

# CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

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## DEADLY DESIRES

John Haffner

When Peter wrote to Christians scattered and suffering persecution, he impressed upon them the importance of continuing to desire the word of God. He noted its purity and called on the church to long for its truth as newborns desire milk (1 Pet. 2:2). Peter followed up on the command with good reasoning. Christians should know the value of seeking God’s word because they have experienced the Lord’s gracious provision (1 Pet. 2:3). Everything we need is supplied by our wise and loving God (Phil. 4:19; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:3). Diligence in the word is essential for our spiritual growth and development (Ps. 119:9-11; 2 Tim. 2:15). God has delivered to us the model of strong faithful living but refocusing on the proper desire requires us to turn away from the deadly desires of sin. Consider how God tells the church to lay aside these weaknesses to truly live after the Holy Word (1 Pet. 2:1).

The phrase “laying aside” in verse 1 means to set down or to put away. The picture is very much like one taking off an outer garment. We must put sinful desires away if we are truly desiring the word. Christians make this decision repeatedly. We remove wicked desires when we obey the gospel, choosing service to Jesus instead. However, Satan and those who have given themselves over to him will attempt to turn us from our purpose. A desire for God and His word is often replaced in the heart of a Christian who begins to act like the world around him. This call to “lay aside” describes the maintenance of spiritual purity. We must put to death our earthly pursuits, refusing to be conformed to the world or to make friends with what God calls evil (Col. 3:5-8; Rom. 12:1-2; Jas. 4:4).

**First, we must lay aside all malice.** This could be described as the desire to harm others. The same root word is present in the word malignant. If we allow this evil disposition to be present in our hearts, then we will never respond appropriately to our enemies. When someone insults or attacks us, we may want to respond in like manner. Our Lord has not called us to be avengers though. His doctrine, and the model He lived out, says to respond with good (Matt. 5:28-48). Rather than retaliation, God’s word promotes living peaceably (1 Pet. 3:8-9; Rom 12:17-18).

**Second, we must lay aside all deceit.** This could be described as the desire to cheat or trick others. Often translated as “guile” or “craft” in the KJV, this same term is used of those who sought to take Jesus by subilty and kill Him (Matt. 26:4; Mark 14:1). Interestingly, Peter declared the Lord to be free of this evil desire in the very same chapter we are told to lay it aside (1 Pet. 2:22; Isa. 53:9). Our enemy, the devil, is presented in scripture as a cunning trickster. The

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## APRIL 2021

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# UNLESS THE LORD BUILDS THE HOUSE...

Cody Westbrook

The Latin motto *Nisi Dominus Frusta* has adorned the coat of arms of the city of Edinburgh, Scotland since 1647. The meaning is “Without the Lord, frustration,” and it is taken from the first line of Psalm 127:1– “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.” The sentiment accurately portrays the outcome of one who seeks to navigate this life apart from his Creator. The emphasis of this Psalm, however, is not on the individual but on the home. Imagine the frustration and heartache that would result from dedicating large sums of time and money toward constructing a home only to see it destroyed by a natural disaster. Infinitely greater is the tragedy that unfolds whenever a home is built by someone or something other than the Lord. Such a home is destined to falter.

In five verses, Solomon outlines the blessings that result from allowing Jehovah to construct and defend our homes. When the Lord build’s the house it includes...

### **Building (1a)**

Every structure must be built upon a solid foundation, and so must the home. Too many in our world build their homes upon foundations that are weak. Things like lust, convenience, and materialism often serve as the basis upon which families rest. Homes such as these are like the foolish man’s and are destined to fall under the weight of the storm (Matt. 7:26-27). But the homes which God builds are like the wise man’s and stand firm regardless of how fierce the storm becomes (Matt. 7:24-25).

When the Lord builds a home, He builds it upon the foundation of His Will. Consider the occasion of Matthew 19:1-9. The Pharisees came to Jesus seeking to ensnare Him and asked, “is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason” (Matt. 19:3)? Jesus was not interested in toeing the party line on the matter. Instead, He pointed their attention to the garden and reminded them of God’s original

intention for marriage—one man and one woman united in the covenant relationship of marriage for life (Matt. 19:4-6). God’s will for every home is that it consists of a man and a woman who are eligible to enter into the marriage relationship. Both leave father and mother and cleave to one another as a new family unit, that they may grow and serve the Lord together (Ps. 34:3).

Additionally, just as a structure is composed of many parts, so God constructs a family of many parts. The Bible identifies a number of Christian characteristics that ought to be present in every home. Peter wrote, “Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another, love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing...” (1 Pet. 3:8-9). Though written in a context of relationships within the body of Christ, consider how each of those characteristics ought to be present within members of a family. We must “be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Eph. 4:32). Love, compassion, kindness, longsuffering, self-control, purity, sound speech, and every other Christian character trait enjoined on God’s people ought to be present in the DNA of every home.

### **Guarding (1b)**

The Devil knows that the home is a sacred place. He knows that our most tender moments happen at home and that it is the place where we can be at our most vulnerable. Within the walls of our homes, we raise our children and teach them to love the Lord and follow His will. At home we make important decisions that impact the direction of our families. The home is the building block of society and even of the church. Therefore, the Devil puts forth every effort to attack it. He seeks to infiltrate it in many ways and thus we must always be on guard. Thankfully, God has not left us alone in this endeavor. Not only does He build, He also protects.

On old athletic truism is that the best defense is a good offense. This truth applies to guarding and protecting our homes as well. In Matthew 12:43-45 Jesus said,

When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation.

The lesson of this context is that of filling the void. The unclean spirit leaving the man left a void which should have been filled with truth and things of a spiritual nature. Doing so would have left no room for the unclean spirit to return. Regarding our homes, the best way to guard against the Devil's advances is to fill every occupiable space with righteousness so that no room is left for wickedness. Reading and studying God's Word together as a family, worshipping and serving the Lord together, prioritizing spiritual things as a family—these are all practices that should be present in every Christian home and will guard against the enemy.

### **Enjoying (2)**

The world moves at a fast pace and we struggle to keep up. Too many families run themselves ragged working and worrying about making ends meet, saving for retirement, and providing the necessities of life. In the process, we take no time to enjoy the blessing of the family God has provided. Psalm 127:2 says, "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: For so He gives His beloved sleep." Solomon is not suggesting that working to earn a living is vanity. His point is that working and worrying ourselves to death over it is vanity. Instead, we should trust in the Lord and take time to enjoy our family.

In Matthew 6:19-21 Jesus commanded that we lay up treasure in heaven, and not on earth. It is easy to imagine a father sitting in the audience thinking about his family and wondering how to reconcile what Jesus commanded with his need to provide for his home. To this Jesus said, "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" (Matt. 6:31). Rather, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33). The Psalmist said

Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways. When you eat the labor of

your hands, you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house, your children like olive plants all around your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord (Ps. 128:1-4).

It is true that we must work to provide for our family, for "if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thess. 3:10). But it is also true that God provides for His people and so we must trust Him and enjoy His provision.

### **Conserving (3-5)**

One of America's great tragedies is the low view that so many have of children. The abortion industry is a grotesque reminder of the perverted view of family in the eyes of many in our country. To the writer of Psalm 127, abortion would have been unthinkable because children are a joy and a blessing from the Lord, not a burden. It does no good to build and care for houses if there are no future generations to inhabit them. Thus, the emphasis of these passages is two-fold: thank God for our children and teach them to honor God as their Creator.

In the ancient world arrows were primarily a long-distance offensive weapon. Their effectiveness depended upon the strength and skill of the archer. Similarly, the godly influence of a man can live on through his children once his time on earth is over. God commands parents to teach their children (Deut. 6:4-6; Eph. 6:4) so that they may learn to love and obey the Lord. Our commitment to fulfilling this command makes it possible for godliness to exist from generation to generation. As Paul commanded Timothy, "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

### **Conclusion**

Life is short and the time we have with our children at home is even shorter. It would be tragic indeed to look back over 20 plus years of parenting with sorrow and regret because of misplaced priorities and an insistence of allowing everything and everyone but God build our home. Remember the words of Jesus, "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock" (Matt. 7:24-25). Heed the cry of Psalm 127 and allow the Lord to be the builder of your house.

# Fourth Quarter Class Schedule

## Southwest School of Bible Studies



April 26-July 9, 2021

<b>8:30-8:50</b>	<b>CHAPEL</b>		
<b>9:00-9:50</b>	1	Messiahship	Logan Summers
	2	Personal Evangelism	Matt Gibson
<b>10:00-10:50</b>	1	Kings	Logan Summers
	2	Revelation	Steven Lloyd
<b>11:00-11:50</b>	1	Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon	Matt Gibson
	2	Ezekiel II	Steven Lloyd
<b>11:50-1:00</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>		
<b>1:00-1:50</b>	1	Christian Doctrine	Matt Gibson
	2	Hebrews	Steven Lloyd
<b>2:00-2:50</b>	1	Chronicles	Matt Gibson
	2	1, 2, 3 John	Logan Summers
<b>3:00-3:50</b>	<b>GSP</b>		
<b>TUESDAY</b>			
<b>9:00-11:50</b>	1	Acts 2	Ronnie Scherffius
	2	Teaching Methods	Clay Bond
<b>11:50-1:00</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>		
<b>1:00-3:50</b>	1	Apologetics	Logan Summers
	2	Restoration History	Ronnie Scherffius
<b>THURSDAY</b>			
<b>9:00-11:50</b>	1	Advanced New Testament	Cody Westbrook
	2	Preaching Practicum	Wayne Jones
<b>11:50-1:00</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>		
<b>1:00-3:50</b>	1	Expository Preaching	Steven Lloyd
	2	Minor Prophets	Clay Bond

**Focal Point - May 1-6**  
**Memorial Day - May 31**  
**BCS MDC - June 2-6**  
**Camp Hensel - June 13-18**  
**Servants' Academy - June 27**  
**Graduation Weekend July 9-11**

# THE FRIEND OF GOD

Bill Burk

**M**an was created for community. All of us need good friends whom we may trust and count on. Probably each one of us can see in his mind's eye someone whose friendship you hold near and dear. The Bible says “a friend loves at all times but a brother is born for adversity” (Pro. 17:17). If there is any being about whom we can truly say He loves us at all times in both good times and bad it would be the God of heaven. There is no better blessing than to be able to say I am God's friend and He is mine.

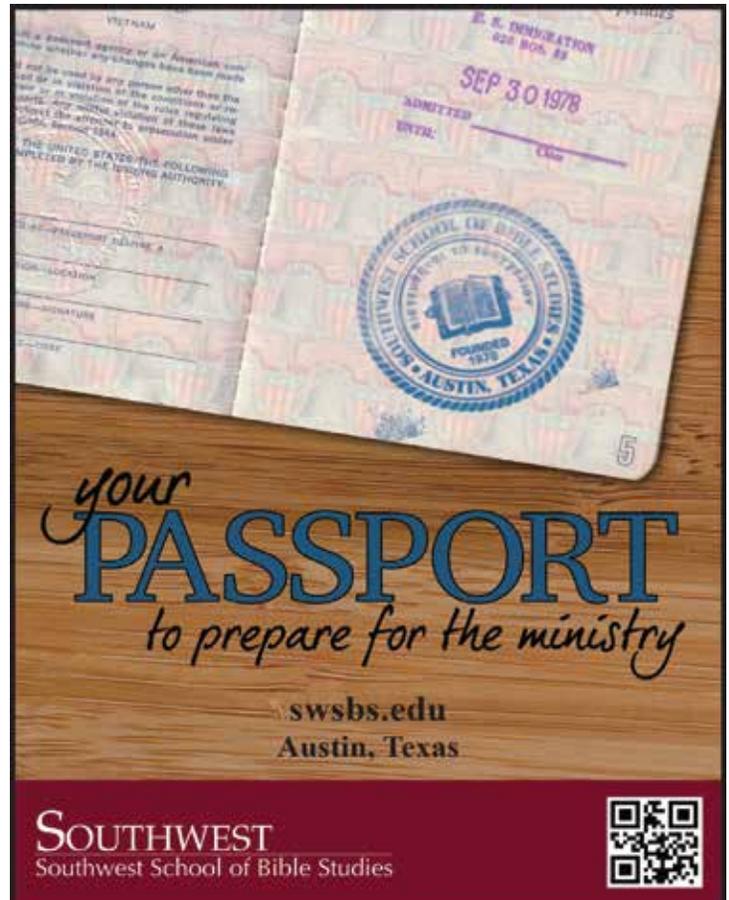
But how do we demonstrate that we are really friends of God? Perhaps if we can find someone in Scripture who was God's friend we will be able to ascertain better what it means to partner with Him. Three times in Scripture the patriarch Abraham is referred to as the friend of God (2 Chron. 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; Jas. 2:21-23). Thus, a perusal of Abraham's life can help us to better understand what it means to be God's associate. From the grand old patriarch's life we learn that being a friend of God means to...

- 1. Trust Him Completely.** Abraham was called from the Ur of the Chaldees, his homeland, to an unknown place. He left behind comfort, security and familiarity for somewhere he didn't know (Gen. 12:1-3). The Hebrews writer put it this way: “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God” (Heb. 11:8-10). When God said “go” Abraham went and showed himself to be God's friend.
- 2. Value Him Supremely.** After the battle of the kings (Gen. 14), God appeared to Abraham and said, “After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I *am* your shield, your exceedingly great reward” (Gen. 15:1). Abraham enjoyed perhaps his finest hour in his rescue of Lot and meeting with Melchizedech yet the Lord said it was not earthly success or things that are to be valued but rather Him. Abraham agreed and later in his life he would show how much he really valued Jehovah

(cf. Gen. 22).

- 3. Obey Him Fully.** In Genesis 17 the Lord reaffirmed his covenant with Abraham and commanded circumcision as a sign of the agreement made between the two. As gruesome as it may sound, and uncomfortable, Abraham circumcised every male in his house (17:23). He obeyed God. We shouldn't be surprised because that is what we see of Abraham from his introduction. As we mentioned earlier, such obedience is seen at its height later. This we will cover in the following point.
- 4. Sacrifice For Him Completely.** God commanded Abraham to take his son, the son of promise, and sacrifice him on Mount Moriah (Gen. 22:1-2). God wanted to see if Abraham had the faith even to give up his prize possession – his only son. Abraham was willing and God rescued Isaac before any violence took place; providing a substitute, a ram, as the proper sacrifice (Gen. 22:11-14). Some wonder how Abraham could do such a thing. He could because he believed that should Isaac be sacrificed God would raise him from the dead that His promises might be fulfilled (Heb. 11:17-19).

CW



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# GOD AMONG THE NATIONS

Steven Lloyd

**A** theme that is repeated in the books of Kings, some of the Psalms, and in some of the prophets is the justice and righteousness of God. These are described as being the foundation of God's throne.

Because our Lord is considered infinite in these qualities, He cannot, with a wave of the hand, dismiss unjust behavior from His own people. When Israel went astray after other gods, the Lord chastised them.

On a broader scale, the Lord would use one nation to chastise another, and then he would chastise the chastising nation for their unjust behavior against the initial nation. It is precisely for this reason the Lord allowed the foreign nations that were supposed to be banished from the Promised Land to stay when Israel refused to destroy them. I encourage you to read all of Judges 2:16-23 on this point, but here are the last few lines:

So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he said, "Because this people have transgressed my covenant that I commanded their fathers and have not obeyed my voice, I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died. In order to test Israel by them, whether they will take care to walk in the way of the Lord as their fathers did, or not." So the Lord left those nations, not driving them out quickly, and he did not give them into the hand of Joshua (Judges 2:20-23).

After the long tedious history of Israel's kings, the Lord raised up the Assyrians to destroy the northern tribes of Israel, and the Babylonians to destroy the southern tribes of Judah. But later, he would destroy the Assyrians, and even later he would destroy the Babylonians by the might of the Medes and Persians, and the Persians with the fierceness of Alexander of Greece, and Greece would be taken out by the Roman Empire.

In the late '70s, I purchased a book by Edward Wharton titled God Among the Nations. One of the observations he makes is as follows:

The Bible insists that God from the beginning to the first century, the span of history covered by the Bible, has raised up and used nations to do His bidding. That God has interfered into the affairs of nations other than Israel is the plain statement of Scripture.

He then cites passage after passage in which the Lord stirs up one nation against another for His purposes.

There is a passage in Isaiah that made me pause because of its wording. Isaiah is telling the nation of Israel about the hope that will follow the Lord's chastisement of them: "In days to come Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots and fill the whole world with fruit. Has he struck them as he struck those who struck them? Or have they been slain as their slayers were slain" (Isa. 27:6-7)?

Did God strike Judah in the same way he struck Babylon? Babylon is the one who struck Judah. Did He slay Judah in the same way he slew Babylon?

Answer: No! He struck, or, slew Babylon in such a way that they would never rise again. He spared a remnant among Israel through whom He would work to fulfill His promise to Abraham, and to the whole world. Brother Wharton is right: God used the nations to do His bidding.

CW

## COUNTING YOUR BLESSINGS

"Selected"

**I**f you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more blessed than the million who will not survive the week.

If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation, you are ahead of 20 million people around the world.

If you attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death, you are more blessed than almost three billion people in the world.

If you have food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head, and a place to sleep, you are richer than seventy-five percent of this world.

If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace, you are among the top eight percent of the world's wealthy.

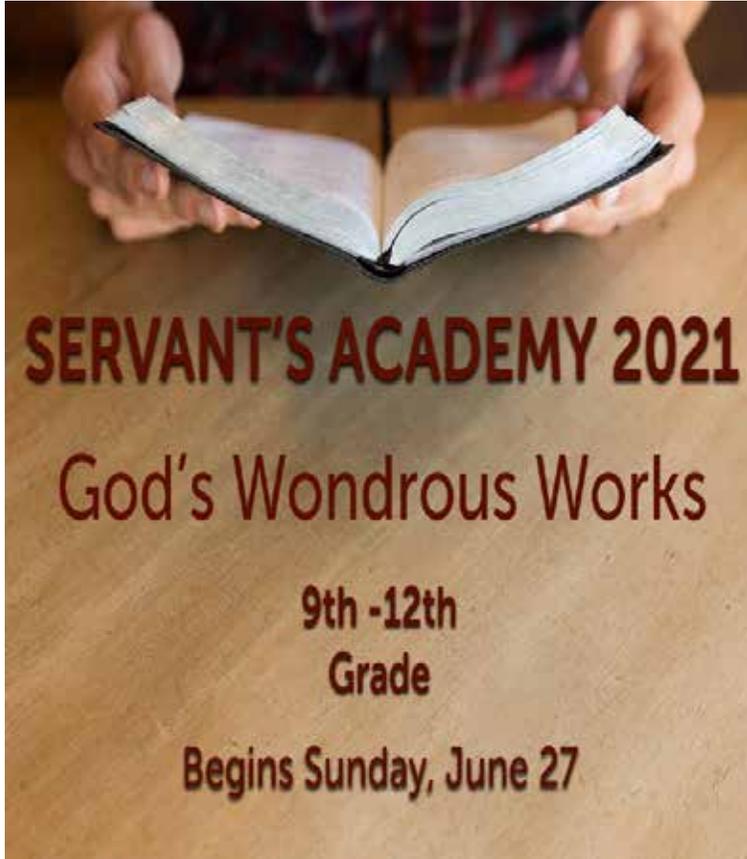
If your parents are still married and alive, you are very rare, especially in the United States.

If you hold up your head with a smile on your face and are truly thankful, you are blessed because the majority can,

but most do not.

If you can read this message you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world that cannot read anything at all.

CW



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very name, Satan, means “adversary.” It’s time we realized, to desire to deceive is to desire to be devilish (Gen. 3:1-13; John 8:44)! Rather than deception, God’s word promotes honorably walking in truth (1 Pet. 3:10-12; 3 John 1:4).

**Third, we must lay aside hypocrisy.** This could be described as the desire to fool others. The word has connections to theater; actors pretend to be someone or something they are not. In the Bible hypocrisy and false religion are denounced by our Lord (Matt. 23:28; Mark 12:15; Luke 12:1). Likewise, many today claim devotion to God, and yet see little problem with contradicting His teachings (Matt. 15:7-9). We could draw specific contrast to

the “unfeigned” love Peter noted within the church family (1 Pet. 1:22). Hypocrisy in our spiritual service will draw many away from true religion and bring decay into the church family. Rather than play-acting, God’s word promotes the wisdom of sincerity (Rom. 12:9; Phil. 1:9-11; Jas. 3:13-18).

**Fourth, we must lay aside envy.** This could be described as the desire to have what rightfully belongs to someone else. Many give in to envy because they have slipped into a materialistic mindset. This can be closely linked with the concept of covetousness (Ex. 20:17; Luke 12:15; Rom. 13:9). When you are envious of another, you have ill will towards them brought on by seeing their well-being. This can ruin our relationships inside and outside the church (Pro. 23:17; Rom. 13:12-14; 1 Cor. 3:1-3). Instead, Christians should be happy when their brother experiences good and be satisfied with what they have been given. Rather than yearning for what belongs to another, God’s word promotes loving support and contentment (Rom. 12:15; 1 Cor. 12:26; Phil. 4:11).

**Fifth, we must lay aside all evil speaking.** This could be described as the desire to tear down others by lashing out with our tongue. The Greek term used by Peter for evil speaking is a compound word (Lit. “against-speak”). It is far too easy to become inconsiderate with our words. A child of God should never engage in gossip, backbiting, or slander. Always remember how powerful and how dangerous your tongue can be (Pro. 18:21; Jas. 3:1-12). If we become corrupted by the world and lack proper compassion, it shows in our speech. Are you ready to give an account of “every idle word” that comes from your mouth (Matt. 12:33-37)? Rather than the misuse of our tongues, God’s word promotes pure and uplifting speech (Eph. 4:29; Col. 4:6).

May we all desire the word of God to become strong and put off these deadly desires which make us weak!

CW





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**“To Know Jesus and...make Him known”**

## From the Director's desk



**Steven Lloyd**  
Director SWSBS

The fourth quarter of the School year is always our busiest time of year. The second week of the quarter we attend Focal Point hosted by the University congregation in San Marcos. June 3, 4 the men attend the BCS Young Men's Leadership Conference (June 2-6). A week later, we serve at Camp Hensel (June 13-18).

We are hosting our annual Servants' Academy again, beginning June 27. Many of you will remember that Servants' Academy was cancelled last year due to COVID.

There are many things our students will learn at each of the activities mentioned above. We view it as a part of their education. But, it is all the more challenging to cover the materials planned for their routine classes. More than three full weeks are taken from our regularly scheduled classes. It leaves little time for anything else—and yet, it seems to be one of the most enjoyed quarters of the year.

Graduation for our second-year students is scheduled for July 11, 2021. Three students are slated to graduate this July: Aaron Anderson, Jesse Moser, and Justin Parks.

Ten students will return for their second year, and eleven students are lined up to start school in August.

I want to thank those of you who have helped support the work of SWSBS in the past, and for those of you who continue to support the work financially. We could not do it without your help

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