

The Map Maker's Guide

Map 2 - Searching Out the Matter

Spiritual Exercise

There are many promises for the man, woman and child that will put their trust in God. Here are a few.

*As for God, His way is perfect;
The word of the LORD is proven;
He is a shield to all who trust in Him. 2Samuel 22:31*

*Trust in the LORD, and do good;
Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.
Delight yourself also in the LORD,
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to the LORD,
Trust also in Him,
And He shall bring it to pass.
He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light,
And your justice as the noonday. Psalm 37:3-6*

*The LORD is good,
A stronghold in the day of trouble;
And He knows those who trust in Him. Nahum 1:7*

As we will see in this study, searching out the mysteries of the kingdom will require the grace to trust Him more. Let's turn our hearts to the one that supplies that grace.

Prayer

Father God, we come to you now encouraged by your promises. We thank you and praise you for the provision You have made for us - the grace to trust You and lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus laid hold of us. We surrender to the working of the truth of Your word - to make us free. In Jesus' name; Amen.

Introduction

The availability of Christian resources in America is astounding. I dare say something has been written or recorded about every circumstance and situation that challenges every man, woman and child in this country. ChristianBook.com has over 500,000 products. I don't know how they keep up with all the books, tapes and study guides.

Furthermore, there must be thousands of TV stations, and tens-of-thousands of radio stations, all broadcast for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Who can imagine the number of websites dedicated to the application of God's word?

Jesus said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32) So why is the church in America so bound? Why has she become as captive as the world in some of the most obvious sin - abortion, divorce, pride, greed, etc.?

Speaking from my own experience as a church leader, I believe it is our ignorance of Him, and the neglect of our heart's desire to know Him, that has left us prisoners to the deception of Satan, the world and our flesh. Our enemies know that knowledge is power; that this is particularly true in the kingdom of God. They will fight us tooth and nail to keep the knowledge of God hidden from His children and the world. The agents of deception are all around us.

And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you." Matthew 24:4

If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. James 1:26

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Revelation 12:9

This adventure is not for the passive, nor the faint of heart. We must fight for the truth that will make us free. Praise God, we have been given weapons for the battle.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. 2Corinthians 10:4-6

Throughout this study, we will uncover many weapons for our warfare. Let us desire and determine to use them!! But first, they must be discovered.

In this map, we will begin the incredible adventure of searching out the vast mysteries of God's kingdom. We will be challenged to venture out into the "higher than" thoughts and ways of God. And we will discover the keys to a safe and successful journey.

Definition

Truth (*aletheia*): Objectively, signifying "the reality lying at the basis of an appearance; the manifested, veritable essence of a matter" (Romans 9:1; 2Corinthians 11:10). Used especially of Christian doctrine, for example in Galatians 2:5 where "the truth of the Gospel" denotes the "true" teaching of the Gospel, in contrast to perversions of it. The word has an absolute force in John 14:6; 17:17; 18:37, 38. In Ephesians 4:21, where the RV, "even as truth is in Jesus," gives the correct rendering, the meaning is not merely ethical "truth," but "truth" in all its fullness and scope, as embodied in Him. He was the perfect expression of the truth; this is virtually equivalent to His statement in John 14:6. *Vine's Expository Dictionary*

Mystery (*mystērion*): Hidden thing, secret, mystery; generally mysteries, religious secrets, confided only to the initiated and not to ordinary mortals; a hidden or secret thing, not obvious to the understanding; a hidden purpose or counsel; the secret will of God; the secret counsels which govern God in dealing with the righteous, which are hidden from ungodly and wicked men but plain to the godly. *Blue Letter Bible Outline of Biblical Usage*

Searching Out the Matter

(All Scripture references, but those noted, are NKJV; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; headings and footnotes excluded)

Our adventure into joyful, Spirit-filled ministry will be filled with "searching out the matter". Most have yet to discover that this searching is God's way for our coming to know Him and His doctrine.

*It is the glory of God to conceal a matter,
But the glory of kings is to search out a matter. Proverbs 25:2*

And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that ' Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.'" Mark 4:11-12

So, what are these matters and mysteries that have been hidden for our discovery?

For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:8-9

These matters and mysteries are the thoughts and ways of God that can only be measured by the vastness of the universe. The farthest galaxy from Earth is over 13 billion light years away!! This should give us some idea of the magnitude of our Father's invitation.

And what are we to do with the mysteries of the kingdom? Consider the following verses:

Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds. 2John 1:9-11

Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. 1Corinthians 4:1-2

The children of God are commanded to abide in, and be stewards of, the mysteries of God. A good steward does not limit his understanding to a portion of the Master's property. He seeks out what is good and profitable in it. In his faithfulness, he leverages what he finds - to the Master's benefit.

The Doctrine of Christ

The Vast Estate of God's Mystery

Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.
2John 9

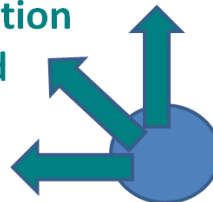
For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.
Proverbs 25:2

And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God...
Mark 4:11

Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 1Corinthians 4:1

It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.
Proverbs 25:2

The Invitation of God



Doctrines of Man
Confined to the House?

And so God invites us outside the boundaries of the doctrines of man to explore the vast estate of His mysteries - what the Bible calls “the doctrine of Christ”.

Searching Safely

It is our responsibility - to ourselves, our families, and everyone in our spheres of influence - to carefully avoid the deception of false doctrine (i.e., leaving the safety of the Master’s property). The Master has defined the “property lines” by His word. Men have done their best, by their doctrines, to define those boundaries. We must have a cautious respect of the doctrines of man, but not allow them to bind us from searching further. There is much to explore, if we are to be good stewards. We can do this safely, trusting God to protect us from wandering off the property, if the motivations of our hearts are aligned with His.

1. Our hearts are pure and rightly motivated. Those that find themselves “out of bounds” are usually motivated by self-aggrandizement and self-sufficiency. The prayer of Psalm 139:23-24 is a great protection.
2. We recognize that we have been wrong before, and might be wrong again. Most of us would have fought over some “truth” that we once held, which over time turned out to be something less than we thought. The humble heart is the heart to which God reveals His mysteries.
3. We look to the Spirit and Christ Jesus to be our teachers. We must be careful to remember that men are only vessels and instruments of the truth. Our ears must be tuned to the voice of God.
4. Our hearts are bent toward unity - not dismissing someone even when we know they are wrong. One of my favorite teachers has a habit of saying, “It may not mean what I say it means, but it must mean something. You put meaning to it; but, please don’t discard me in your disagreement.” God is more interested in our relationships than in our defense of the truth. The truth can defend itself.

NOTE: I hope and pray that these things are true of me and this study. I would greatly appreciate you letting me know if you see or sense anything contrary to these points. You will be doing me a great personal service.

We can venture out “safely”; and this is how we will search out the matters of God in this study. The purpose of our stewardship is too amazing and critical to ignore:

To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. Ephesians 3:8-12

God’s eternal purpose is for His manifold wisdom to be made known BY THE CHURCH. That’s us!! In Christ Jesus our Lord, we have boldness and confident access, through faith in Him, to know and make known the mysteries of God.

Becoming Faithful Stewards

God would not command our stewardship without making a way for us, in accordance with His great plans. T. Austin-Sparks said, “Let us all pray every day that we shall not only hear the Scriptures expounded, but that a great act of God shall be done in us whereby our spiritual eyes are opened to see and know the Lord.” Isn’t that what we all want?

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

The word of God is described as a double edged sword. It cuts bone from marrow, soul from spirit, etc. It is heavy; and sometimes just plain difficult to receive - to make it a part of our life. But, the good news is that it doesn't have to be overwhelming. The Holy Spirit has laid out for us the keys for discovering and receiving the truth. In this day, it is important that we understand these keys, and teach them to everyone in our spheres of influence that will listen.

The first key is our hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Matthew 5:6

The natural mind would say, "Blessed are the righteous." But it is those who are hungry and thirsty who are blessed. Righteousness comes - and the truth with it - when we recognize our emptiness and respond out of a deep need. As we prepare to read, or hear, the Scriptures, let us confess our need and proclaim our desire to know the Lord and His truth.

The second key comes to us in a warning - failing to receive a love of the truth.

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 2Thessalonians 2:9,10

This passage is taken out of Paul's exhortation regarding the Great Apostasy. Those without a love of the truth are at great risk of falling away from the faith. It is important to note that the love of the truth is something that is given. It is not earned, but it must be received.

While each key is truly important to our entering and receiving the mysteries, **the third key** is the most critical. Jesus shared it while answering those that marveled at, yet questioned, His teaching.

If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching (or doctrine), whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself. John 7:17 (NASB)

To know the source and reality of the truth, we must be willing to respond in obedience to that truth. As someone has said, "We must come with a proceeding 'Amen'." This is distinctly more than a willingness to consider the truth. It is to accept it by faith - trusting God for the outcome - even before we begin searching.

Key number four is the beginning of our response to the truth - entering into it.

Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered. Luke 11:52

When the truth comes, we must respond by "entering in". To understand this key step, consider two things that we might "enter into". One is a contract. In a contract, we commit ourselves to the conditions of our agreement - our preceding "Amen".

Second, let's assume our contract grants us access to the Vast Estate of God's Mysteries; to be stewards there. Upon "entering into" the contract, we are allowed to "enter in" and live on the estate. "Entering in" is committing to, and abiding in, the mysteries of God!

As we discussed earlier, the faithful steward does more than hear about the mysteries of God - they do something with them. This leads us to **the fifth key** for entering and receiving the mysteries of God: Being "doers of the word".

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he

who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. James 1:22-25

We must do something with what we have been given. Otherwise, we risk losing it and deceiving ourselves; even forgetting who we are in Christ.

Conclusion

It is God's intention for every one of His children to search out the mysteries of His kingdom - and do something with them. To do otherwise is to risk deception and falling away. There are many motives and excuses for settling for less. Every one of them is from our enemies - intended for our destruction.

Because Jesus is the truth and the truth is in Him, searching out the mysteries of God results in our finding Him. Many are afraid they will wander, or be lead, "out of bounds" - into heresy. Those with a humble and hungry heart should not fear in this way.

Our Loving Father knows we are like children. We need His help in our searching. He takes our hand and leads us into the vast estate of His thoughts and ways. He has provided the keys that enable and encourage us to search out the matters of His mysteries.

Application

As Leaders in the Workplace, we are called to lead others into the vast mysteries of God. This is a primary responsibility of "making disciples... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." No one can lead where they will not go themselves. Those that lead well, go before the ones they are leading.

Leaders in the Workplace are in the best position to lead the children of God into the full expression of His mysteries - from hearing to doing. They are where most spend most of their waking hours, out where the doing is done. God has established every Christian Leader in the Workplace for this purpose, in this very critical season.

Go, therefore, and explore!!

Reckoning

Christ, by His Spirit, will make us faithful stewards of the mysteries of God (Mark 1:17; 1Corinthians 4:1-2).

Assignment

1. Review your notes and the Scripture passages from this week's module. What were the most challenging concepts about the truth of God? What do you think the Holy Spirit is trying to teach you in this regard? Share this with someone in your spheres of influence.
2. Ask the Lord for the grace to practice the steps of knowing and receiving the truth:
 - i. A hunger and thirst for righteousness.
 - ii. A love of the truth.
 - iii. Courage and discipline to come with your "Amen" first.
 - iv. Enter into the truth you are given.
 - v. Becoming a doer of the word and work.
3. Go deeper into the truth - by exploring this week's devotion.

Devotion

The “And” of Searching in Community

From Rob Streetman, The inLight Adventure Blog

There was a time in my life when I would pass over sections of Scripture because they were beyond my understanding. At the time, I didn't understand how serious God was about our being faithful stewards of the mysteries of His kingdom. I didn't realize that there were things hidden for me to search out. I also wasn't aware that He had a “way” of searching that would open up the mysteries of His word. I call this way: The “and” of searching in community.

I discovered this way through a contrast of meetings that providentially happened within a week of each other. In the first meeting, I saw - even felt - the tension rise in the room when the teacher introduced the topic of baptism. At least half the participants moved to the edge of their chairs waiting, it seemed, to hear the teacher say something that they did not agree with. I am convinced that their ears were closed to hearing, and the Spirit was grieved.

The second meeting was a blessed contrast. As with the first, there were people from various denominations. I am sure that each had a different understanding of the topic: Communion. But their hearts were softer towards God word, and each other. They were not looking to be right. They just wanted to know the truth; and knew they didn't know it all.

The scripture that was introduced was Jesus' claim (in John Chapter 6), to be the bread of life that must be consumed by those that desire to have eternal life. It was asked, “What did Jesus mean when He said:

... Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. John 6:53-56

After some consideration, one brother said he wasn't sure, but thought it meant “so and so” to him. The next jumped in and said, “And it means... to me.” A third, “And it seems to be saying...”

To be honest, I can't remember what any of them said about the meaning - because the Holy Spirit was focusing me on the “and” of their hearts. At no time during the conversation was “no” or “or” used. No one corrected or disagreed with the others. It was truly amazing; so amazing that I almost missed the most amazing thing:

In the midst of searching out the matter in loving community, this passage - that had so long been a mystery to me - was given meaning, somewhere deep in my heart. I couldn't explain what I understood (that came later), but I knew something that I had not known before. The word - that word - became alive for me.

In reflection, I was reminded of Paul's encouragement to the church in Rome:

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another... Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Romans 12:3-5, 10, 16-18

Map 2 - Searching Out the Matter

Since that day - at least three years ago - I have not been in a meeting of kindred minds and hearts where I did not hear a word from the Lord. Where two or three are gathered in His name, He is there (and He has something to say).

I pray that He gives you a heart to hear the mysteries of His kingdom. I pray the blessing of community on all your future meetings.