rule, suffering remains because He has not yet finished His redemptive story. And in His providence, He places need directly in our path.

In Matthew 25:31–46, Jesus describes the final judgment. The sheep are welcomed because they fed, clothed, and visited “the least of these.” Their mercy did not earn the kingdom—it revealed they belonged to the King.

The goats are condemned not for cruelty, but for indifference. One day, compassion will not be admired; it will be examined.

Dick and his wife, Anne, Taylor understood that gravity. With only coffee, Kool-Aid, and a cooler of baloney sandwiches, Anne walked into bars and streets others feared, returning repeatedly. Costly mercy became worship. Along the way, they showed that God could use even me. In turn, I pray that I have been showing others too.

The poor will always be with you—and one day, so will the Judge.

**Call to Action:** Ask the Lord to search your heart. Then move toward the need before you—while there is still time.

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*Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. 1 Peter 3:8 NIV*  
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**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #20 - The Poor Are a *Same Kind of Different as Me*

I sat across from Ricky at The Lord's Pantry. His hands trembled in one of Cincinnati's oldest neighborhoods, Over the Rhine, as he held his coffee cup. Mine were steady — but my heart was not. As he told me his story of prison, homelessness, and loss, I felt the quiet conviction of the Spirit: apart from Christ, I am just as bankrupt.



When I first read the book, *A Same Kind of Different As Me*, by Ron Hall & Denver Moore with Lynn Vincent (Nelson Thomas Publishers), (there is a movie too) I thought I was going to help the poor. In His sovereign mercy, God used the poor to expose my pride. He did not simply call me to serve them; He called me to get to know them as friends and stand beside them. Most of us have personal and emotional safety nets around us that many of my friends from more dire neighborhoods do not have.

In Over-the-Rhine, I've watched men like Ricky and countless more move from homelessness to hope through Christ's transforming grace

In Haiti, where many endure crushing poverty, I've seen joy rooted not in provision, but in Christ Himself. Different circumstances. Same spiritual need.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3, ESV). At the foot of the cross, there are no benefactors — only beggars rescued by grace.

**Call to Action:** Ask the Lord to search your heart. Repent of subtle superiority and paternalism. Then walk toward someone in need — not as a savior, but as a fellow recipient of mercy. I also highly recommend the book and movie — “*A Same Kind of Different As Me*.”

## Reminder #21 - Get Rest Regularly

Are you tired enough to stop — or too tired to listen?

On my ride across America in 2021, there were long stretches where pride whispered, *Keep pushing*. Headwinds across Kansas. Endless climbs. But I discovered something sobering: exhaustion doesn't just weaken the body — it distorts perspective. When you are tired, everything feels urgent. Even your own importance grows larger than it should.

Jesus told His disciples, “*Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while*” (Mark 6:31, ESV). The crowds were multiplying. Needs were real. Yet the Son of God called for withdrawal. Why? Because rest is not abandoning mission — it is trusting the Father Who owns it.

Psalm 127:2 (ESV) reminds us, “*He gives to His beloved sleep.*” Rest is not laziness; it is surrender. It is a confession that we are servants, not Savior. The Kingdom advances because “*God gave the growth*” (1 Corinthians 3:6, ESV), not because we refused to slow down.

When we refuse rest, we subtly assume the world depends on us.

**Call to Action:** Block time this week to be still before the Lord. Protect it. Guard it. Let your rest declare what your heart must remember: God is sovereign — and He does not need your exhaustion to accomplish His will.



## Reminder #22 – Ministry is Hard, Messy at Times

“Lord, this is harder than I thought.”

I have prayed that prayer more than once. Early on, I imagined ministry would be steady progress—clean victories, visible growth. Instead, I found addiction relapse, fatherless boys testing boundaries, leaders who disappointed me, and seasons where fruit seemed stagnant or buried beneath the soil.



Paul does not sanitize it:

*“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed... struck down, but not destroyed”* (2 Corinthians 4:8–9, ESV). The pressure is real. The heartbreak is real. But so is the sovereignty of God. Nothing touches our work that has not first passed through His hands.

And when weakness surfaces, Christ answers: *“My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Corinthians 12:9, ESV). Ministry is messy because sanctification is messy.

I have seen men return after failure. I have seen boys become fathers who love differently. God wastes nothing—not even the hard.

**Call to Action:** If you are weary, do not step back. Step closer to Christ. Stay faithful in the mess. The struggle is not a sign of failure—it is often the soil where God grows His strongest servants. As my late friend, and former Lord’s Gym Ministry Chaplain, Jerry Dubose fondly reminded, “Don’t let the mess, stop the press.”

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**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #23 - Just Pray

I can recall when people from the Lord's Panty would come up to Anne and ask her for money or items they needed.

She would be so attentive to them with her eyes fixed on theirs and acknowledge their need. It would not be uncommon for Anne to hold their hand and place her other hand on their shoulder and reply, "Let's pray and ask Jesus to help you and see what He does." Then, she prayed!

Since then, there are other people who come to mind who live this out such as Salley, Danny, Tom, Burr, Roger, David, and the list goes on. These are people from my church, other ministries, and our staff at FOCAS Ministries.

### But prayer is never "just."

Prayer is confession — that we are not sovereign, but God is. It is dependence when pride wants control. *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication... let your requests be made known to God"* (Philippians 4:6, ESV). Why? Because He occupies the throne.

James writes, *"The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective"* (James 5:16, NIV). Not because of the strength of the one praying, but because of the supremacy of the One who hears.

Prayer does not replace obedience — it empowers it. It steadies trembling hands and clarifies the next faithful step.

So, before you react, retreat to your knees. Before you speak, seek His face.

**Call to Action:** Set aside ten undistracted minutes. Kneel. Open His Word. Name your burdens aloud. Just pray — and then walk forward believing God is already at work.



## Reminder #24 - Only the Shedding of Blood Can Atonement for Sin

The smell of smoke and burnt offerings must have been familiar to Israel. Day after day, animals were brought to the altar. A man would place his hand on the head of a lamb, confess his sin, and watch the life of that innocent creature taken in his place. It was graphic. It was costly. And it was meant to be. God was teaching His people that sin requires death, and forgiveness is never free.



Scripture says, “*For the life of the flesh is in the blood... it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.*” (Leviticus 17:11, ESV). Every sacrifice pointed forward to something greater. The blood of bulls and goats could cover sin for a time, but it could never remove it. Only the perfect sacrifice could do that.

Hebrews reminds us, “*Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*” 9:22, (ESV). That is why Christ came. Not just to teach, not just to heal, but to die. On the cross, *Jesus became the final sacrifice — once for all.* No more altars. No more lambs. His blood was enough.

When we understand the cost of atonement, we stop treating sin casually and start clinging to the Savior.

**Call to action:** Read Hebrews 9 today and thank Christ for His sacrifice. Ask the Lord to give you a deeper hatred for sin and a deeper gratitude for the blood that saved you.

## Reminder #25 - Sabbath Ministry Days Are Good Practice

*What if your greatest act of faith this week is to stop?*

For years in urban Cincinnati and rural Haiti, I believed urgency impressed God. The needs were relentless—poverty, addiction, fatherlessness, storms rolling in without warning. But God never commanded ceaseless striving. He commanded rest. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8, ESV). Sabbath is not suggestion; it is surrender.

When I ignore Sabbath, I subtly assume the ministry hinges on me. That is pride dressed as perseverance. Yet Scripture reminds us, “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain” (Psalm 127:1, ESV). God is sovereign over outcomes. We are responsible only for obedience.

Even Jesus withdrew to lonely places to pray (Luke 5:16). If the Son of God stepped away from crowds, how dare I believe I cannot?

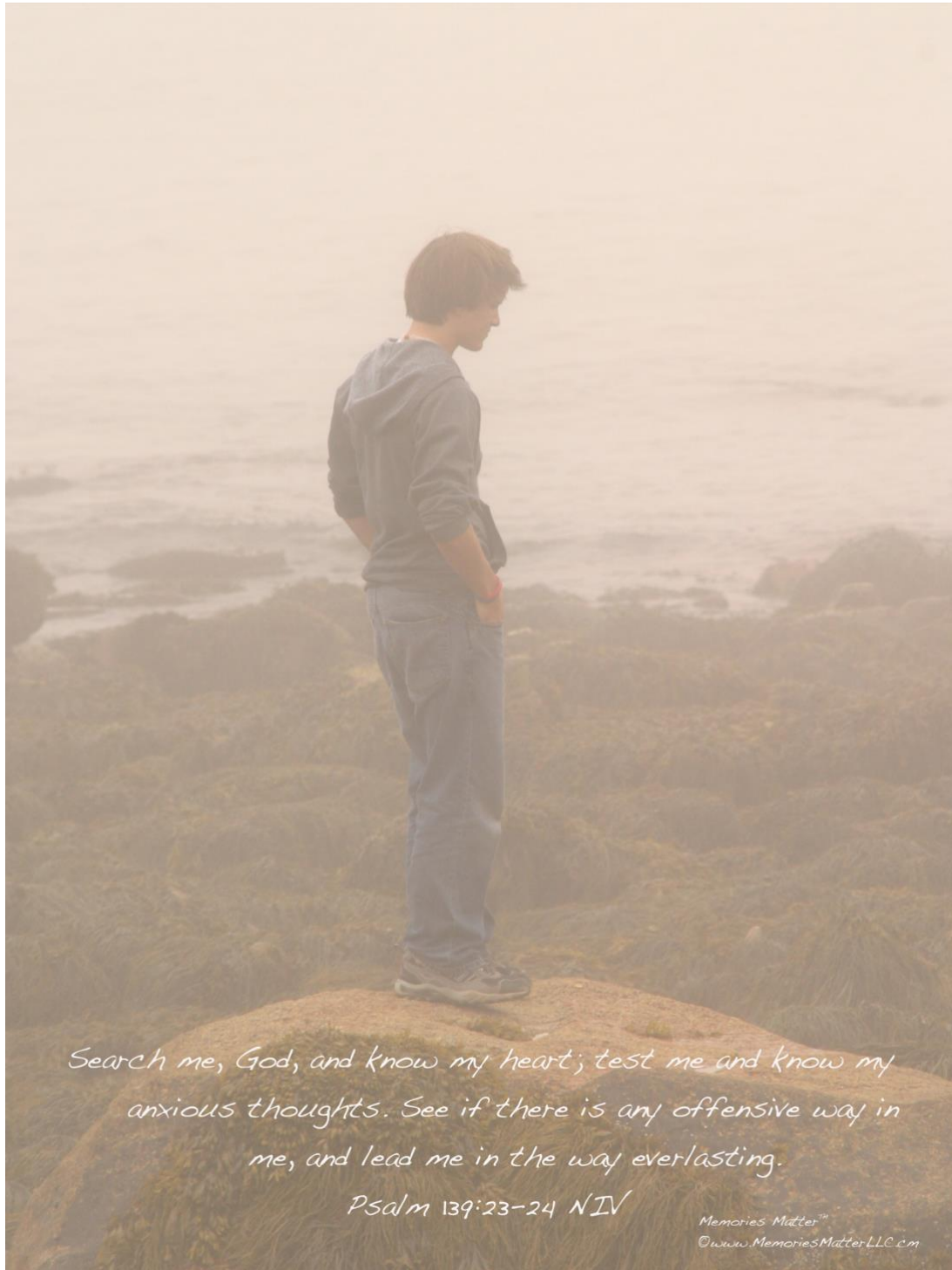
Sabbath ministry days recalibrate our souls. They expose idols of productivity, restore intimacy with Christ, and remind us that fruit grows from abiding, not frantic effort (John 15:5).

Rest is warfare against self-reliance.

**Call to Action:** Set apart one day this quarter. Silence your phone. Open Scripture. Walk, pray, and listen. Trust that the God who called you can sustain His work without you—and strengthen you for what lies ahead.



## Reminder #26 - Extra Grace Is Required at Times



*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my  
anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in  
me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

*Psalm 139:23-24 NIV*

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Have you ever reached the quiet place in your heart where you thought, “*I cannot do this again?*”

I have sat across the table from someone who promised change—again. I have watched progress unravel in weeks. I have been confronted by violent and enraged people. (I started with FOCAS one week before the Cincinnati Riots in April of 2001.) I

have felt the fatigue of pouring into a life that seemed determined to resist help. In those

moments, I have taken people to detox only to see them back the next day, frustration whispers, *“Step back. Do something else. Protect yourself.”*

But the Spirit reminds me: *“Press pause, extra grace is required.”*

Scripture commands, *“Be kind to one another... forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you”* (Ephesians 4:32, ESV). And we are told, *“The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love”* (Psalm 103:8, ESV). The sobering truth is this: I was once the resistant one. I tested God’s patience. Yet He did not withdraw. He pursued.

Difficult people are often God’s chisels—shaping pride, exposing impatience, and deepening dependence on Him. Grace extended at your breaking point becomes a testimony of Christ’s work in you. Ouch, ouch, and ouch again.

Extra grace is costly. It’s painful. It’s not easy. Neither was the Cross.

**Call to Action:** Name the person who stretches you most. Pray before you speak. Let mercy lead. The grace you extend may be the very evidence that Christ is still at work in your heart.

## Reminder #27 - Embrace Failure, Learn from Feedback and Improve

What if the setback you resent is the instrument God is using to reshape you? What if your setback is not a verdict—but a classroom?

In neighborhoods where poverty suffocates opportunity and many begin life two steps behind; I have watched failure either harden hearts or humble them. Lequan left prison homeless and wandered into our Lord's Gym for a workout. What he found was truth, correction, and patient discipleship. God did not waste his collapse. He governed it.



*“The righteous falls seven times and rises again”* (Proverbs 24:16, ESV). Rising is not denial—it is repentance, it is grit, adjustment, and renewed obedience. Testing is not random. It is measured, permitted, and governed by a sovereign Father.

The cross looked like catastrophic defeat. Yet through the darkest Friday in history, God secured eternal victory. If He ordained redemption there, He is not intimidated by your present failure.

In flight school I over sped an engine on startup. Too much fuel! I had not positioned the throttle correctly. Feeling the quiet weight of disappointment (and horror) and embarrassment, I was escorted to the Flight Commander to own my failure. We discussed the mishap and then his next reaction surprised me. He gave me the keys to another aircraft and told me to get it right this time. Let corrections become refinements. It's how we progress and meet success on the other side.

**Call to Action:** Stand up. Repent where needed. Adjust your course. Obey the next step. Success builds reputation. Failure surrendered to God builds Christ-like character.

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**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #28 - Measure Ministry for Stewardship Improvements and Accountability

How will you know if your faithfulness is producing fruit that lasts?

In ministry, busyness can feel like obedience. Crowds can feel like impact. But Scripture is clear: *“Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful”* (1 Corinthians 4:2, ESV). It’s about being faithful, not impressive.



When we created our Dashboard in 2013 and began tracking attendance, decisions for Christ, tutoring hours, and employment outcomes, it was not about optics. It was about stewardship in communities where poverty and instability distort opportunity. In places like these, vague intentions do not change trajectories. Activity can masquerade as impact. Measurement forces honesty. It also provides credibility.

Evaluation reveals blind spots, exposes inefficiency, and protects mission drift. It also fuels gratitude when fruit appears. Numbers never replace prayer—but they often reveal where prayer is needed most. They may reveal a different emphasis, direction, or strategy.

Yet we measure trembling, not boasting. God is sovereign over outcomes; we are responsible for obedience. *“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”* Matthew 6:33 (ESV). Only God transforms hearts. Only God sustains fruit.

But He will ask what we did with what He placed in our hands. *“Each of us will give an account of himself to God”* (Romans 14:12, ESV).

**Call to Action:** Take inventory. Identify one area of your life or ministry to evaluate honestly before the Lord. Pray over it. Refine it. Strengthen it. Then act in obedience. Measure not to impress men—but to prepare to stand before the Master with joy.

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**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

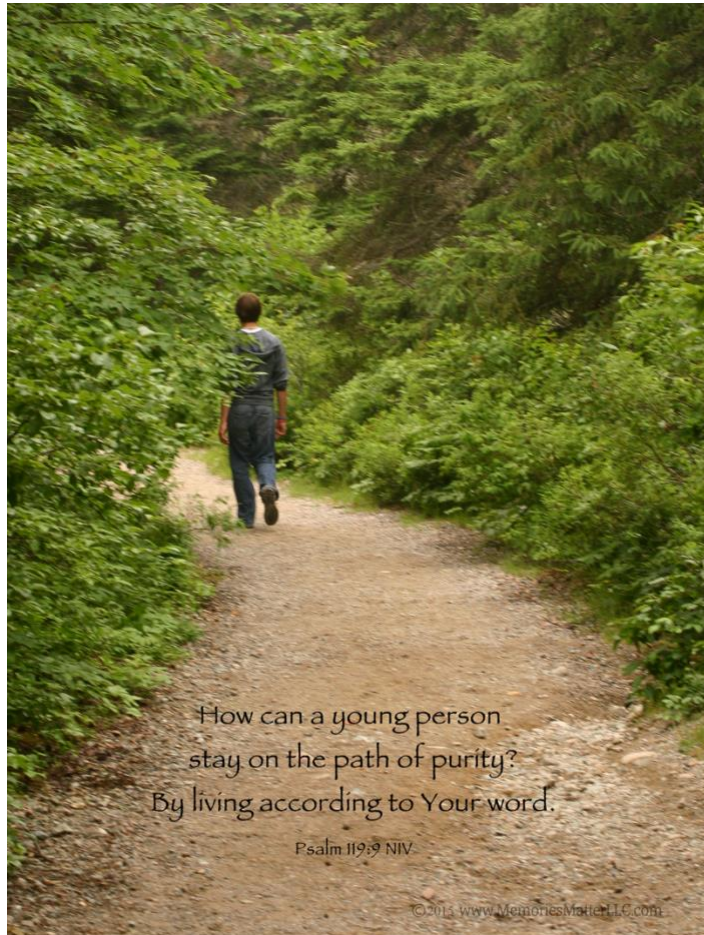
## Reminder #29 - Be Accountable

Who has permission to confront you when your heart begins to drift?

Isolation rarely announces itself. It grows quietly unchecked pride, small compromises, unchallenged thoughts. I have watched men unravel when they stopped inviting counsel. In communities marked by poverty, broken systems, and fatherlessness as well as more affluent neighborhoods.

I've seen how quickly drift becomes downfall.

Scripture reminds us, “*So then each of us will give an account of himself to God*” (Romans 14:12, ESV). One day we will stand before a holy God with nothing hidden. Yet in His mercy, He does not leave us alone. “*Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed*” (Proverbs 20:18, NIV). Accountability is not weakness; it is God’s appointed means of sanctifying His people.



I have needed faithful brothers to confront blind spots I could not see. My friend, Ford Taylor, calls them “Bumper Buddies”. (See \* below.) Left to myself, I am capable of self-deception. The enemy works best in secrecy, but the Gospel calls us into light. Because Christ has borne our judgment at the cross, we are free to confess without fear and grow without pretending.

Accountability humbles pride, guards the soul, and strengthens our resolve in spiritual warfare.

**Call to Action:** Invite one mature believer to speak honestly into your life this week. Step into the light—before the light exposes you.

\*See Ford’s *Transformation Leadership* to learn more about Bumper Buddies at <https://www.transformlead.com/ford-taylor>

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**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #30 - Build Skill.



Why do so many believers pray for impact yet resist preparation?

When I cycled across America at 64, I learned a humbling truth: endurance is not granted—it is built. Mile after disciplined mile. To crest Hoosier Pass in Colorado at 11,500 ft. you train for it. You develop technique.

Building skills like teaching, planning, prayer, de-escalation, fundraising, time management, artificial intelligence, never ends. It's lifelong. Learn to enjoy the concept.

I have watched potential wither when discipline is absent—and flourish when cultivated. Scripture says, *“Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings”* (Proverbs 22:29, ESV). Skill matters to God.

Yet He will not practice for us.

Left untended, gifts dull. Faith atrophies. A child goes unmentored. A calling lies dormant.

**Call to Action:** Choose one discipline—prayer, Scripture reading or study, mentoring—and sharpen it daily. The Kingdom is not built by good intentions, but by sharpened servants wielded by a sovereign God.

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**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #31 - Be Intentional and Bold: Courage Flows from the Cross

*When was the last time your obedience required courage instead of comfort?*

In neighborhoods where violent crime soars and poverty suffocates hope; passivity is never neutral—it is costly. I can tell you about bold capital campaigns to raise funds for building programs, they still lack the heart pounding courage and intentionality of a woman who turns her back on prostitution, her pimp, her Johns to embrace an emotionally charged world of recovery and restoration.

I have looked into the eyes of young men who expect prison more than purpose. Bold obedience has cost me sleep, comfort, and at times reputation. But drift costs far more.

Paul commands, *“Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might”* (Ephesians 6:10, ESV). Our courage is not self-generated. It rests in the sovereign God who ordains both the calling and the outcome. We act boldly because Christ first acted boldly for us. *“While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8, ESV). The cross is God’s decisive move toward broken people.

*“Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead”* (James 2:17, ESV). Living faith steps forward—again and again.

Because Christ was bold for you, you can be bold for Him.

**Call to Action:** What obedience have you delayed? Name it. Pray. Act before the day ends. The kingdom of God never advances through comfort—but always through consecrated courage.



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**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #32 - Courage Is Not the Absence of Fear

Have you ever done the right thing while your hands were still shaking?

Fear is not foreign to faith. I have stood on cracked sidewalks in Over-the-Rhine where poverty and addiction grip entire blocks. I have walked dusty roads in Haiti where nearly 80 percent live in abject poverty

I have watched men like Reggie step from homelessness and prison into new life through Christ.



In every case, there was risk. There was uncertainty. There was the quiet temptation to step back instead of forward.

Joshua 1:9 (NIV) declares, “Be strong and courageous... for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” God does not promise calm conditions; He promises His sovereign presence. He rules the storm.

When Peter stepped out of the boat (Matthew 14:29–30, ESV), the wind still howled. He felt fear — yet he got out anyway. It was faith — not calm seas — that carried him.

Jesus says, “Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.” (Luke 10:3). Yes – we encounter wolves, metaphorically speaking, in the neighborhoods we serve!

Our courage is not rooted in personality, but in a risen Christ who has conquered sin and death.

**Call to Action:** Name the fear that has held you back. Pray Joshua 1:9 aloud. Then step. The Lord strengthens the feet that move.

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**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— *Scott Bowers*

## Reminder #33 - Don't Compromise God's Word



“Did God really say...?” The ancient whisper has never stopped.

As a FOCAS ministries team member, you likely walked streets where poverty competes with hope and watched lives unravel — not usually through open rebellion, but through quiet compromise. I have felt that pull myself. The temptation to soften truth. To round off sharp edges. To make obedience easier to swallow.

But God does not revise His holiness to suit the age. He reigns. His Word stands.

“The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul” (Psalm 19:7, ESV). The law exposes our sin; the cross satisfies its penalty. Christ fulfilled the law we could not keep, and by His Spirit empowers the obedience He commands. We do not keep His Word to earn His love; we keep it because we already have it.

Compromise slowly numbs the soul. Truth awakens it. Compromise breeds confusion. Truth births freedom.

I say this as a fellow struggler, not as a judge. In neighborhoods marked by violence and despair, transformation has never come through diluted standards — but through proclaimed, lived truth.

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**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

**Call to Action:** Examine your heart today. Where have you adjusted Scripture to ease discomfort? Repent. Return. Stand firmly under His Word. One day you will stand before the Author of it — and His Word will not have changed.

## Lesson #34 - Do Team Building Activities

Why does isolation feel easier than unity?

Reflecting back over college, military, corporate life, and ministry, I've learned this: left alone people drift. But bound together in Christ, they grow. Division weakens witness. Unity magnifies it.

Scripture declares, *“Two are better than one... For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow”* (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10, ESV). And Paul reminds us, *“Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it”* (1 Corinthians 12:27, ESV). Our unity is not organizational strategy — it is blood-bought reality secured at the cross.

The enemy prowls (1 Peter 5:8). He isolates. He divides. He whispers suspicion. But God builds His Church through shared mission, shared sacrifice, and shared prayer.

Team building is not about games. It is about Gospel alignment. It requires humility, repentance, forgiveness, and courage. But where believers labor side by side, God commands blessing.

**Call to Action:** Do not wait for perfect chemistry. Pursue covenant unity.

If you want to grow stronger in the Lord, refuse isolation. This week:

- Invite one believer to pray with you.
- Join or initiate a small group.
- Repair one strained relationship.

Because lone believers wither — but united believers advance the Kingdom.



## Lesson #35 - Shepherding Is a 24/7 Proposition — You Are a Shepherd



If someone followed you for one week, would they see a shepherd?

Shepherding is not a title; it is a calling assigned by the Chief Shepherd. We shepherd because we are first shepherded by Christ. *“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care... being examples to the flock”* (1 Peter 5:2–3, NIV).

I have learned that shepherding rarely feels dramatic — it feels daily. It’s gritty. It is staying late. Answering the hard call. Correcting gently. Praying when exhausted. In neighborhoods marked by poverty and fractured families, steady presence matters. The enemy preys on unattended sheep (1 Peter 5:8). A missed word can echo for years; a faithful word can redirect a generation.

I have seen this modeled by our amazing staff at every level. I explained to our ministry partners that our staff parachuted right out of heaven into our pastures. They love our friends. They build community. Adelle says, “Scott, you’re (our staff and volunteers) my family. I don’t know what I would do without the Lord’s Gym.” This is a mom who lost one son to street gun violence while the other son threatened her life.

**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

Jesus said, *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep”* (John 10:11, ESV). Shepherding costs. It always does. But the Chief Shepherd never sleeps. He sees what is done in secret and empowers ordinary faithfulness in a fallen world.

You may not carry a staff, but you carry sacred responsibility.

Stand your post. Watch well. Love deeply. The souls entrusted to you are eternal.

**Call to Action:** Today, ask the Lord: Who have You placed in my care? Then shepherd them intentionally — patiently, prayerfully, and persistently — for His glory.

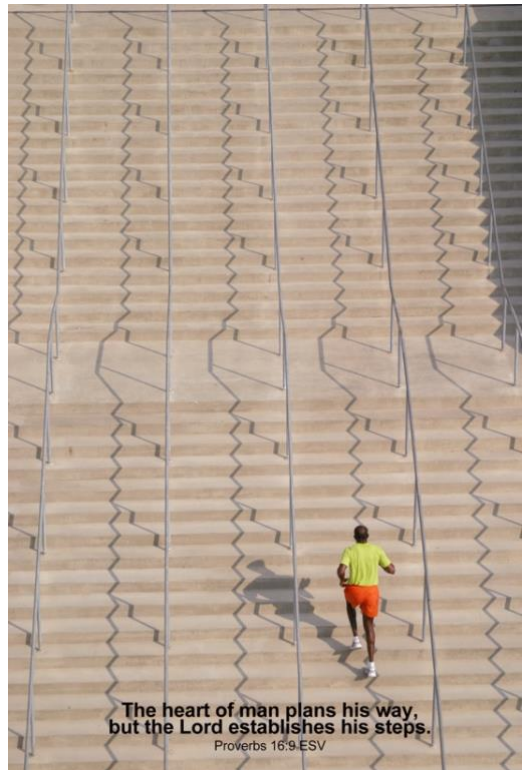
## Reminder #36 – We Have to Adapt to Keep Moving Forward

On a 4,400-mile cross country bike trek; when a catastrophic mechanical failure or a sudden storm hits, you don't change the destination, you change your tactics. Resiliency isn't just about following a map; it's the ability to pivot when the road is washed out or a forest fire makes it too dangerous to pass.

It was the first day of week three during my bike ride across America. Twentyfive miles into my ride for the day, my lower chainring failed while shifting gears. Apparently, a retaining bolt came loose and fell out during the journey. It was May of 2021, and Covid had decimated supply chains everywhere. A replacement part would not be found until a week later in Carbondale, Illinois. Quit or keep going. I thought, I can always quit tomorrow. Over the next 350 miles, I rode without my low range of gears, on a fully loaded bicycle, resorting to pushing my bike up non-negotiable steep grades. Looking back the extra physicality of that week only accelerated my endurance capacity to take on the challenges that lie ahead of me in the Ozarks, Rockies, and Cascade mountains.

In years of inner-city ministry, I've seen that God's sovereign "terms" are the fixed boundaries, but His Spirit provides the creativity to navigate them. When the 16-year-old showed up at a community picnic with a gun, his intent was to defend his sister from a group of other teens. It took the calm intervention of our staff to quickly assure him his sister was safe and would not be harmed. He had everything to lose if he let his emotions control the situation. Our staff intervened in the chaos and met a human need. We don't negotiate God's values, but we must "improvise" how we apply His love in the chaos of the "dark pastures".

"The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps." — Proverbs 16:9 (ESV)



**Call to Action:** Think of a "roadblock" in your life this week. Instead of frustration, ask the Holy Spirit for the "uncanny ability to improvise". How can you honor God's fixed terms while creatively navigating the obstacle in front of you?

## Reminder #37 - Broken Crayons Still Color

Have you ever watched a child grip a broken crayon and press harder—only to see the color grow darker and bolder? Have you ever almost thrown away a broken crayon—assuming it had no value left?

In neighborhoods where poverty dominates and incarceration marks young men before they ever see opportunity, I have watched people believe the lie that their cracks disqualify them. Some fractures were self-inflicted through sin and addiction. Others were carved by abuse, abandonment, or generational despair. Shame whispers, “*You’re finished.*”

But Scripture declares, “*The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit*” (Psalm 34:18, ESV). And Paul reminds us, “*We have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.*” (2 Corinthians 4:7, ESV).

Our sovereign God does not merely tolerate broken vessels—He ordains that His power shine through them. The cross proves it. Christ was pierced for our transgressions; His broken body secured our redemption. What looked like defeat was divine design.

God wastes nothing—not your scars, not your failures, not even your deepest regret.

**Call to Action:** Place your cracks into the hands of the Redeemer today. Confess, surrender, and trust Him. In Christ’s sovereign grip, broken crayons still color—and often, they leave the boldest mark.



## Reminder #38 - The Safest Place to Be Is the Center of God's Will

Is safe really safe if God is not in it?

I remember April 2001 — the Cincinnati riots. Sirens, smoke, curfews, uncertainty. I remember seasons of rising gun violence in Price Hill. I've been in Haiti during civil unrest in the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere.

None of those settings felt safe.



Yet I have never sensed greater security than when we knew we were exactly where God had placed us.

Our ministry, Foundation of Compassionate American Samaritans or FOCAS for short (EST 1986) was not built in comfort but in calling. I remember my second trip to Haiti. The aftermath of the Cincinnati riot of 2001 was still festering, 9/11 had occurred, and the unrest in Haiti was manifested with burning tires in the streets forcing detours. Dick was calm and discussing the particulars of the week's activities for the mission team: medical clinics, pastoral training, and a two-night crusade at the end of the week.

I asked him how he was holding up. He looked at me and said, Flash (that was my nickname given to me by Dick.) He said something that I have embraced to this day and share with staff and volunteers — “The safest place to be is in the center of God's will.” He called us to Haiti to serve in a particular area. So, we did!

The environment was dangerous. The obedience was decisive.

Psalm 27:1 (ESV) says, “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”

The center of God's will does not eliminate risk — it establishes refuge. Outside His will may look calm, but it is spiritually exposed.

**Call to Action:** Identify the step of obedience you have delayed. Pray. Surrender. Then move. Better to stand in unrest with the Sovereign Lord than to hide in comfort without Him.

**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #39 - Hire Believers With Your Mission and Ministry DNA in Mind

“Culture is not written on the wall. It is carried in the hearts of the people you hire.” Culture, we say, is what you “Practice, Permit, and Promote”

In 2026, FOCAS will celebrate 40 Years of ministry between the Greater Cincinnati Tri-State Area and Haiti. I have learned this: talent builds programs, but shared belief builds Kingdom impact. When you serve in neighborhoods where poverty crushes families and crime shapes childhood, neutrality is not an option. We are not merely managing services—we are stewarding souls.

FOCAS exists “to proclaim the gospel, develop disciples, and show God’s love in practical ways”

That is not a slogan. It is our spiritual DNA. Amos 3:3 (ESV) asks, “*Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?*” Agreement is deeper than shared skills—it is shared surrender to Christ.



I have watched staff and volunteers climb into the back of a truck to ride the mountainous roads of Haiti to get to clinics, offices, schools, and villages to deliver supplies, conduct clinic operations, and share the Gospel. These people do not need a pep talk to go. They are wired with Gospel conviction. Programs inform. Christ transforms. And He most often works through unified, believing teams.

Drift begins subtly—when competence replaces conviction and efficiency overshadows eternity. But Psalm 127:1 (ESV) reminds us, “*Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.*”

**Call to Action:** Examine your team prayerfully. Do they carry your mission in their bones? Ask God for the courage to prioritize spiritual alignment over mere talent. Eternity is too weighty for divided hearts.



## Reminder #40 - God Loves a Cheerful Giver

**TITHING 10%**  
A GOOD START.

**\$10%?**  
THE QUESTION ISN'T JUST HOW MUCH, BUT HOW FAR YOUR *heart* WILL GO.

**RADICALLY Generous**  
A GREATER DESTINATION.

**THE MILESTONE**  
Tithing 10% is a biblical foundation—a step of obedience that builds discipline and trust.

**THE JOURNEY**  
Radical generosity goes beyond percentages. It's about a heart fully surrendered to God's purposes and people.

**FOCUS**  
What's the minimum I should give?

**MINDSET**  
Obligation or routine.

**IMPACT**  
It supports the mission. And it matters.

**FOCUS**  
What can I give that changes lives and honors God?

**MINDSET**  
Gratitude, joy, and willingness.

**IMPACT**  
It multiplies hope, transforms lives, and advances His Kingdom.

**OBEDIENCE**  
**TRUST**  
**GROWTH**  
**FREEDOM**  
**FREEDOM**

**START WITH OBEDIENCE. GROW IN GENEROSITY.**  
**GIVE WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART.**

*“God loves a cheerful giver.”*  
— 2 CORINTHIANS 9:7

(Graphic created with AI.)

The offering plate was almost empty that night. We had more needs than dollars, more people to help than resources to give. After everyone left, one of the volunteers walked back in, set an envelope on the table, and said quietly, “I want to be part of what God is doing.” He did not give out of pressure. He gave with joy. That kind of giving is worship.

In the Old Testament, God established the tithe to teach His people dependence and reverence. “Bring the full tithe into the storehouse... and thereby put me to the test,” says the Lord of hosts (Malachi 3:10, ESV). The first portion belonged to God, not because He needed it, but because His people needed to remember Who their provider was. The tithe trained the heart to trust.

**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

Under the New Covenant, the standard is higher, not lower. We are no longer giving under law, but under grace. *“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart... for God loves a cheerful giver.”* (2 Corinthians 9:7, ESV). I have watched men who once lived only for themselves discover that serving others keeps them free and close to Christ. Their joy grew when their grip on money loosened.

The tithe teaches obedience. Grace produces surrender.

**Call to action:** Ask yourself honestly: Does my giving cost me anything? Then ask the Lord to make your giving an act of worship, not obligation, and trust Him as your true provider.

## Reminder #41 - Keep Your Ministry Partners Informed

Light builds trust.  
Darkness breeds doubt.

Reflecting over FOCAS' 40 years serving in urban Cincinnati and my time walking dusty Haitian roads, I have learned this: stewardship is not only about how we spend money—it is about how we communicate mission. In communities where violent crime far exceeds national averages and poverty grips families, and in Haiti where the majority live in abject poverty, every dollar given represents sacrifice, prayer, and faith.



Paul writes, “Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2, ESV). Faithfulness demands transparency. When we report attendance, baptisms, mentoring relationships, and employment breakthroughs, we are not promoting ourselves—we are declaring what God has done.

However, our reports, words, and numbers can only convey so much of the story – our images reveal impact where text falls short.

Our mission has never changed: proclaim the Gospel and transform lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. *Ministry Partners are not outsiders looking in; they are co-laborers in the harvest.* “We are ambassadors for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20, ESV). Ambassadors report back.

Integrity in communication protects the witness of Christ and honors those who give.

**Call to Action:** Examine your stewardship. Have you clearly shared what God is doing? This week, write one honest update. Tell the story of His faithfulness. Shine light on His work.

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**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #42 - Make Studying God's Word with Your Team a Priority

Would you send soldiers into battle without armor?

Since becoming a believer in August 1977, I have seen ministries falter not from lack of passion, but from neglect of the Word. In communities where poverty presses hard against hope and where daily survival tests



faith, the visible needs are overwhelming. Yet beneath every physical struggle is a deeper spiritual war. The enemy does not fear busy leaders—he fears biblically grounded ones.

I confess there have been seasons when urgency crowded out disciplined study in my own life. That is where drift begins—quietly, subtly. Paul reminds us, “*All Scripture is breathed out by God... that the man of God may be complete*” (2 Timothy 3:16–17, ESV). But illumination belongs to the Lord. We must pray, “Open my eyes” (Psalm 119:18, ESV). “*that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you*” (Ephesians 1:17-18 ESV).

Good commentaries do not replace the Spirit; they help guard us from pride and private interpretation (2 Peter 1:20–21).

God sovereignly gives the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6, ESV). Our task is faithful handling.

**Call to Action:** Gather your team. Open the Scriptures slowly. Use trusted guides. Pray for clarity. Fight drift. Build on truth—because programs fade, personalities pass, but the Word of the Lord endures forever.

**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #43 – The Ministry Must Be Transparent



Would you trust a ministry that prefers shadows to light?

After decades serving in Over-the-Rhine—where broken systems and broken promises have wounded generations—I have learned this: the ministry is not ours to manage for image. It is God’s to steward for His glory. He owns it. We answer to Him.

Paul declares, *“We refuse to practice cunning... but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves”* (2 Corinthians 4:2, ESV). And he reminds us, *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ”* (2 Corinthians 5:10, ESV). Transparency is not branding; it is living in light of eternity.

Our long-standing ECFA (Evangelical Council Financial Accountability Membership since 2002) accountability is not about optics; it is about fearing God more than man. When attendance grows and lives change, we report it honestly because these are souls, not statistics.

**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

**Call to Action:** Search your heart. Where are you tempted to manage appearances? Step into the light now. Live so transparently before God that eternity will feel familiar when you stand before Him.

## Reminder #44 - Do the Little Things Well

“Who despises the day of small things?”  
(Zechariah 4:10, NIV).

In neighborhoods where poverty grips families and violence disciplines the fatherless, transformation rarely begins with something dramatic. It begins with someone showing up. A hot meal. A math lesson. A firm handshake. A warm greeting. A quiet prayer.



FOCAS/Lord's Gym Ministries did not grow through headlines but through faithfulness.

The Lord's Pantry began with a thermos of coffee, pitcher of Kool-Aid, and sandwiches.

The SportsCenter, (predecessor to our sports programs with the Family Activity Center) basketball courts became a refuge in streets marked by despair.

JJ once walked in homeless; today he strengthens other men.

None of that was accidental. The sovereign God who “prepared beforehand” the good works (Ephesians 2:10, ESV) ordained obedience, especially in the little things, that led to lasting fruit.

When no one does the little things, the streets will.

I have learned this slowly. God does not ask me to control outcomes. He commands faithfulness. “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much” (Luke 16:10, ESV). We plant. We water. God gives the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6, ESV).

The Kingdom of God rarely advances through applause. It advances through quiet, costly consistency.

**Call to Action:** Do the next small thing well. Heaven keeps careful record of seeds no one else sees.

**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #45 - Culture Is What You Practice, Permit, and Promote

What is forming the atmosphere of your life right now?

Culture is not crafted by slogans but by repetition. Overtime serving in neighborhoods where poverty undermines hope and crime reshapes expectations; I've seen this truth:

- Whatever is practiced becomes normal.
- Whatever is permitted takes root.
- Whatever is promoted multiplies.

Too often it's default over discipline.

We have watched women like Teresa rise from prostitution to sobriety to gainful employment because someone consistently prayed, served, and encouraged her. No fanfare. Just faithful repetition. Over time, that rhythm impressed upon her the courage

to get help and seek restoration. She stepped out of her street culture into a new culture with new practices and expectations to learn and absorb.

Scripture is direct: "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals'" (1 Corinthians 15:33, ESV). And Paul commands, "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might" (Ephesians 6:10, ESV). Strength is not accidental. It is cultivated under the Lord's authority.

Homes drift. Churches drift. Hearts drift. Culture drifts. Unless they are shepherded intentionally.

- Practice what honors Christ.
- Refuse what dishonors Him.
- Promote what reflects His kingdom.

In the end, the culture you build is the legacy you leave before a holy God.



**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

**Call to Action:** Examine your daily patterns this week. Look in the mirror. Remove one practice that weakens your walk. Establish one habit that strengthens it—prayer at dawn, Scripture before screens, encouragement instead of complaint.

## Reminder #46 - It's About the Gospel, Discipleship, and Growing Strong in the Lord

*What if our greatest problem is not weakness—but forgetting what we are growing for?*

For nearly four decades FOCAS' mission has remained unchanged: *“To proclaim the Gospel, develop disciples, and show God's love in practical ways...”*



Methods shift. Neighborhoods change. Needs intensify. In East Price Hill—where overdose, according to WCPO Ch 9, alone stole 758 years of life in three years —we are reminded that activity cannot save a soul. Only the Gospel can.

Paul writes, “Him we proclaim... that we may present everyone mature in Christ” (Colossians 1:28, ESV). And again, “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might” (Ephesians 6:10, ESV). We are not merely serving programs; we are contending for souls. The enemy is content with busy believers who never mature.

I confess, there have been seasons when I mistook momentum for depth. But God gives the growth. He builds His church. Our call is faithful obedience.

The Gospel rescues. Discipleship fortifies. Growth glorifies Christ.

**Call to Action:** Recommit yourself to intentional growth. Set aside daily time in the Word. Seek one believer for accountability. Identify one person you will begin discipling. Pray for strength to stand firm in spiritual battle. Because what is shallow will not stand when eternity tests it.

**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #47 - Allow for Change

Transformation rarely arrives gently. I have watched men walk into our ministry broken by addiction, prison, and regret. Kenny grew up in an affluent neighborhood; yet he once slept on benches after drugs dismantled his former glory. God drew him in, restored discipline to his body and truth to his mind and rebuilt his life one obedient step at a time. But renewal required surrender. Pride had to die before purpose could live.

Scripture says, “Be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Romans 12:2, ESV). And again, “He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion” (Philippians 1:6, ESV). The Lord is not passive in your growth. He ordains it. He presses, prunes, and purifies because He loves His children too much to leave them unchanged.

When I sailed, I had to change course with the direction of the wind in mind. I could not get there without tacking and working the sails and rudder. It was constant, intentional, and at times, hard work, especially when the winds were strong and the water was rough. Comfort feels safer than sanctification.

**Call to Action:** Name the area where God is pressing you. Write it down. Pray over it. Surrender it deliberately to Him. Take one obedient step, however small. The Spirit will not waste your discomfort—if you place it in His sovereign hands.



## Reminder #48 - Be Ready to Say Goodbye to Staff, Ministry Partners, and Volunteers



Have you ever smiled publicly while grieving privately?

In long-term ministry, departures test the heart. Faithful staff move on. Ministry partners redirect generosity. Volunteers sense a new calling. If we are honest, fear whispers: *What will happen now? Did we fail?*

Yet Ecclesiastes 3:1 (ESV) steadies us: “*For everything there is a season...*” a time to keep and a time to let go. Seasons are not interruptions to God’s plan; they are instruments in it.

In neighborhoods like East Price Hill, where poverty and instability remain high, we have watched many people find employment and youth receive mentoring and tutoring support. Faces change. The mission does not. Psalm 127:1 (ESV) reminds us, “*Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.*” The Builder has never stepped away from the work.

I have learned this slowly: people are gifts from God—on loan for a season. We do not own them. We steward them.

**Call to Action:** Prayerfully release someone you’ve been holding too tightly. Thank God for their season. Bless their next step. And anchor your confidence not in who stays, but in the Lord who never leaves. The Builder remains — even when the builders change.

## Reminder #49 - Serve Joyfully



What if your joy is the most powerful ministry tool you possess? Whoa!

I have been in communities where nearly half of households live below the national income average and schools report measurable learning loss after the pandemic. I have watched children carry the invisible weight of poverty—lower self-esteem, increased anxiety, fractured family systems.

In environments like this, service done mechanically feels hollow. But service done joyfully becomes prophetic. I rode on the back of donkey up a mountain (in Haiti) where FOCAS supported a church, clinic, and school. I met people along the way whose way of life was walking up and down the mountain as a daily routine. At the top, we were welcomed with joy and enthusiasm. I had a lot to learn from my Haitian friends.

Nehemiah 8:10 (ESV) declares, “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” Not your strategy. Not your funding. Not your reputation. Joy rooted in Christ becomes spiritual resistance against despair.

**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— *Scott Bowers*

In one year alone, we witnessed 40 decisions for Christ, 16 baptisms, and over 1,500 individuals receiving life coaching and mentoring. Those numbers are not the result of polished programs. They are the fruit of men and women who show up consistently with glad hearts, believing God gives the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6, ESV).

Joy in service says to a weary child, *“You matter.”*  
It says to a struggling father, *“God is not finished.”*  
It says to the enemy, *“You do not win here.”*

**Call to Action:** Examine your spirit today. Are you serving out of duty or delight? Ask the Lord to restore your joy—and then serve boldly, knowing heaven strengthens what is done with gladness.

## Reminder #50 - No One Is Irreplaceable

What would happen if you were suddenly gone?

That question has followed me through boardrooms, battered neighborhoods, and quiet early mornings before the doors open. The honest answer?

God's work would continue.

FOCAS was founded long before my leadership and has endured storms, leadership transitions, and cultural shifts.

Over the years I've seen men and women transformed, children and families restored. But here is the deeper truth: Christ is building His Church. Not me. Not you.

Jesus said, *"I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18, ESV). That is sovereignty. That is security.

Colossians reminds us, *"He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together"* (Colossians 1:17, ESV). If He holds all things together, then He does not depend on us to keep them from falling apart.

We are stewards, not saviors.

This truth humbles pride and frees weary shoulders. The Kingdom does not rest on your strength — it rests on His supremacy.

So, serve diligently. Lead courageously. But hold your role loosely.

**Call to Action:** Kneel before Christ and release your need to be essential — because the only One who is indispensable already reigns.



## Reminder 51 - We Need the Church and the Church Needs Us

What would you have done differently?

A volunteer once asked that question as if we were standing before God with one final moment of clarity. I have replayed it often.

In one year alone, faithful volunteers served over 6,000 hours—meals prepared,

prayers offered, doors opened. God does not need us. Christ is “before all things” (Colossians 1:17, ESV). Yet in His sovereign design, He builds His Church through His people.

“You are the body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:27, ESV). A body cannot thrive if members detach. Isolation is not harmless; it is how the enemy weakens believers (1 Peter 5:8). I have learned—sometimes the hard way—that I need the correction, encouragement, and sharpening of other saints.

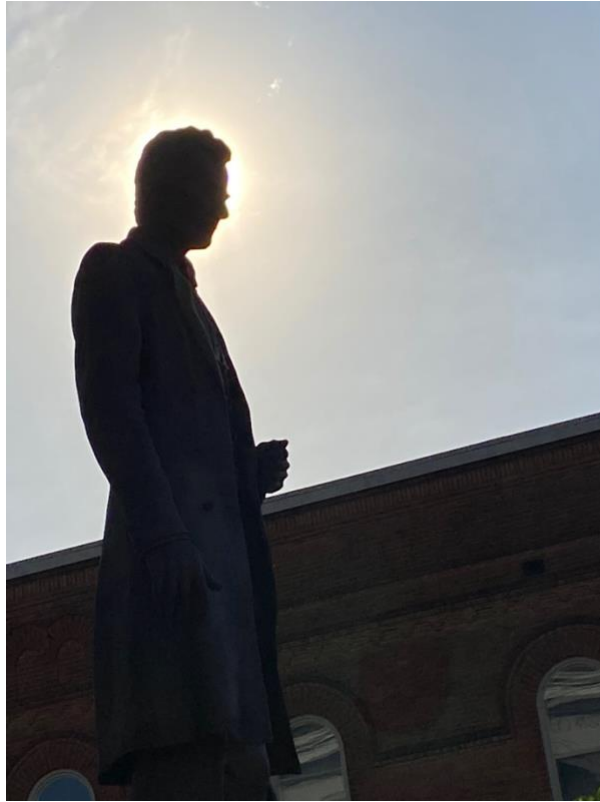
The Church is Christ’s bride, purchased with His blood (Ephesians 5:25). To drift from her is to drift from something sacred.

And the Church needs you—your gifts, your prayers, your faithfulness. Lives are changed when believers stay engaged

**Call to Action:** This week: attend. Commit. Serve. Reconcile if needed. Ask the Lord where you are withholding yourself—and step in fully. One day, you will answer that final question.



## Reminder #52 – God Trusts Us?



Why would a holy, self-sufficient God entrust frail men and women with His work?

I've watched Him write powerful stories through ordinary volunteers — thousands of hours quietly offered in faithfulness. The truth is unmistakable: God does not need us. He chooses to use us.

*“He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together”* (Colossians 1:17, ESV). This ministry was His before I arrived. It will be His long after I leave.

Like the man praying for an oak and receiving an acorn, we are handed seeds — people, resources, influence — and told to sow faithfully. Growth belongs to Him.

There have been moments when my feelings questioned the calling. But as I once learned in flight training, instruments — not emotions —

guide you safely through turbulence. Feelings can be misleading. God's Word is our instrument panel.

*“What do you have that you did not receive?”* (1 Corinthians 4:7, ESV).

**Call to Action:** Today, kneel — literally if you can. Thank God for the privilege of serving. Ask Him to purify your motives. Lead and serve as one who will give an account — grateful for grace, sobered by stewardship. One day, the trust given to you will be reviewed by the One who gave it.

## Reminder #53 - God Loves the Poor and Vulnerable

If God loves the poor, why are we often so careful to avoid them?

From serving in neighborhoods ravaged by addiction, violence, and instability, I am convinced of this: the poor are not peripheral to God's purposes.



They are seen, known, and intentionally placed within His redemptive plan. “The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble” (Psalm 9:9, ESV). And Scripture reminds us, “Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord” (Proverbs 19:17, ESV).

I have stood in parks where Narcan had just revived someone. I have prayed with men shaking from detox and watched volunteers quietly serve meals as if serving Christ Himself. This is not mere charity. It is contested ground. The enemy seeks to devour image-bearers through despair and deception. But Christ moves toward the vulnerable — and so must His Church.

We do not engage the poor to feel compassionate. We engage them because Christ is supreme over every broken street and every wounded soul.

**Call to Action:** Ask the Lord to examine your heart. Where have you grown indifferent? Rearrange one priority this week — give, serve, show up. If we belong to this King, we will walk where He walks.

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**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #54 - People Can Be So Cruel

Cruelty can feel shocking when it strikes—words meant to wound, betrayal that cuts deep, addiction fueled by manipulation and taunting. We have seen how quickly the enemy exploits weakness and deepens shame. Why would someone treat another human being that way?

Scripture tells us why: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick” (Jeremiah 17:9, ESV). Sin distorts what God created good. But cruelty never sits on the throne—Christ does. “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21, ESV).

We cannot govern another person’s heart. We can surrender our own. God often answers cruelty not with instant vindication but with time — an opportunity to plant grace instead of revenge, restraint instead of retaliation. Over time, that seed becomes quiet strength.

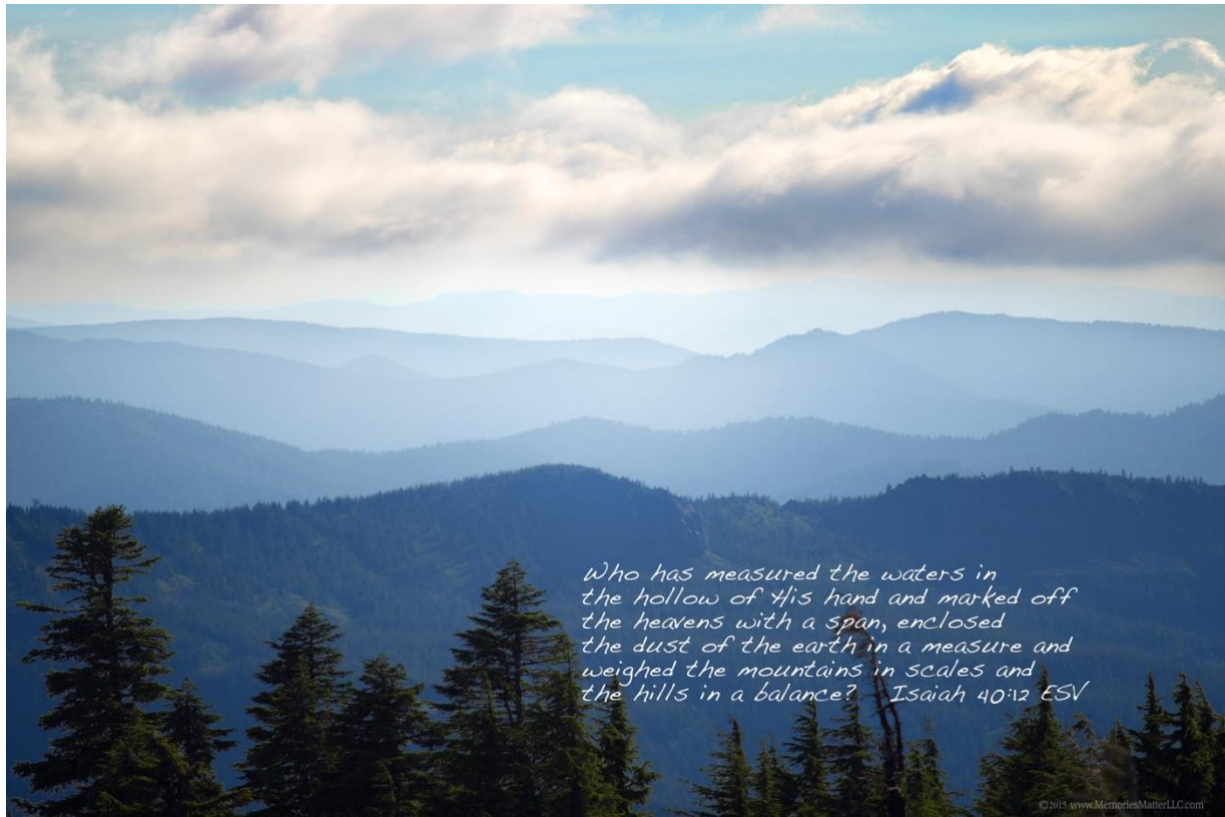
I have learned that cruelty does not get the final word—Christ does. We cannot control how others treat us, but we can control whether bitterness takes root. God often answers pain with —an opportunity to sow grace instead of revenge

**Call to Action:** If you have been wounded, bring it to the cross. Refuse to let someone else’s sin harden your heart. Pray for the courage to forgive, to bless, and to stand firm in Christ. Refuse to rehearse the offense. Pray—by name—for the one who hurt you. Then choose one deliberate act of undeserved kindness this week. Trust Christ to defend, heal, and grow what you plant.

Cruelty may scar the moment.  
But grace shapes eternity.



## Reminder #55 - God Only Asks That We Repent and Believe Having the Faith of a Mustard Seed



How small is a mustard seed? Small enough to miss in your palm. Yet Jesus said, “If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed... nothing will be impossible for you” (Matthew 17:20, ESV).

What a profound reality!

For more than two decades I have watched mountains stand in front of men and women—addiction that nearly buried them, court-ordered service that became genuine surrender, ordinary volunteers whose quiet obedience changed lives. The turning point was never charisma, programs, or resolve. It was repentance. A heart laid down. A will released.

“Repent and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15, ESV) is not a heavy burden; it is a merciful invitation. God does not demand impressive faith. He commands surrender because He alone moves mountains. Christ is “the image of the invisible God... for by him all things were created” (Colossians 1:15-16, ESV). The One who formed the mountain is not threatened by it.

Often what delays deliverance is not the size of the obstacle—but the pride we refuse to yield.

The decisive moment was never human resolve. It was repentance — a dethroning of self.

**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

If I am honest, there have been mountains I protected longer than I should have. Pride can disguise itself as prudence. Control can masquerade as leadership.

“Repent and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15, ESV) is not advice; it is a command from the sovereign Christ, “the image of the invisible God... by him all things were created”

The enemy does not fear talent or programs. He fears surrendered hearts.

Mountains move when thrones change hands.

**Call to Action:** Ask the Spirit to expose what you are still holding. Repent specifically. Believe deliberately. Take one step of obedience today. The seed is small. The King is not.

## Reminder #56 - The Apostle Paul Sets a Standard, Besides Jesus, to Imitate

What kind of man sings in prison, writes about joy in suffering, and refuses to quit when beaten, opposed, and forgotten?

The kind like Paul.

In a world obsessed with comfort and applause, Paul's life confronts us. He was not driven by outcomes but by obedience. He reminded the church of Christ's supremacy:

"For by Him all things were created... and in him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:16–17, ESV).



That vision anchored him. Christ was not a concept; He was Lord over everything.

Paul wrote from prison, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21, NIV).

His joy was not circumstantial; it was theological. He understood that God was working in him "to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13, ESV).

On one end of the spectrum is the person, at the peak of their game, climbing the corporate ladder, at the other end, trapped in sex-trafficking, is the woman seeking to escape the streets; both meet the living Christ, and their lives are forever changed. They embrace God's word. God still builds His church through surrendered lives.

Paul's standard is not brilliance. It is surrender.

**Call to Action:** This week, choose one area where you have been hesitant to obey. Pray. Surrender it fully to Christ. Ask Him to make your life about His glory, not your comfort.

Because in the end, what we imitate reveals whom we truly worship.

## Reminder #57 - Right Now, Our Citizenship Is in Heaven

If you had to leave everything tonight, what would still matter in the morning?

In ministry, I have watched people cling to what cannot last—addictions, applause, bitterness, even good works. I have also watched volunteers quietly give thousands of hours, unseen by the world yet recorded in heaven

***The difference is perspective!***

Paul writes, “*But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Philippians 3:20, ESV). Right now—not someday—our primary residence is not Cincinnati, not Haiti, not America. It is heaven.

When storms rock coastal villages or when overdoses shake city streets, we are reminded how fragile this world is.

The devil may prowl and this world may feel dark, but it is not ultimate. Christ is supreme. He reigns now.

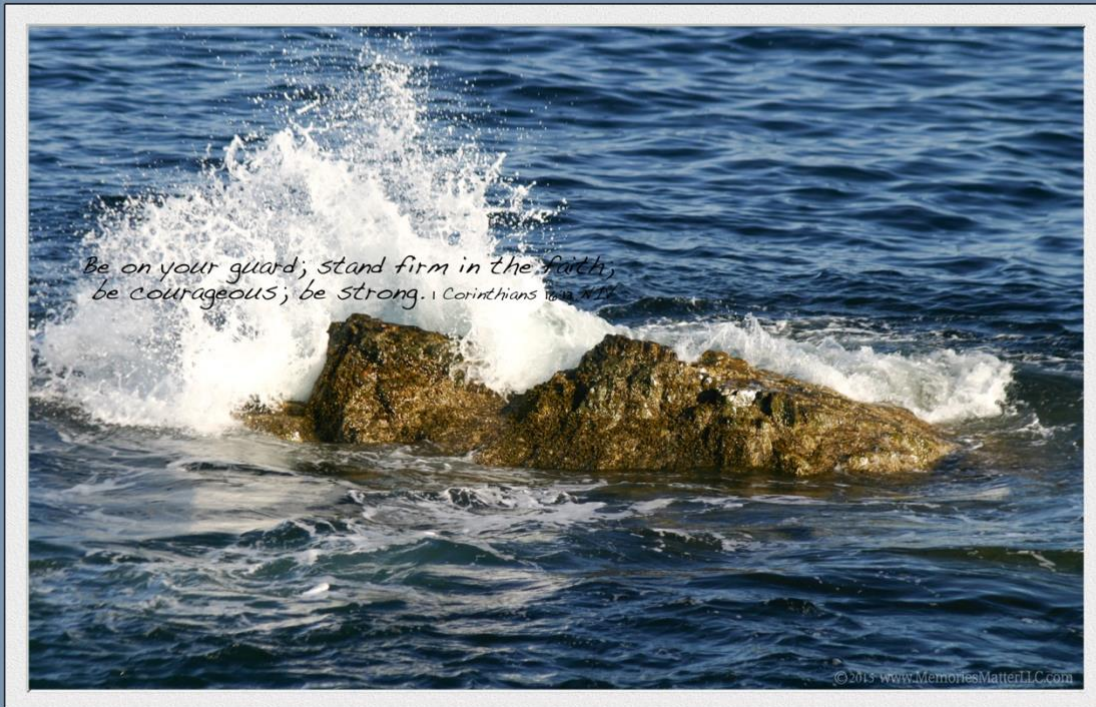
Citizens of heaven live differently. We sow faithfully, even when results are unseen (Ecclesiastes 11:6, ESV). We trust the Word over our shifting feelings. We pursue peace not as escapism, but as obedience (Philippians 4:6–7, NIV).

I confess, I still must recalibrate my heart. It drifts. But eternity steadies it.

**Call to Action:** Ask yourself: Are my priorities shaped by earth—or heaven? Live like a citizen who knows where home truly is.



## Reminder #58 - Press On, Stand Firm, Grow Strong in the Lord



Are you tired — not physically, but spiritually?

There are seasons when obedience feels less like running and more like crawling. I have known those seasons. Pressing on did not feel heroic. It felt hidden.

Yet Scripture does not adjust its command to match our fatigue. *“Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong”* (1 Corinthians 16:13, NIV). Strength in the Lord is not emotional intensity; it is settled confidence in Christ’s supremacy (Colossians 1:15–16). And when feelings distort reality—like a pilot fighting disorientation—the answer is not panic but discipline.

Not because the path is easy — but because Christ is supreme. *“... in Him all things hold together”* (Colossians 1:17, ESV). If He holds galaxies together, He can hold you.

The enemy does not always attack with catastrophe. Sometimes he simply whispers, “Slow down. Ease up. No one will notice.” But heaven notices. Eternity weighs more than this moment. *“So, we do not lose heart... For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory”* (2 Corinthians 4:16–17, ESV).

**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

Identify where you are most tempted to quit. Bring it before Christ. Take one obedient step today — unseen if necessary. The enemy would prefer distraction or despair

But Christ calls us to endurance.

**Call to Action:** Choose one area where you feel weary. Pray. Open the Word. Take the next obedient step.

Press on.

Stand firm.

Grow strong in the Lord.

## Reminder #59 - Stay in the Boat



Have you ever watched someone cry out for rescue... only to climb back into the very waters that were drowning them?

There are nights on the streets when ministry feels like lifeboat work. We locate hurting friends. We feed them. We pray with them. Sometimes they step in. Sometimes they meet Christ. And sometimes—after rescue—they hop back out.

It reminds me of our Street Outreach Ministry, STORM, cruising neighborhoods where overdoses are becoming more personal.

We are often the first on scene—not with sirens, but with Scripture, prayer, and presence. Cincinnati, like most cities, has resources. There is room in the boat. There is capacity for healing.

But rescue requires remaining.

**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— *Scott Bowers*

Paul reminds us, “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:17, ESV). Christ does not merely pull us from the waves—He holds us fast. Yet some prefer the chaos they know over the surrender they fear.

Friends, stay in the boat. Stay in the Word. Stay in fellowship. The enemy prowls, but Christ reigns.

**Call to Action:** Ask yourself: Have I stepped into rescue—but drifted back toward old waters? Pray for courage to remain. Stay where grace is holding you.

## Reminder #60 - You Can't Change a Person; They Have to Want To Change

Have you ever watched someone you care about slowly self-destruct — and felt completely powerless?

I have learned something humbling: you cannot change a person. You can love them. You can tell them truth. You can create refuge.

But they must want it. They must be willing to do the work repentance requires.



Change requires ownership.

Paul reminds us, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you” (Philippians 2:12–13, ESV). Notice the tension—God works, and we work. Transformation is sovereignly initiated by God but personally embraced through surrender.

In ministry and in family life, I have had to release people to the Lord. I cannot regenerate a heart. Only Christ can. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17, ESV). New creation is His miracle—not my management.

Pray. Speak truth. Stay present. But stop trying to play Holy Spirit.

**Call to Action:** Entrust someone you cannot fix to the God who can. Then examine your own heart. Are you willing to do the work He is calling you to?

## Reminder #61 - You Have to Train; You Have to Do the Work

As Dave once said plainly in the Lord's Pantry. "Life requires effort. You have to take responsibility." Those words still echo in my heart.

Growth — spiritual or otherwise — never happens accidentally. It's like a sprout that will not be denied; even asphalt will not hold it back.

In ministry I have watched thousands of volunteers give hours of faithful service. But behind every meaningful moment was preparation. Seeds were planted long before fruit appeared. *"In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand"* (Ecclesiastes 11:6, ESV)

Faith matures the same way — steady obedience over time.

Even joy requires discipline. Paul wrote from hardship, yet maintained perspective because God was at work in him (Philippians 2:13, NIV). We train our minds to trust truth over feelings. We develop prayer habits. We sharpen discernment in Scripture. We practice generosity, patience, endurance.

No believer stands firm without daily formation in the Word.

Growth is never accidental — not in ministry, not in character, not in faith.

Scripture reminds us, *"For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."* (Philippians 2:13, ESV). We train not to earn God's favor, but because He is already at work within us. Yet make no mistake — we live in contested ground. The enemy is content with distracted, untrained believers. Formation is resistance.

I have learned, sometimes slowly, that neglect today becomes weakness tomorrow. Prayer must be practiced. Scripture must be studied. Character must be forged.

**Call to Action:** So, here is the question: what are you training for? Commit to train in it deliberately. Build the muscle. Sow the seed. Stay the course. Eternity will reveal what you prepared for. Train accordingly.

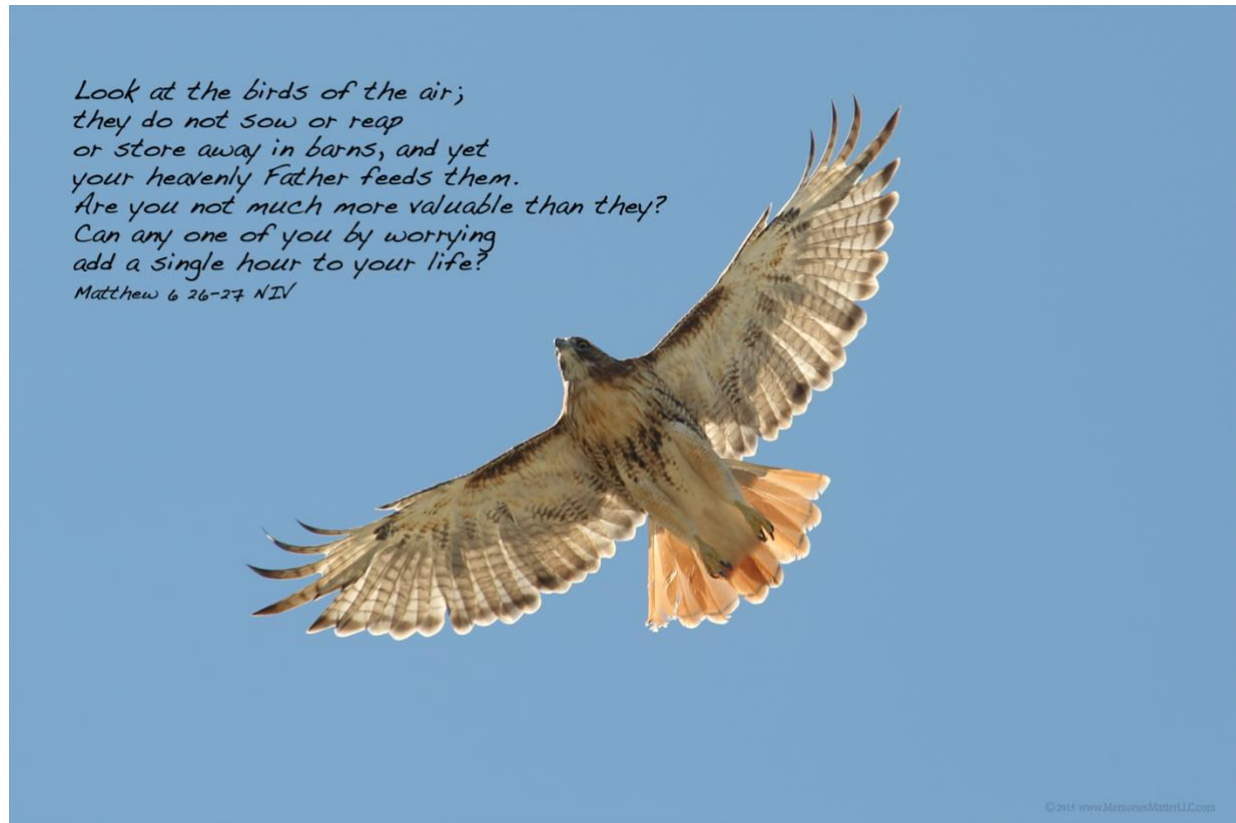


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**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #62 - Where Does Your Joy Come From



Several years ago, a young man named Dave began volunteering at the Lord's Gym because a court ordered him to complete service hours. He didn't arrive eager or joyful. Like many people sent by the courts, he was just trying to fulfill an obligation. He arrived with his anxieties and life challenges. In this case, he had a debt to pay.

Yet something unexpected happened while he spent time around the men studying Scripture and serving others. When his required hours were finished, Dave kept coming back. One day he stood in the pantry and spoke to volunteers and guests about taking responsibility for their lives, surrounding themselves with good influences, and walking with God.

Something had changed inside him.

That transformation illustrates where real joy is found. It does not come from comfort, success, or getting our way. It comes from Christ working within us.

Jesus reminded His disciples of this truth when they returned excited about their ministry success: *"Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."* (Luke 10:20, ESV).

**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

Paul echoes this same foundation for joy: “*Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say rejoice.*” (Philippians 4:4, ESV).

Circumstances change. God’s work in the heart does not. Joy rooted in Christ remains steady because it is anchored in eternity.

**Call to Action:** Take a moment to ask yourself: *Is my joy tied to circumstances or to Christ?* Thank the Lord that lasting joy flows from belonging to Him.

## Reminder #63 - Helping Can Hurt

Have you ever helped someone... and later realized you may have delayed what God was trying to shape in them?

I have. And that realization humbled me.

In ministry, compassion can become control. I have stepped in too quickly, softened consequences too soon, and mistaken urgency for wisdom. Relief is visible. Transformation is slower—and far more costly.

The authors of *When Helping Hurts*, remind us that walking humbly with people is different than rescuing them. They remind us that we don't want to do for them what they can do for themselves.

An acorn does not become an oak overnight. Growth requires seasons, struggle, and roots pressing deep into unseen soil.



Scripture says, “In the morning sow your seed... for you do not know which will prosper” (Ecclesiastes 11:6, ESV). We sow. God grows. “For it is God who works in you...” (Philippians 2:13, ESV).

When I overstep, I can interrupt what God is patiently doing beneath the surface. Sometimes consequences are not cruelty—they are instruments of mercy. The enemy would prefer dependency. Christ forms maturity.

Helping can hurt when it replaces God's process with my impulse.

**Call to Action:** Slow down. Pray before you intervene. Ask the Lord for discernment to strengthen, not simply soothe. Some growth only happens when we resist the urge to rescue.

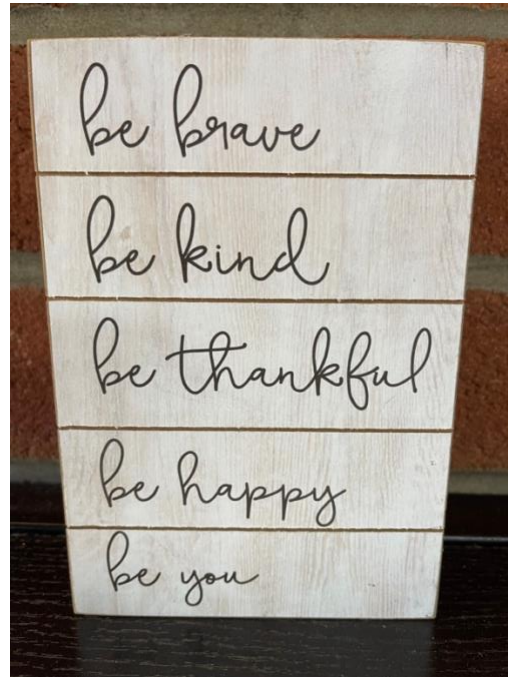
## Reminder #64 – Everyone Experiences Some Level of Poverty

What if poverty is not first about money—but about need?

After years of ministry, I have learned that poverty wears many faces. Some who come to us lack food, housing, or sobriety. Others lack peace, direction, or self-control. And if we are honest, even our ministry partners—faithful donors, board members, volunteers—experience their own forms of poverty. It may not be financial. It may be fatigue. Discouragement. Strained marriages. Quiet anxiety no one sees.

*When Helping Hurts* argues that we experience poverty in four ways. Poverty of:

- 1- Spiritual Intimacy
- 2- Stewardship,
- 3- Community,
- 4- Being.



We once celebrated thousands of volunteer hours given in a single year.

Yet even the most generous servant cannot give what he does not first receive. As one man reminded us in the Pantry, “You control your attitude. Don’t make excuses.”

True—but only Christ transforms the heart.

Jesus said, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:3, ESV). And “*Apart from me you can do nothing*” (John 15:5, ESV). That levels the ground. The struggling addict and the successful executive both stand dependent before God.

Our shared poverty is not shameful—it is sacred ground. It brings us together. It drives us to Christ.

**Call to Action:** Name your need before the Lord. Receive His sufficiency. Then extend grace to someone else who is quietly poor in ways you may never see.

## Reminder #65 - God Causes the Growth

Why do we grow restless when results move slower than our expectations?

I remember walking through Ogden Park after weeks of faithful presence — meals served, conversations started, prayers offered. Nothing dramatic. No headlines. Just steady obedience. Then one afternoon a man quietly said, “I’ve been listening for months. I’m ready.” In that moment I was reminded: transformation had



been happening long before we saw it. The kingdom does not advance by our intensity but by His sovereignty.

The prophet Isaiah reminds us, *“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven... so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose”* (Isaiah 55:10–11, ESV). God ties growth to His Word and His purpose — not our timelines.

Jesus said, *“The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground... he sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how”* (Mark 4:26–27, ESV). There is mystery in growth. Holy mystery.

We are called to faithfulness, not outcomes. To sow in tears if necessary. To water in prayer. To wait without cynicism.

If you are discouraged by what you cannot see, remember: unseen does not mean inactive.

**Call to Action:** Remain faithful where He has placed you. Sow the Word. Pray for rain. Trust the God who alone causes the growth.

## Reminder #66 - We Are All Broken

Have you ever noticed how the cracks in a photograph sometimes make the light more noticeable?

In ministry, I have stood beside addicts fresh off the street, volunteers with hidden grief, donors fighting private battles, and leaders quietly exhausted. Brokenness is not rare. It is universal. *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23, ESV). Scripture levels the ground beneath us all.

I have seen men assigned to serve because of court orders become transformed servants of Christ. I have watched those revived with Narcan after an overdose wrestle toward repentance and hope.

None of us comes whole. We come needy.

Yet here is the mercy: *“The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit”* (Psalm 34:18, ESV). God does not recoil from fractured people. He draws near. Brokenness is not the disqualifier; pride is.

The gospel does not require polish. It requires surrender. Christ was broken so we could be restored. When we stop pretending to be strong, we begin experiencing grace.

The danger is not our brokenness. The danger is denying it.

**Call to Action:** Kneel before the Lord without defense. Name your fractures. Trust Christ to meet you there. And extend grace to someone whose cracks are showing. We are all broken — and that is exactly where grace begins.



## Reminder #67 - God Adopts Us, Unconditionally, into His International Family and Heavenly Kingdom

The most secure place on earth requires a transformed heart instead of a keycard.

In Cincinnati's neighborhoods and on crowded sidewalks where addiction and exhaustion collide, I have watched men and women search for belonging. Some try substances. Some try religion. Some just try harder. Yet Scripture says something stunning: *"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son"* (Colossians 1:13, ESV). This is adoption language. Transfer language. Kingdom language.

God does not offer probation. He offers adoption.

Through Christ, we are brought into an international family — diverse, redeemed, blood-bought. But this kingdom is no casual association. It is holy ground. "You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God," (Ephesians 2:19, ESV). Citizens live differently. They carry the culture of their King.

I have seen hardened hearts softened in a gym and pantry setting

Transformation begins when someone realizes they belong — and that belonging carries responsibility.

This gated community has grace at the entrance and obedience along the path.

**Call to Action:** Ask: Am I living like a grateful citizen of heaven or a casual visitor? Walk worthy of the King who adopted you.



## Reminder #68 - We Wait on the Lord

Why does God seem silent when the need is urgent?"

I have stood in moments when the stakes were high — lives fragile, resources thin, decisions pressing. Everything in me wanted movement. Instead, heaven felt still. Yet, Scripture declares, *"They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength"* (Isaiah 40:31, ESV). Renewal does not come from frantic motion, but from surrendered waiting.

Waiting is not spiritual idleness. It is warfare against unbelief.

In the work of ministry, I have watched hurried solutions create shallow fruit, while steady, prayerful dependence bore lasting change. Faithful volunteers return week after week, not knowing which quiet act God will use to alter a soul. The anxious heart learns peace not by escape, but by bringing every request to God until His guarding presence steadies the mind.



Waiting exposes our theology. Do we believe God is sovereign — or only useful when He moves on our timetable?

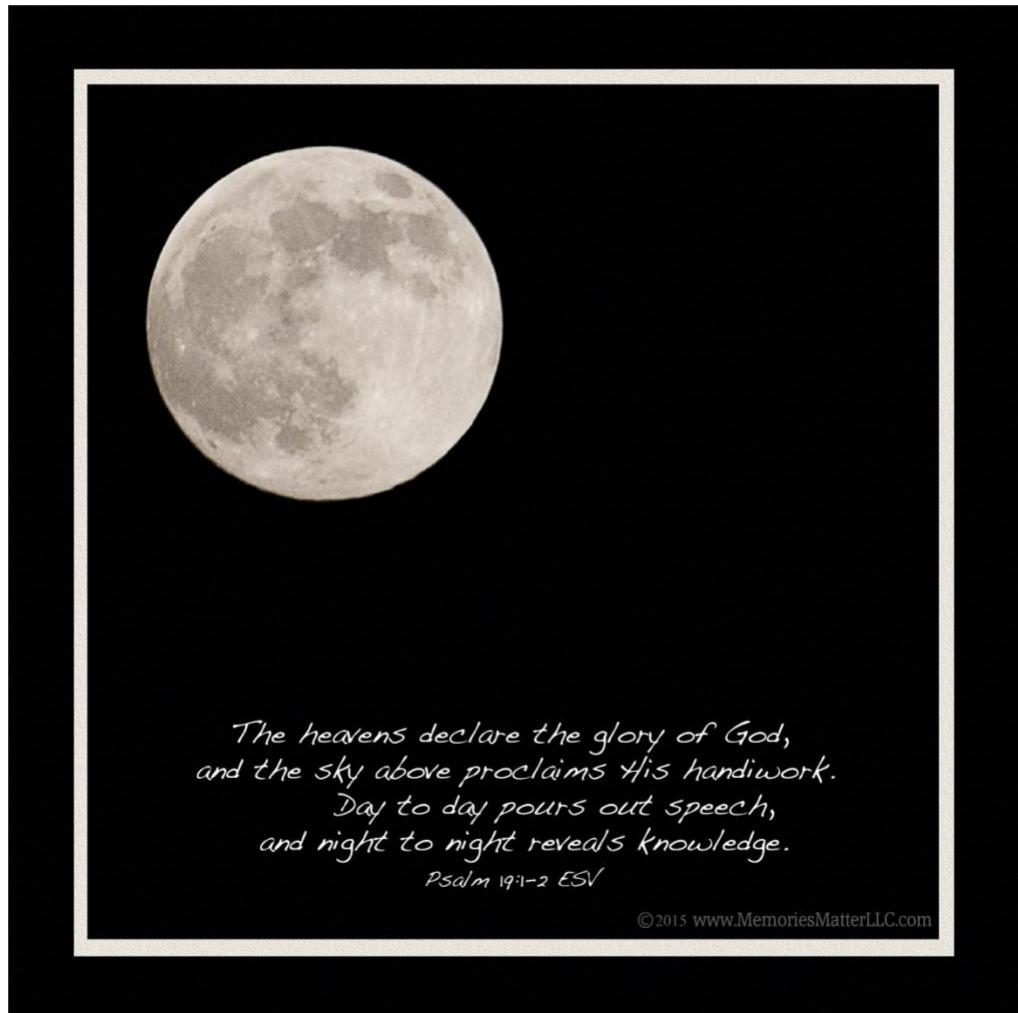
The Lord is not stalled. He is reigning. He is refining motives, humbling pride, deepening trust. What feels like delay may be divine preparation.

**Call to Action:** Name the burden you are tempted to control. Lay it before Christ again. Refuse to rush ahead of Him. Ask for the grace to wait well — and to trust that in the silence, He is still at work.

## Reminder #69 - We Are Getting a “NEW” Earth Someday

Have you ever stood in the aftermath of a storm and felt the weight of what is broken?

Having seen complete devastation from a hurricane and earthquake in what was once a tropical paradise of Haiti to the desolate plains in the U.S. while on a cross-country bicycle ride, the topography I was witnessing is someday getting a complete overhaul. It will be restored and made new.



This world groans. I have seen it in shattered neighborhoods, in trembling hands revived by Narcan and in quiet conversations where regret hangs thick in the air. Creation is not as it should be. Scripture says it plainly: *“The creation was subjected to futility... in hope”* (Romans 8:20, ESV). And that hope is certain. *“According to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells”* (2 Peter 3:13, ESV).

The same Christ who is *“before all things”* and holds all things together will not abandon His creation. He will renew it. Not remodel it. Renew it.

That promise changes how we endure suffering. It steadies us when evil feels loud. It guards us from despair and from misplaced attachment. We serve in a broken world knowing restoration is guaranteed.

**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

This earth is temporary. His kingdom is not.

**Call to Action:** Live cleanly. Forgive quickly. Give generously. Suffer faithfully. Fix your hope fully on what is coming. A new earth is not wishful thinking. It is a promise signed in the blood of Christ. Live like you believe it.

## Reminder #70 - The Bottom Line Is, “Do You Believe?”

Jesus said. “All things are possible for one who believes.” (Mark 9:23, ESV)

The real question is rarely about ability, resources, or timing. The bottom line is, *do you believe?*

Belief is not polite agreement with doctrine. It is surrender under authority. James warns us, “Even the demons believe—and shudder!” (James 2:19, ESV). True belief bends the knee. It restructures our schedule, tempers our reactions, and steadies us when outcomes are uncertain.



God makes it very simple for us. We do not have to earn or prove anything. The story of the thief on the cross next to Jesus, acknowledging his belief by his comments and heart, acknowledge to Jesus his belief that He was the Son of God and was who He claimed to be. Otherwise, Jesus would not have said “Today, you will be with me in paradise.” That is profound!

I remember on some of my rides, I questioned my direction. My senses insisted I was not on course, but the compass and map were unwavering. In those moments I had to decide to trust my feelings or trust what was proven true. Faith works the same way. Fear speaks loudly. Culture pressures. Fatigue clouds judgment. God’s Word does not shift.

Paul declares that Christ is “before all things, and in Him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:17, ESV). If He truly holds all things together, then He holds *your* uncertainty, *your* future, and *your* calling.

Belief is acting on that reality.

**Call to Action:** Locate the place where you are hesitating. Lay it before the Lord. Choose obedience over emotion. And step forward — not because you feel confident, but because you believe.

## Reminder #71 - It Takes a Shepherd's Heart

“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”  
— *Matthew 9:36 (ESV)*

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to criticize sheep—and how hard it is to shepherd them? Why can't they be like my dog? Obedient? Wanting to please? Loving? But no! They are different.

Compassion is costly.  
Sheep wander. They bite.

They return to the same ditch. I have seen it in gyms, on street corners, and across dinner tables. God chooses willing volunteers to write His story, but He never promised the ink would be clean.

A shepherd's heart is not sentimental. It is steady. It reflects the supremacy of Christ, “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15, ESV) —a King who rules all things yet stoops to carry lambs. That tension humbles me. I cannot change hearts. I cannot rescue souls. But I can stand watch.

There is a real enemy who prowls, and ignoring God is not neutral ground. Shepherds must pray, speak truth, and refuse to abandon the flock when fatigue sets in.

**Call to Action:** If Christ has entrusted someone to your care, lead with courage and tears. Ask Him today for a shepherd's heart. And then stay when others walk away.



## Reminder #72 – Show Up, Even When You Don’t Feel Like It

Have you ever noticed how the hardest step is often simply walking through the door?

A man once stood in our Pantry and reminded us, “Life requires effort.” He had once been ordered to serve. He stayed because God met him there. He showed up before his heart was fully in it — and obedience became the catalyst for change.

There are mornings when prayer feels dry, when leadership feels heavy, when serving feels unnoticed. That is not weakness; that is warfare. The enemy thrives on absence and apathy. If he can sideline you, he doesn’t have to fight you.

Scripture is clear: *“Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up”* (Galatians 6:9, ESV). And *“Stand firm... Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 15:58, NIV).



On long cycling stretches into relentless headwinds of Kansas and Wyoming, progress feels invisible. But if you keep pedaling, you still move forward. Momentum comes after obedience — not before it.

**Call to Action:** Choose presence over preference. Pray when you feel empty. Serve when unnoticed. Love when tired. Show up. God does some of His deepest work in those who simply refuse to quit.

## Reminder #74 - You Are Going to Be Scared

What happens when the calling becomes real?

It's one thing to pray for vision. It's another to step into it. When God begins to answer and the door opens, fear often walks in with it. The size of the assignment exposes the limits of our strength.

I have watched men and women come alive to God's

purpose—volunteers stepping into hard neighborhoods, staff launching new ministries, individuals choosing sobriety and obedience. The moment purpose becomes personal, courage is required. Maybe you must raise funds to join the staff of a ministry. Calling is never comfortable. Even Jesus said he was sending you out as sheep amongst wolves in Luke 10:3.

When the Lord called Joshua to lead after Moses, He did not pretend it would be easy. He said, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9, ESV). And Paul reminds us, "*For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.*" (2 Timothy 1:7, ESV).

If the vision God has placed before you does not stretch you, it probably did not come from Him.

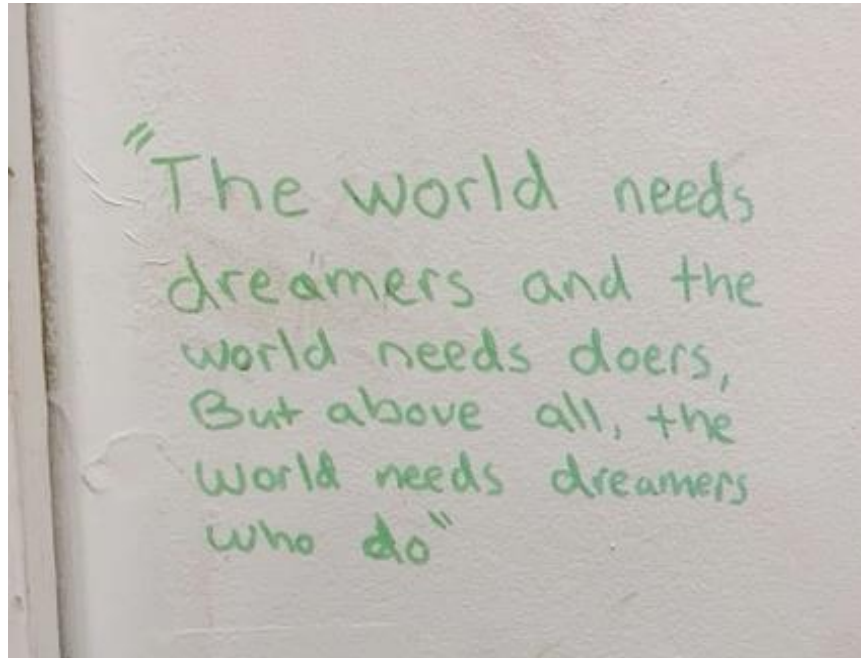
**Call to Action:** You are going to be scared. The question is not whether fear will visit. The question is whether obedience will lead. Take one deliberate step toward the calling God has placed on your heart. Fear may speak—but faith must decide.



## Reminder #75 - Go to Church and Find Something to Do

“What if the reason you feel spiritually stuck is not because you need more sermons—but more service?”

In one season at FOCAS, we recorded 3,101 volunteer opportunities totaling over 6,200 hours. Those weren't empty statistics. They were sacred moments—meals served, Scripture shared, burdens lifted. God still writes His story through willing volunteers



Paul reminds us, *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand”* (Ephesians 2:10, ESV). Church is not a weekly spiritual refueling station alone. It is a place where disciples are formed and deployed. We gather to worship Christ—and we scatter to reflect Him.

I spent the night in a church while riding across the country and visitors could sign the wall. One quote impressed me. It concluded saying, “But above all, the world needs dreamers who do.” It starts with the basics – the fundamentals.

I have seen men and women walk in weariness and uncertainty, then come alive when they began stacking chairs, mentoring a teen, or praying quietly with someone in crisis. Joy often follows obedience. Strength grows in service. Faith deepens when it costs us something.

*“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another”* (1 Peter 4:10, NIV).

If your faith feels stalled, don't just attend. Engage.

**Call to Action:** This Sunday, ask where help is needed—and step into it.

## Reminder #75 - Tell Others About Jesus, Your Hope and Joy

What if someone's eternity changes because you spoke—or stayed silent?

One evening on outreach, after Narcan had revived another life, a young man sat trembling on the curb. The chaos had passed, but eternity was still pressing in. I asked him a simple question: “Do you know the One who gives real hope?” His eyes softened. That night he prayed—not because I was persuasive, but because the Spirit of God was already at work.

Scripture commands us, *“In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense... for the hope that is in you”* (1 Peter 3:15, ESV). Paul declares, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes”* (Romans 1:16, ESV).

We do not manufacture transformation. God does. But He has chosen redeemed sinners to carry the message.

Your joy in Christ was never meant to remain private. The streets are weary. Suburbs are anxious. Boardrooms are restless. Homes are quietly breaking.

**Call to Action:** Ask the Lord for one name today. One conversation. One moment of courage. He is your hope and joy. Now tell someone why.



## Reminder #76 - Love Your Neighbor Like a Samaritan

What if the greatest barrier to loving your neighbor is not distance—but reluctance?

Jesus' story in Luke 10 confronts more than indifference; it exposes the quiet calculations in our hearts. The priest had theology. The Levite had position. "But a Samaritan...came



to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion" (Luke 10:33, ESV). Compassion is not pity. It is movement.

I have watched volunteers step into hard places—preparing meals, praying with men, opening doors again and again—ordinary believers becoming God's instruments of mercy. I have also stood on sidewalks where overdoses turned abstract headlines into names and faces. In those moments, loving your neighbor is no theory. It is kneeling beside someone who cannot repay you and pointing them to Christ.

Jesus' command is direct: "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37, ESV). No applause. No guarantee of results. Just obedience.

The Samaritan risked inconvenience, reputation, and resources. Christ risked His life.

**Call to Action:** Ask yourself: Who is God placing in your path that you would rather walk past? Cross the road. Pay the cost. Reflect the Savior.

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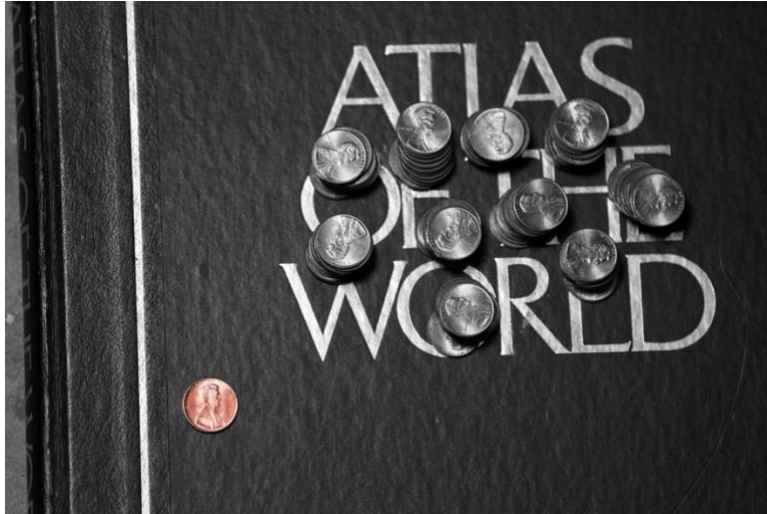
**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #77 – Be Radically Generous - When No One is Watching

The coins barely made a sound.

Jesus noticed what no one else did. While the wealthy made a show of their giving, a widow slipped in two small copper coins. *“Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box.”* (Mark 12:43 ESV). *“She out of her poverty her put in everything she had”* (Mark 12:44 ESV).



Small gift. Total surrender.

I have watched men and women in hard places give when it cost them — sharing a meal, offering forgiveness, choosing obedience when it would have been easier to walk away.

I see Walter, a volunteer on a fixed income, buy groceries and further invest his time to make the ingredients into delicious soup filling two crockpots – enough to feed 20-30 people.

It did not look impressive. It looked costly.

That is the difference.

Generosity is not about excess; it is about trust. David understood this when he said, *“I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God that cost me nothing”* (2 Samuel 24:24 ESV). What costs us clarifies who owns us.

The widow’s mite was small in the world’s economy but immense in heaven’s. It was an act of worship — a declaration that God was her security.

What would it look like for you to give in a way that stretches your faith? Not what is convenient — what is costly.

**Call to Action:** Ask the Lord to loosen your grip. Then give. In doing so, you may discover that the greater gift is not what leaves your hand, but what deepens in your heart.

## Reminder #78 – Constraints: What One Thing is Hindering Our Relationship with God

What if the distance you feel from God isn't His movement—but yours?

Early in my cross-country ride, a small mechanical failure crippled my bike. One missing bolt in the crankset bent the chainring and instantly reduced my power. The frame was strong. The legs were trained. The mission was clear. But one



compromised part restricted everything. I could still move—but not as intended. Every climb became harder than it should have been.

That experience forced a sober realization: small neglect produces major limitation.

James warns us, *“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble”* (James 4:6, ESV). Pride is often the unseen defect. Not loud rebellion—quiet self-reliance. A guarded resentment. A private compromise. An area we refuse to surrender. We continue serving, attending, giving—but spiritually grinding.

David prayed, *“Search me, O God, and know my heart... and lead me in the way everlasting”* (Psalm 139:23–24, ESV). That is a dangerous prayer—in the best way.

If something feels strained in your walk, don't blame the terrain. Ask the Lord to expose the loose bolt.

**Call to Action:** Confess quickly. Surrender fully. Repair immediately. A heart aligned with Christ climbs with power. Don't settle for restricted grace when freedom is available.

## Reminder #79 - You Have to Get Out of the Boat Sometimes

What if Peter had stayed seated—hands gripping the rail, heart pounding, but never moving?

*“He said, ‘Come.’ So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came toward Jesus”* (Matthew 14:29, ESV). The miracle was not in the boat. ***It was in the obedience.*** Eleven disciples watched history unfold because one man was willing to risk looking foolish.



I have learned that boats come in many forms—security, reputation, routine, financial comfort. They are not sinful; they are simply safe. Yet safety can quietly compete with trust. Abram heard, *“Go... to the land I will show you”* (Genesis 12:1, ESV). He did not receive a five-year plan. He received a command.

Years ago, when I was faced with leaving the stability of corporate life to step into ministry, I wrestled with fear. The offer on the table was safer. Predictable. Comfortable. Yet the Spirit kept pressing. I was reminded of Abram in Genesis 12:1 (ESV): *“Go from your country... to the land I will show you.”* Abram went without a map. Peter stepped without a guarantee.

Comfort can become a quiet prison. Boats feel secure—until Jesus calls us beyond them. The storm did not stop for Peter. The wind still blew. But he experienced something the others never did because he obeyed.

Sometimes faith requires action before clarity.

Peter felt the same wind the others felt. The storm did not weaken when he stepped out. Faith is not the absence of wind; it is movement in spite of it.

When Christ calls, delay is often disguised as wisdom. But partial obedience is still disobedience.

**Call to Action:** Is there something the Lord has been prompting you to do—reconcile, give, serve, start, surrender? Don’t wait for calmer seas. Step toward Him. Fix your eyes on Christ, not the waves. Get out of the boat. Fix your eyes on Jesus. The water may be uncertain, but His word is not.

## Reminder #80 – Ask!

When was the last time you asked God for something so specific it made you uncomfortable?

I have asked for many things—provision for ministry, protection during hurricanes, wisdom in hard personnel decisions, even strength to endure long stretches of open road. What strikes me is not that God always answers the way I expect, but that He invites me to ask in the first place.

In ministry, I have stood with men and women who had exhausted every other option. Pride stripped away, they finally whispered, “God, help me.” That simple, desperate prayer often became the turning point. Not because of eloquence—but because they asked.

Jesus does not stutter: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7, ESV). Paul presses it further with one of my favorite verses: “*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*” (Philippians 4:6, ESV).



**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

Asking is an act of surrender. It confronts our illusion of control. It forces us to admit that strategy, experience, and grit are not enough. God is not honored by our silent self-reliance; He is honored by dependent faith.

Some of us do not receive because we do not ask. Others ask timidly, hedging our prayers to protect our pride.

Asking requires humility. It admits we are not self-sufficient. It draws us closer to the Father who delights to give good gifts.

**Call to Action:** Kneel if you must. Name the need. Confess the fear. Ask specifically. Then rise and trust your Father's answer—knowing that every sincere request draws you closer to Him.

## Reminder #81 – Data Tells but Stories Sell — You Need Both

Would you rather see the numbers, or hear the story?

As an Executive Director, I live in both worlds. In one year, first responders reversed a staggering number of overdoses in our city using Narcan

That data matters. It exposes the scale of the crisis. It demands action. Conversely, data tells you something measurable. It demonstrates stewardship. It satisfies accountability.

But numbers alone rarely change a heart.

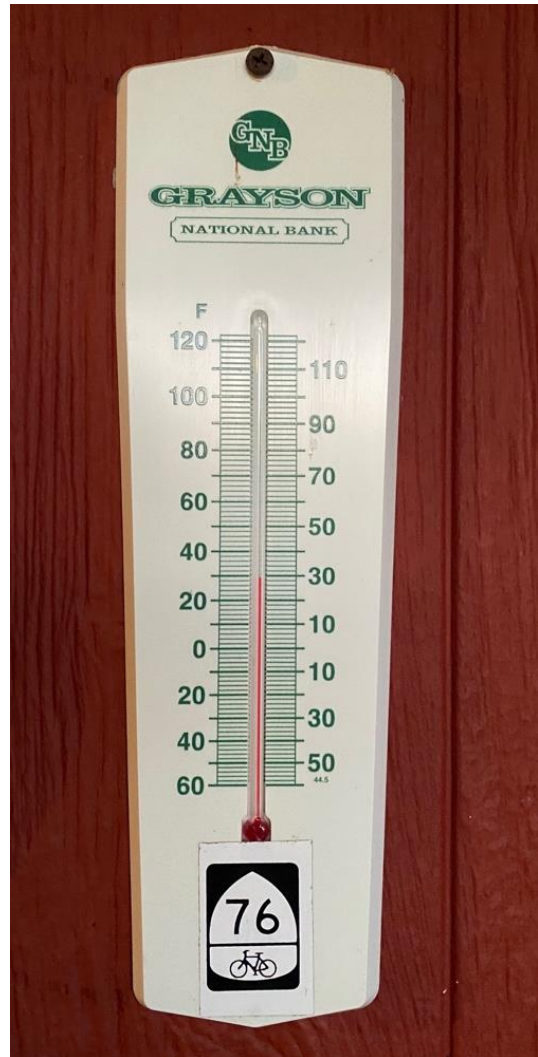
Behind those hours are names, prayers, conversations, and quiet acts of faith. A meal shared. A life redirected. A person choosing Christ. Data informs the mind; stories move the soul.

Scripture does the same. Luke records that “the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47, ESV). That’s measurable growth. Yet Jesus chose parables to awaken hearts. “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one...” (Luke 15:4, NIV). The story makes the statistic personal.

In ministry, leadership, and family, clarity and compassion must walk together. Data establishes credibility. Story establishes connection.

FOCAS doesn’t hide behind reports or rely on emotion alone. We tell what God is doing — specifically and truthfully. In our youth program, we see 76 percent of our youth advancing in one or more of the four areas measured by social and emotional learning. Some of those youth also found the grit and courage to ride a bicycle an impressive 325 miles from Pittsburgh to D.C. over seven days – two times.

**Call to Action:** Ask: What evidence of God’s work can you measure? And whose story must you courageously share?



## Reminder #82 - Vision and Passion Capture People's Hearts

*“Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it.”* (Habakkuk 2:2, ESV)

What makes someone leave the familiar and step into the unknown?

In 2001, when my corporate role shifted and a different door opened, I saw firsthand how vision shapes decisions. The practical option promised stability. The ministry path required sacrifice.

When the software company I served was sold, I later had another job offer—steady income, clear advancement, predictable outcomes. The other path led into ministry at a fraction of the compensation. It felt risky. Yet the vision of changed lives—men and women breaking addiction, families hearing the gospel, young people finding purpose, serving in Haiti, hearts reconciled to Christ—ignited passion that logic alone could not sustain.



Vision clarifies. Passion fuels.

Nehemiah rallied a discouraged people not with spreadsheets but with a God-centered vision. “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10, ESV). Vision anchored in God’s purposes stirs courage. Paul told the Philippians, “It is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:13, ESV). When passion flows from His calling, hearts respond.

People are not ultimately captured by programs. They are moved by a compelling picture of what God can do through surrendered lives.

**Call to Action:** Ask yourself: Is your current path driven by comfort or by calling? Write the vision. Pray over it. Share it. Then ask the Lord to ignite holy passion within you—and watch how He uses it to draw others closer to Him. Then take one courageous step of obedience today.

## Reminder #83 - Focus on the Fundamentals



What wins championships? A coach once said, “Blocking and tackling.” Not hype. Not highlight reels. Fundamentals.

When I set out to ride my bicycle across the United States, 4,400 miles and multiple mountain ranges stood between me and the Pacific when I left Yorktown, Virginia for Astoria, Oregon. People asked about the Rockies. Few asked about cadence, hydration, salt, stretching, sleep.

Yet it was the daily disciplines that carried me west. Eat before you’re hungry. Drink before you’re thirsty. Consume 1,000 mg of sodium for every hour in the saddle. Spin steady. Repair small issues before they become trip-ending failures. Miss the basics, and the mountains win.

Faith works the same way. We long for spiritual summits, but neglect prayer, Scripture, confession, fellowship, obedience. Paul told Timothy, “Practice these things, immerse yourself in them” (1 Timothy 4:15, ESV). Proverbs 3:5 (ESV) reminds us, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart.” Trust is not built in crisis; it is cultivated in routine.

Intentionality. Steady. Maybe even slow, like the tortoise versus the hare – gets you across the finish line. It's not always about speed, but endurance.

**Call to Action:** Are you drifting from the basics? Return today. Open the Word. Pray deliberately. Worship faithfully. Obey promptly. Strong finishes are built on simple, repeated faithfulness.

## Reminder #84 - At the End of the Day, It's About Self-Control

# SELF-CONTROL



### James 3:4

Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go.

New International Version (NIV)

One early afternoon on my ride across America, I rolled into a small town exhausted, hungry, and tempted to quit early. No one would have known if I cut the day short. No applause. No criticism. Just me, the bike, and the quiet. In that moment, the real battle wasn't the miles behind me or ahead of me. It was within me.

Paul reminds us, "For the grace of God has appeared... training us to renounce ungodliness... and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age" (Titus 2:11–12, ESV).

**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

Self-control is not grit alone; it is grace at work. And Galatians 5:22–23 (ESV) makes it clear—self-control is fruit of the Spirit.

In ministry and leadership, I've seen how easily emotions can hijack decisions—fatigue breeds impatience, criticism fuels defensiveness, success tempts pride. But at the end of the day, it's about Who governs the heart.

Self-control is choosing discipline and integrity when compromise would be easier. It is holding the tongue, guarding the mind, disciplining the body, and surrendering the will. James 3:4-5 reads, “Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. (NIV)

**Call to Action:** Identify one area where your impulses tend to lead. Bring it before the Lord. Ask Him to strengthen your restraint. The strongest man in the room is often the one who has mastered himself under Christ.

## Reminder #85 - Eternal Life is Beyond Comprehension!

Eternal life? Really?

It was a Friday on a cold December morning at the Family Activity Center in Price Hill. Sharing a cup of coffee, I sat across from an older man at a table. His eyes hollow from years of chasing relief. Someone had stolen his sleeping bag, and he spent the night suffering in the cold. He looked at me and asked, “You really believe this isn’t all there is?”



That question lingers.

Jesus did not hesitate: *“I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live”* (John 11:25, ESV). Paul doubles down: *“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile”* (1 Corinthians 15:17, ESV). Christianity stands or falls on an empty tomb.

I said “No”, and we discussed the Gospel. He had heard it before. He believed. He claimed he confessed Christ as his Savior years ago; but he wanted to escape the suffering. My friend let me pray for him.

A volunteer had recently brought in a few nice heavy sleeping bags, and I was able to give him one. He was grateful, and I let the volunteer know that her generosity made a difference in someone’s life.

The question is real. Circumstances can force the question. Eternal life is not sentimental theology. It is defiant hope. It steadies trembling hands. It frees us to forgive. It emboldens us to sacrifice.

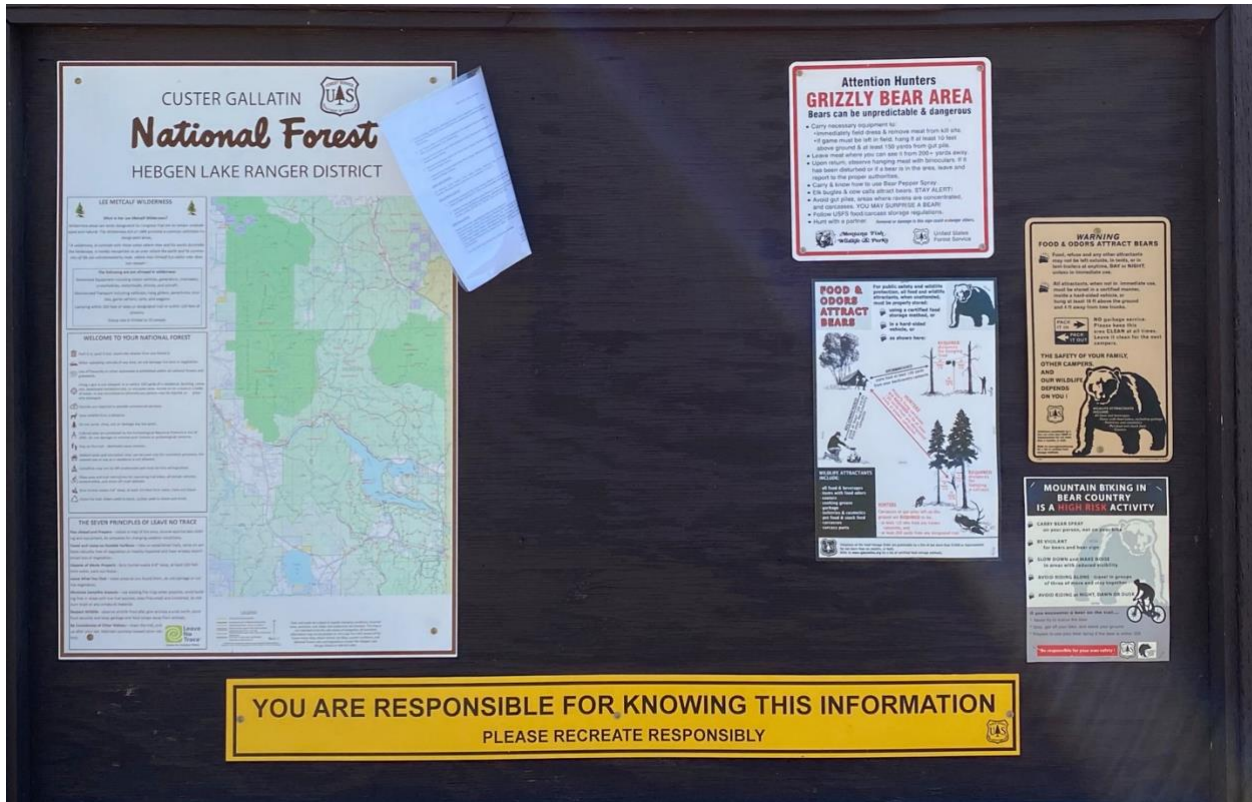
If Christ rose, then your worst day is not your last day.

**Call to Action:** Examine your fears. What would change if you truly believed eternity is secure? Read 1 Corinthians 15 and ask God to anchor your courage in the resurrection.

**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #87 – Judgement by God is Coming; We Have Been Warned



The most honest moments of my life have not been in public meetings, but alone—when my conscience would not let me look away.

There is something inside each of us that knows we are accountable. We can silence it, distract it, or argue with it, but we cannot erase it. Scripture confirms what our souls already sense: *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due...”* (2 Corinthians 5:10, ESV). And Hebrews is direct: *“People are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment”* (Hebrews 9:27, NIV).

These scriptures are informative and provide a warning that we are forced to evaluate. Do we believe it? Are we taking it seriously? We see warning signs all the time and respond with the same: Do we believe it and take it seriously?

I was riding in southeast Montana and rolled up on a recurring message. The large warning sign stopped me in my tracks. It declared that hikers (and cyclists) *were responsible for their own safety* because of the real presence of danger – grizzly bears! Whether you saw it or not, the threat existed. Whether you heeded it or not, the threat still existed. Not once did I think of questioning the source or authenticity of the warning.

The message was clear: the choice is yours; be prepared! That image has stayed with me.

**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

Judgment by God is inescapable. It does not adjust to cultural trends or personal narratives. The Lord who sees the quiet act of generosity also sees pride, bitterness, and compromise. Nothing is hidden.

Yet this truth is not meant to crush us but to drive us to Christ. The same Judge has provided a Savior. **At the cross, justice met mercy.** We do not prepare for that day with panic, but with repentance and faith. Today is a gift to live accountable, forgiven, and ready.

**Call to Action:** Examine your heart. Confess what the Spirit reveals. Walk humbly and deliberately—because one day, we will stand before Him. Live today with eternity in view. Invite the Holy Spirit to search your heart. Repent quickly. Forgive freely. Walk in integrity. One day we will stand before Him. Let that certainty shape how you live right now.

## Reminder #87 - Coveting is at the Very Core of Our Being

Why is it that someone else's blessing can quietly unsettle our own contentment?

I have seen this tension surface in board rooms, on city streets, and even in my own heart. A new opportunity, a larger platform, a different calling—coveting rarely announces itself loudly. It whispers. God's Word is direct: "*You shall not covet*" (Exodus 20:17, ESV). Yet Paul goes deeper, calling covetousness idolatry (Colossians 3:5, ESV). That stings. Idolatry is not just bowing to statues; it is bowing to comparison.



In ministry I have seen how quickly we measure impact against someone else's numbers, resources, or recognition. Even good work can be poisoned by misplaced desire. As was once reflected in our writing about joy, Paul's contentment flowed from Christ, not circumstances. Joy anchored him; comparison did not control him.

Coveting says, "If only I had what they have – the house, the car, the spouse, the job, the recognition ..." Christ says, "I am enough."

When I rode across the country, I learned something simple: you cannot pedal someone else's route. Faithfulness is personal. God assigns the road.

**Call to Action:** Ask the Spirit to expose hidden comparison. Thank God specifically for three blessings in your life. Then pray for the success of someone you might be tempted to envy. In doing so, you loosen the grip of coveting and draw nearer to Christ.

## Reminder #88 - Cultivate an Eternal Perspective

What looks enormous today when viewed from eternity?

Nothing.

Pedaling across endless plains and climbing mountain passes, I had long stretches with nothing but wind and horizon. Out there, deadlines, emails, and minor frustrations felt small. Distance changes perception. What seemed urgent at home lost its weight somewhere between the



Blue Ridge and the Cascades. Things that were once new and useful are now decaying and reminders of the past.

Scripture does the same for our souls. “For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come” (Hebrews 13:14, ESV). Paul adds, “For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18, NIV). When eternity fills the windshield, today’s setbacks no longer define us.

“Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Colossians 3:2, ESV), is a command to live today in light of forever. One day we will stand before Christ. Titles, possessions, and applause will fade. What will remain is faithfulness—how we loved, gave, endured, and proclaimed Him.

***Eternity is not later; it is shaping this moment.*** An eternal perspective steadies us in suffering and humbles us in success. It reminds us that our real citizenship is not bound to this soil. ***We are stewards, not owners. Pilgrims, not settlers.***

The question is not whether eternity is real—but whether it shapes how we live this afternoon.

**Call to Action:** Before you sleep tonight, ask: *If I truly believed eternity was near, what would I change tomorrow?* Then act on one of those changes in obedience to Christ.

## Reminder #89 – Can’t do it Alone

The shots came from a passing car. In seconds, laughter in Tot-lot park turned to chaos. Volunteers dove toward the playground, pulling children off the equipment and covering them with their own bodies.

No one paused to ask who was in charge. They simply acted—together.



Later, I reflected on that night. The courage displayed was real, but it was collective. One volunteer alone could not have shielded every child. Protection required proximity. Strength required unity.

That is not just a ministry principle; it is a biblical one. We are links in a mighty chain, doing our part to carry the load assigned to us.

“Two are better than one... For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow” (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10, ESV). And Paul writes, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2, ESV).

We admire independence, but Scripture exalts interdependence. Even seasoned leaders grow vulnerable in isolation. Fatigue, discouragement, and temptation gain ground when we drift from the body.

God designed His church as a shelter—where we protect, strengthen, and steady one another.

Who stands close enough to pull you down to safety when life erupts? And who are you shielding?

**Call to Action:** Lean in. Invite accountability. Share the weight. Stand firm—together—in Christ.

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**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— *Scott Bowers*

## Reminder #90 - We are Set Apart to Be a Blessing to Others

Why would a stranger open their home to you?

That question lingered in my mind one evening as I sat at a farmhouse table after a long climb.

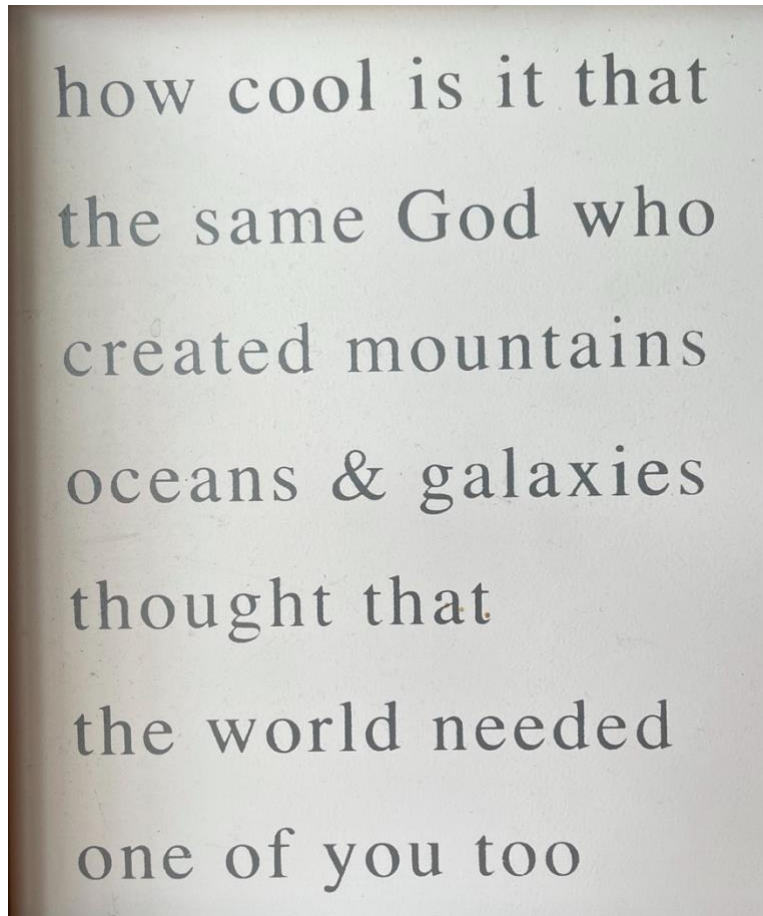
I had asked only for water. Instead, I was given a meal, a place to camp, and prayer before I left. Their kindness reminded me that God's favorite instrument is a willing servant.

Genesis 12:2 (ESV) says, "I will bless you... so that you will be a blessing." Peter echoes it: "*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another.*" (1 Peter 4:10, ESV). We are not set apart for comfort or applause, but for purpose.

In ministry, I have seen men and women step into dark places—addiction, violence, despair—and offer presence, prayer, and hope. That is what it means to be set apart. Not elevated above others but sent among them.

We carry Christ into boardrooms, parks, neighborhoods, and homes.

**Call to Action:** Ask the Lord: *Who can I bless intentionally?* Then act. A call. A prayer. A meal. A word of hope. You are set apart—so that someone else might encounter the love of Christ through you.



## Reminder #91 - Pray for Your Pastor

*“Brothers, pray for us.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:25, ESV)

Those four simple words from Paul have settled deeply into my heart. He was planting churches, enduring hardship, preaching with boldness—yet he still asked the church to pray for him. If the apostle needed prayer, how much more does your pastor?

Paul also writes, *“Pray also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel.”* (Ephesians 6:19, ESV). Preaching truth, shepherding souls, guarding doctrine, and caring for families is not light work. It is spiritual work. And spiritual work carries spiritual opposition.



I have witnessed firsthand that ministry places leaders on the front line. Holding the sign that reads, “Free Lunch”, I am always impressed when I see the head pastor serving with his members from his church at our Family Activity Center in Price Hill. Nothing flashy, he just serves meals and builds relationships with our “friends” from the community. In fact, he is helping to build community.

The call to stand firm is not theoretical—it is daily. Your pastor carries burdens you may never see counseling crises, interceding for prodigals, preparing sermons while managing his own heart before God.

Do not assume he is “strong enough.” Strength is sustained through prayer.

**Call to Action:** Set aside five **intentional** minutes. Pray for his marriage, his children, his study time, and his courage. Then tell him you prayed. You may never stand behind a pulpit—but you can stand behind the person who does.

## Reminder #92 - Pray for Your President

Do you pray for the leaders with whom you disagree?

That question confronts many believers during seasons of political tension. It is easy to critique leaders, debate policies, and grow frustrated with decisions that affect our communities. Yet Scripture gives believers a clear and often uncomfortable instruction: pray for those in authority.

Paul wrote to Timothy, “I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions” (1 Timothy 2:1–2, ESV). The goal is not political agreement but spiritual posture—so that society might experience peace and order.

When we look around our nation and see conflict, division, and anxiety, we realize how deeply peace is needed. Real peace ultimately flows from Christ and from hearts surrendered to Him reminds us that true peace is not merely the absence of conflict, but a life rooted in Jesus and shaped by prayer.

Praying for a president—any president—acknowledges that God is sovereign over nations and leaders. It also guards our own hearts from bitterness.

“I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.” (1 Timothy 2:1–2, ESV).

**Call to Action:** Pray specifically for your president and national leaders. Ask God to grant them wisdom, humility, and guidance—and ask Him to shape your heart with the peace that comes from trusting Christ.



## Bonus #93 – Miracles Impress, but They Don't Save

A crowd once chased Jesus across the Sea of Galilee because the day before He multiplied bread and fish. They had seen a miracle. Yet Jesus confronted them with a sobering truth: they were seeking the miracle, not the Savior.

In John 6:26 (ESV) Jesus said, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.”* Miracles may capture attention, but they do not transform the heart. Like the wind, you see their effects. But the effects do not change a person. They only point to the source. Only Christ, the source, can do that.



I have seen people deeply moved by dramatic moments—an answered prayer, a narrow escape, or a powerful experience in ministry. Those moments are meaningful, but emotion alone does not bring salvation. Real transformation happens when a person trusts Christ and submits their life to Him.

One man I remember walked through the doors of the Lord's Gym discouraged and unable to provide for his family. Through encouragement (i.e. impart courage), accountability, prayer, and Bible study his life began to change with new opportunities. It was not because of a miracle, but because he encountered the truth of the gospel.

Paul reminds us, **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”** (Romans 1:16, ESV)

Miracles may open our eyes. The gospel saves our soul.

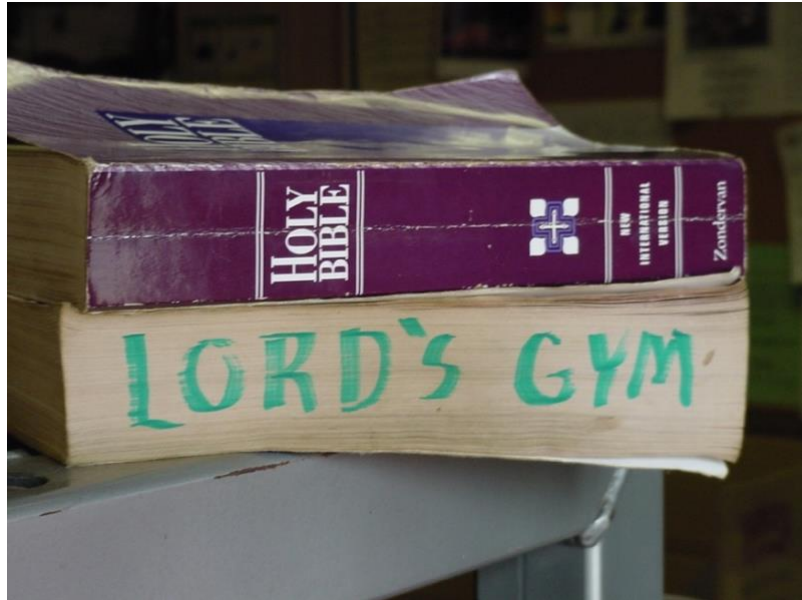
**Call to Action:** Ask yourself: Am I pursuing God for what He can do for me, or for who He is? Spend time in Scripture and thank Christ not just for His works—but for His saving grace.

## Reminder #94 - Sola Scriptura!

What happens when everyone becomes their own authority on truth?

Spend a few minutes listening to conversations about faith, morality, or purpose and you will hear it: “*I think...*” or “*My truth is...*” Yet when every voice claims authority, confusion is never far behind.

God did not leave humanity to navigate life by opinion, emotion, or cultural trends. He gave us His Word. The Reformers captured this with the phrase *Sola Scriptura*—Scripture alone is the final authority for faith and life. Paul reminds us, “*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness*” (2 Timothy 3:16 ESV).



I have watched men and women in difficult circumstances search for answers everywhere—relationships, substances, self-help, even religion. We read Paul’s insightful warnings about being misled by hollow and deceptive philosophy, human traditions, principles of this world, Antinomianism, Gnosticism, Epicureanism, and Stoicism. Judaizers, Jews, and Gentiles – Paul engaged them all with the Good News of Jesus Christ, His birth, death, and resurrection claiming He is God. Paul is so bold in Athens, that he uses their own writings to make his point, and begins his address to them that “God made the world and everything in it, is the Lord of heaven and earth, and does not live in a temple built by human hands.” (Acts 17:24) He concludes in verse 30 by telling them God overlooks their ignorance, and that people everywhere are to repent.

Yet the turning point often comes when they open the Bible and begin to wrestle honestly with what God has said. His Word cuts through confusion and points us back to Christ, the source of true life and peace.

**Call to Action:** Set aside ten quiet minutes today to read a passage of Scripture. Ask the Lord to shape your thinking through His Word so that His truth—not the shifting opinions around you—directs your life.

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**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #95 – Love God, Love Others (Even When It’s Hard)

The Christian life is not complicated—but it is demanding. Strip away the noise and it comes down to two priorities: love God and love people. Everything else grows out of those roots.

Working among people facing addiction, violence, poverty, and broken relationships teaches you quickly that loving others is rarely convenient. It often requires patience when someone relapses, grace when someone is angry, and compassion when someone disagrees with you. Someone injured but refuses to go to the doctor for fear of being caught.

Yet God repeatedly uses ordinary believers who simply show up willing to care. In fact, the stories that change lives are most often written through the simple faithfulness of volunteers who give their time, prayer, and presence to others.



Jesus made the command unmistakably clear: **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”** (Matthew 22:37–39, ESV).

Loving God aligns our hearts with Him. Loving others—especially those we don’t naturally connect with—reveals whether that love is real. As the Spirit works in us, **“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness...”** begin to shape how we treat people (Galatians 5:22–23, ESV).

**Call to Action:** Ask the Lord to help you see one person through His eyes. Choose patience, kindness, and prayer—and let your love for God overflow into love for them.

## Reminder #96 – Getting Tired of Doing Good is Not an Option

What keeps a person serving when the results are slow, unseen, or even resisted?

In ministry and daily life, it is easy to grow tired. You pray with someone battling addiction, encourage a discouraged neighbor, or serve a meal to someone who may return to the same struggles tomorrow. The visible results can feel small. Yet Scripture speaks directly to that moment: “*Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.*” (Galatians 6:9, ESV).



God rarely works through dramatic moments alone. More often, He writes His story through ordinary faithfulness. One reflection from our ministry captured it well: **God’s favorite instrument to write with is a willing volunteer.**

I have witnessed it firsthand with our coaches who drive 30 to 45 minutes from home, two to three times per week for practice and then one more time on the weekend for the game. The many who go out and buy the food, with their own money, cook it, load it in their cars, and bring it to our locations to feed our friends. The teams of women who boldly go out on our STORM bus and engage women on the streets or in front of their trap houses. Adults who will give up a week of their vacation to ride bicycles 350 miles and camp so youth can have the same experience. Our ministry partners who pray and share their valuable resources month in and year out.

Paul understood this mindset. Beaten, imprisoned, and rejected at times, he still pressed forward because he knew God was working through him “*to will and to work for His good pleasure.*” (Philippians 2:13, ESV).

Faithfulness is not measured by applause but by obedience.

**Call to Action:** Ask the Lord today: *Who can I serve?* Then act. Encourage someone, give your time, pray with someone in need. Leave the harvest to God—but never grow tired of doing good.

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**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #97 - We Must Cultivate Our View and Understanding of God and His Holy Character. It Will Develop Our Humanity and Humility

The Bible doesn't begin with man—it begins with God.

When Isaiah saw the Lord “high and lifted up,” his response was immediate humility: *“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips”* (Isaiah 6:5, ESV). A clearer vision of God always produces a humbler view of ourselves.

I have witnessed this truth play out in the lives of people we serve. Renee once walked the streets of Cincinnati, burdened by poor choices and broken circumstances. Yet today she rescues women from sex trafficking on our STORM bus and greets people entering the Lord's Pantry with warmth and dignity, living proof that Christ can transform a life.

JJ has a similar story. At 21, he felt trapped—unable to provide for his children and discouraged about his future. Through Bible study and discipleship at the Lord's Gym, he discovered hope in Christ and began rebuilding his life as a father and provider.

Scripture reminds us that *“He is the image of the invisible God... and in him all things hold together”* (Colossians 1:15–17, ESV). When we cultivate a deeper understanding of God's holy character, pride fades and humility grows.

**Call to Action:** Press pause and reflect on who God truly is—holy, sovereign, and merciful. Ask Him to enlarge your vision of Him. A bigger view of God will always produce a humbler heart and a more compassionate life.



## Reminder #98 - God Incarnate? Incredible!

### God Incarnate! Really?

Have you ever stood outside when the sky turns violent before a storm—wind rising, clouds boiling, the air thick with tension—and felt that uneasy sense that you are witnessing power far beyond you? In moments like that, no one argues about control. No one feels in charge. You simply know something greater is moving.



(Image by Mary Schoettmer Carpenter. Used with permission.)

That is why the idea of God becoming man seems almost impossible. How could the One who commands the wind and the seas step into our fragile world?

Yet Scripture declares it without hesitation: “*He is the image of the invisible God..*” (Colossians 1:15 ESV).

The same Bible tells us that the God who came once in humility will come again in unmistakable power. “*I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True.*” (Revelation 19:11, NIV).

The manger proves His humanity.  
The cross proves His love.  
The resurrection proves His deity.  
The white horse will prove His authority.

God incarnate? Yes—really. And *He is coming again!*

**Call to Action:** Live today with this in mind: the Savior you trust now is the King you will meet one day. Make sure your life is ready to welcome Him.

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**Press on. Grow Strong. Stand Firm.**

— Scott Bowers

## Reminder #99 – Serving the Poor and Disadvantaged and Getting Out of Your Comfort Zone Helps You Grow Strong in the Lord

What happens to a faith when it is stretched?

One evening on our street outreach bus, we met a young woman exhausted from life on the streets. She quietly said she was finished with that life and wanted help getting into detox. We prayed, made calls, and waited for a door to open. By



the next day she stepped toward recovery, surrounded by believers who cared enough to step into her world. Moments like that remind me that ministry rarely happens from a comfortable distance. It happens when we step toward people who are hurting.

God often strengthens our faith when we move outside our routines to serve others. The Apostle Paul wrote, “*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*” (Galatians 6:2, NIV). Serving the poor, the addicted, or the forgotten exposes our own weakness—and God’s power.

I have seen volunteers offer meals, prayer, and encouragement to people who feel invisible. God frequently uses ordinary believers as His instruments to change lives.

When we step beyond comfort and serve in Jesus’ name, something unexpected happens: our faith grows stronger than before.

**Call to Action:** Ask the Lord today to show you one person in need—someone outside your normal circle. Pray for them, serve them in a practical way, and watch how God uses that step of obedience to deepen your walk with Him.

**Reminder #100 - ‘All It Takes Is All You Have Got’**  
(Author of Quote Unknown)



Sometimes life feels like a marathon race. We had just dropped off two women, who decided that night to come off the streets, at the Emergency Room. It was late, and we still had to drop off the other volunteers, clean and park the bus. God wasn't done with the team.

Driving through the back streets in the West End of the city of Cincinnati, the bus lights reflected off a figure walking on the other side of the street. It was a very chilly fall night. The rain had just started falling, turning the streetlights into blurred streaks across the windshield.

We pulled up adjacent to the lone figure. One of the volunteer women bolted off the bus and escorted the stranger on to the bus. Wearing a soaked lightweight windbreaker, the young lady climbed up the three stairs and asked boldly, “Who are you guys?” Before I could answer, with a sense of pride, “Lord’s Gym Ministries,” Candice, approached her with a sandwich and drink replying, “We are the church!” WHAT a perfect answer.

I remember sitting behind Jim, the driver, feeling tired, short on patience, and wondering if I had anything left to give that night. Ministry, work, family, responsibilities—it all felt like too much.

Yet the thought came to mind, *All it takes is all you have got*. Not more. Not what you wish you had. Just what you have, offered to the Lord.

Scripture reminds us, “*Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established*” (Proverbs 16:3, ESV). God never asks for what we do not have. He asks for faithfulness with what is in our hands right now.

I have seen this principle lived out repeatedly in ministry. When circumstances forced us to adjust how we served, what mattered most was not having perfect conditions, but choosing the right response with the strength we had that day. The outcome belonged to God, but the effort belonged to us.

There are seasons when obedience feels costly. Those are often the moments when God does His deepest work.

**Call to Action:** Give God your full effort—no excuses, no holding back. Offer Him everything you have and trust Him with everything you don’t.

**Scott Bowers** has been a Cincinnati resident for more than 40 years. He and his wife, Betsy, have been married for over four decades and are the parents of two sons, Keith and Craig.

After graduating from Miami University in 1980, Scott was commissioned as an officer in the United States Air Force, serving as a helicopter pilot. Following his military service, he spent 16 years in corporate leadership roles in Human Resources and Administration.

In April 2001—just one week before the Cincinnati riots—Scott stepped out in faith to join the Foundation of Compassionate American Samaritans (FOCAS), now operating as **Lord’s Gym Ministries** of the Greater Cincinnati Tri-State Area, where he serves as Executive Director and President.

Scott is driven by a deep passion to see lives transformed through the love of Jesus expressed in both word and action. He leads efforts to meet people where they are, helping them experience hope, dignity, and purpose.

A highlight of his ministry is leading cycling-based outreach, including “Resiliency Rides,” where fitness, mentorship, and faith intersect to teach perseverance, discipline, and teamwork.

At age 64, Scott cycled 4,426 miles across the United States—an experience that reflects the resilience he now teaches.

He remains inspired daily by staff, volunteers, and partners who serve faithfully. His enduring vision is to see people grow strong in the Lord—physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

To support Scott and his team go to [www.LordsGymMinsitries.org](http://www.LordsGymMinsitries.org) “Apply My Donation To” and select “Vision Team.” Invite him to come and share his key take-a-ways, “Don’t Wait” tailored to your group.



Scott and Betsy on the Pacific Coast after completing his TransAmerica bicycle ride in 2021.