

John Newlin Ministries, Inc.

- realizing the power of a life in Christ-

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RECOGNIZING GOD'S GUIDANCE

We have just completed the move away from our long term home near the beach. Why? We loved the beach, the spectacular view of the majestic ocean, the climate. But it was time for us to go. Last fall I understood that. Time to sell. And in prayer the Holy Spirit confirmed that clearly. In fact, in thinking about all this Cathy and I made a list of reasons to move. After we wrote down reason number eight, we stopped thinking about such reasons. The plan was clear.

God's plan and purpose come to each of us day by day and month by month in various ways – sometimes direct words of guidance, sometimes circumstances (e.g., the eight reasons to move), sometimes perhaps an obvious requirement in order to go forward with God's plan for our lives.

So many aspects. I want you to think a moment about how God sent us off from this house, how he emphasized and indeed even reassured us that we were taking the right step. The final day the movers came to take away the furniture and such, we ordered lunch for the movers and us from a nearby restaurant called Bowmans. As I spoke with the person taking the order at the restaurant, I suddenly realized and said to her that nineteen years ago on the day the movers were moving our furniture in, we had called Bowmans to order lunch for us all!

The next day Cathy and I spent a lot of hours cleaning up the house to be ready for the new buyers. It was late when we finished, very late at night. We had not had anything to eat. So we stopped by one of the few chain restaurants still open. But the place seemed to not be operating – no one to seat us, no waitress around. So we left and went to a nearby Waffle House at the area of Wilmington called Monkey Junction. A warm, kind waiter greeted us and tired as we were we enjoyed being there. As we sat and ate a late meal, Cathy suddenly realized that in our move into the area nineteen years ago late at night when we were so very tired, we had come to the same Waffle House to eat a late night dinner!

Then the next day as the sale closed and we were finally out of the house for good, we went to dinner with a friend who had graciously let us stay with her during these hard last days of the move. She liked Italian food, and she mentioned Osteria Cicchetti, so we went there. It was a wonderful time of rest after such a hard several days. During dinner Cathy suddenly realized and spoke out to say that the day we had moved to our new town nineteen years before we had come to have dinner the very night before the move in the very same restaurant (the restaurant had had the name Milano's then).

I suddenly said to Cathy and our friend: BOOKENDS! God was showing us bookends. Three times. Three different restaurants. When we moved in nineteen years before and now when we were moving out. BOOKENDS. Our time in this spot, in this place, was clearly finished. Before and after. Sealed by the same occasion. Three times! God was making sure we got the point – he was closing the book on this chapter in our lives! We all thought about that quietly. And with awe. Cathy and I look with wonder

Keep Your Eyes on Jesus!

at where this is all heading. We do have an idea of course. God has given us some clues, and we are waiting for others.

KNOWING JUST WHO GOD IS - About Time, Isn't It?

Those who are wise seek to know more and more about God all the time. Especially as we realize the time is short and Jesus is soon to return to collect his believers. We learn about God through his word, the wonderful Bible. And some of us learn about him directly, through direct contact with him in prayer or other ways, through divine revelation, through circumstances.

Over the years in our writings we have spent a great deal of time focusing on Jesus, his love, his teaching and preaching, why he came, so much more. Right now let's focus on God himself – the triune God – and what the Bible tells us about him.

In Exodus 34:5-7 God describes himself to Moses:

“Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; ...”

We don't have to wonder. We have it in his own words! So indeed God is love, as later in the New Testament and especially in the writings of John we read and learn. And yes he does forgive.

Thankfully for all of us, he is slow to anger and he is faithful. Other Bible translations state the term slow to anger as longsuffering. Maybe that is a better translation. Longsuffering. God suffers when he sees the terrible behavior of those he created. Well, of course he does. He cannot abide evil.

Even with all this great patience God does not leave the guilty unpunished, even if he is slow to act. For decades now we have wondered why hasn't God acted in light of all the evil on earth, all the wanton visible sinful behavior. The answer is he is slow to anger. But obviously he eventually does. We are about to see all that in the Tribulation, a time you do not want to be around.

Elsewhere we read in Psalms 33:5: *“The LORD loves righteousness and **justice**; the earth is full of his unfailing love.”*

So we add justice and righteousness to things that God particularly cares about. In fact he said about Jesus in Matthew 12:18: *“Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim **justice** to the nations.”*

In Isaiah 61:8 we read: “For I, the LORD, love **justice**; I hate robbery and wrongdoing...”

Look at what he expects of us: *“...To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”* Micah 6:8

In Deuteronomy 4:24 we learn more: *“For the LORD your **God** is a consuming fire, a **jealous God**.”* This term jealous used to describe God appears in many verses. Look them up. He is a jealous God. He does

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not want nor like people putting anything before him. Note also that God is a consuming fire. He will totally vaporize – burn up– things that do not meet his approval.

Then from Nahum 1:2: *“The LORD is a **jealous** and avenging **God**; the LORD takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The LORD takes vengeance on his foes and vents his wrath against his enemies.”*

The Lord takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. That wrath is what is poured out during the Tribulation. You don’t ever want to be in the path of God’s wrath. The famous verse from Romans 12:19 (KJV) fits here: *“**Vengeance** is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”*

Deuteronomy 32:4 presents a further summary of God’s traits: *“He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a **God of truth** and without iniquity, just and right is he.”*

Some good insights here. God is unchanging (the rock). His work is perfect. A God of truth. He is truth. In fact, other verses are more dramatic on this. Consider Romans 3:4 : *“...Let God be true, and every human being a liar...”*

Titus 1:2 makes the same point on truth: *“...**God, who does not lie...**”*

That’s a pretty extensive list very explicitly laid out in the Bible.

- Compassionate
- Gracious
- Slow to anger (longsuffering)
- Abounding in love
- Abounding in faithfulness
- Forgiving
- Punisher of the guilty/takes vengeance on his enemies
- Loves righteousness
- Loves justice
- Hates robbery and iniquity (evil)
- Jealous
- Expects people to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before him
- Unchanging
- Perfect
- Truthful – God is truth. He does not lie.

Good start if we can just focus on all this. The Bible is full of real life illustrations of God demonstrating these traits in his dealing with people.

So we can count on God’s being loving, compassionate, faithful, forgiving, just, patient, and also eventually on his never accepting or tolerating evil. He may be longsuffering but he eventually acts. The people of Noah’s day found out about that trait. So too the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. So too will many of our day.

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May you live in the blessings of God always.

John

[All scripture is from the NIV unless marked otherwise]

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