

## **Hurdles-**

### **Family**

Occasionally I have the privilege of having lunch with old friends from law enforcement that I have known over thirty years. It is always great to catch up on what they've been up to. We all share the aches and pains of the "mileage" we accumulated along the way. Before arriving at the restaurant, I always ask God for the opportunity to share His truth if the opportunity presents itself. I never solicit or instigate the Biblical topics unless they open the door. I've learned from previous examples not to "waterboard" someone with our "Christian values" or overwhelm them with scriptures. It is a turn off and a quick way to shut down any conversation. God leads the conversation.

This week's conversation was answered with prayer as the opportunity arose and several thoughts were shared. Nothing lengthy but to the point. In parting, a few things were mentioned that stuck in my mind, the distractions, and hurdles that those seeking God's truth encounter. We all have distractions daily and we know there are numerous hurdles to overcome even after we come to be baptized and accept God's truth and way of life.

Just a quick visit to Merriam-Webster, a hurdle has a few definitions which include: an artificial barrier over which racers must leap, and a barrier or obstacle. This is so applicable to anyone walking in or even seeking to walk in God's Word.

**1 Corinthians 9:24-** “Don't you know that those who run a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? That is the way you *are to* run in order that you may obtain *the prize*.”

**2 Timothy 2:5-** “Also, if anyone strives *to win* in the athletic games, he is not crowned unless he has competed lawfully.”

**Hebrews 12:1-** “Therefore, *since* we are surrounded by such a great throng of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily entraps *us*; *and* let us run the race set before us with endurance,”

There are many references to *race* within scripture and one of the most critical one refers to what we must do to *finish the race*, we must endure, overcome sin and our own flesh, keep the faith, and finish what God commands us to do in His Word.

**2 Timothy 4:7-** “I have fought a good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith.”

But we face a clever adversary, and he knows all the tricks to hinder our pursuit of God’s truth and way of life. He knows exactly what type of obstacles and hurdles to put in front of us to stop our forward motion. We have discussed pride and fear as being root causes on several occasions in the past. But making the choice or failing to make the choice may not always be hinged on being afraid to decide.

Commitment for most men is a tough word and I’m sure some ladies will laugh at this. But men were not alone. Commitment isn’t exclusive to just one sex. Having seen so many professionals in my career, making a commitment was not difficult for those with true leadership. Commitment was a way of life. They cleared the hurdle of commitment with leaps and bounds.

One obstacle that ranks on the list of hurdles is *unlearning* what we were taught our whole lives. Unlearning something is extremely tough especially when we’ve been taught by those we love most. Moms and Grandmoms, how could they lie to us? Like us, they were taught by their parents as we were. They weren’t lying, they just didn’t know any different either. They too depended on the guy at the front of

the church giving a few lines of scripture every Sunday morning with a heartwarming story, singing a few hymns and off to brunch. They never proved for themselves either what was actually in God's Word. Maybe it just wasn't their time to be called (**John 6:44, 6:65**).

**Leviticus 18:4-** "You shall do My judgments and keep My ordinances and walk in them. I *am* the LORD your God."

But for those who have received the call, opened the invitation, know the Word of God and still walk with one foot nailed to the floor, what's the reason(s)? Aside from fear and pride, there are other concerns that will hinder someone from stepping through the door. While these may have a thread through most resistance for spiritual commitment, there are other factors that can play into the enemies plans. As this can turn into a series of topics, we will discuss one that hits closest to home, the family.

In our own small fellowship, we have witnessed the conflict within our membership in which one spouse continues in the "religion" they were raised in and discounts God's truth as "cultish." Even when scripture is presented, some

have refused to acknowledge God's Word as being the truth favoring the lies of man-made "religion."

**Mark 7:6-9-** "And He answered *and* said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy concerning you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men.' For leaving the commandment of God, you hold fast to the tradition of men, *such as* the washing of pots and cups; and you practice many other things like *this*." Then He said to them, "Full well do you reject the commandment of God, so that you may observe your own tradition."

But Jesus Himself knew what conflicts would arise when one decides to "pick up his cross" and "follow Him." He knew that it would not be an easy path to pursue. It is not for the fainthearted. He let us know in advance that conflict would be in our own homes from those we love most.

**Micah 7:6-7-** "For the son dishonors the father; the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's enemies are the men of his own household. Therefore, I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me!"

**Luke 12:51-53-** “Do you think that I came to bring peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division; Because from this time forward there shall be five in one house divided, three against two and two against three. Father shall be divided against son, and son against father; mother against daughter, and daughter against mother; mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.”

To be called by God Himself is a tremendous honor when so many will have a thousand year wait.

**John 15:16-** “You yourselves did not choose Me, but I have personally chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go forth and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain; so that whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He may give you.”

Again, we know that Jesus forewarns us of the hurdles that lie ahead for those that are called.

**John 15:18-19-** “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. However, because

you are not of the world, but I have personally chosen you out of the world, the world hates you for this.”

It is quite understandable how and why someone can hesitate to move forward in their walk of faith if their concerns are still attached to family and loved ones. The feelings of being judged by those we love the most can be gut-wrenching. The thoughts of “leaving them behind” and concerns for their welfare weigh heavy on the heart.

**Matthew 10:34-38-** “Do not think that I have come to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man at variance against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s enemies shall be those of his own household. The one who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and the one who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And the one who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me.”

It is a difficult choice that must be made. But if you look at the overall choice that is being made, we are choosing God over all. ***Everything!*** Again, we are commanded to keep this, the Greatest Commandment.

**Matthew 22:36-38-** “Master, which commandment *is the* great commandment in the Law?” And Jesus said to him,” ‘You shall love *the* Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is *the* first and greatest commandment;”

This commandment is the first step towards true salvation. It is the beginning of our spiritual transformation that we learn to love God first, more than anything else. It in no way diminishes our love for family or others but it puts God in the right place in our hearts. This leads to our trusting in Him in all things, which includes His care for our families and loved ones. We release them to His Hands and His perfect care. Our trust will in turn drive our desire to obey and please God.

**Proverbs 16:7-** “When a man’s ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.”

Even if those in our own household do not come to salvation in the First Resurrection, they will have an opportunity in the Second Resurrection.

**Revelation 20:5-6-** “(But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were completed.) This *is* the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one

who has part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power.

But they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

Our goal is to *love, trust, and obey* God so that we will be included in the First Resurrection. Imagine being able to greet and teach those we love in the Second Resurrection?

**1 Corinthians 2:9-** “But according as it is written, “The eye has not seen, nor *the* ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

Overcoming the hurdle of family is but one of dozens of obstacles the enemy will use to block our path. But the study *of* and obedience to God’s Word will provide the directions and course of action to jump the highest of hurdles. We may trip on occasion but by God’s grace and mercy we can continue the race.

**Isaiah 42:16-** “And I will bring the blind by a way they knew not; I will lead them in paths they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and rugged places plain. I will do these things to them and not forsake them.”

**Titus 3:3-7**- “For we also were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving all kinds of lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful *and* hating one another. But when the graciousness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we practiced, but according to His mercy He saved us, through *the* washing of regeneration and *the* renewing of *the* Holy Spirit, Which He richly poured out upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. So that, having been justified by His grace, we would become heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.”

Our determination to clear the hurdles in our race to the Kingdom will determine whether we are *called* or *chosen*.

**Matthew 22:14**- “For many are called, but few *are* chosen.”

This is an award we won't receive until the trumpet sounds but one we won't want to miss *once committed*. Keeping the Sabbath and Holy days was perhaps my biggest hurdle. It gets easier by the week. To be chosen we must run the race according to God's Word. Our rewards (**Revelation 1:6, 5:10**) will be given at the end of the race *if* we follow God's rules (**Revelation 22:14**).

God has given us His Word to follow and His son Jesus Christ as an example. He has not called the equipment, but He has *equipped the call*.

**Romans 8:37-39-** “But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which *is* in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

***If*** you know and believe something is coming and you do nothing to prepare for it, you have no one to blame for your dilemma when the disaster hits. To those who know God’s Word is truth, there is no hurdle we cannot overcome.

**John 13:17-** “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.”

The most secure way we can hold onto something is to release it to God. Loving Him first and trusting our family to His care will break the anchor chain that is holding us back in our spiritual growth.

**Hebrews 12:1-2-** “Therefore, *since* we are surrounded by such a great throng of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily entraps *us*; *and* let us run the race set before us with endurance, Having *our minds* fixed on Jesus, the Beginner and Finisher of *our* faith; Who for the joy that lay ahead of Him endured *the* cross, *although* He despised *the* shame, and has sat down at *the* right hand of the throne of God.” Amen.