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TouchPoints for New Believers

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ABILITIES

Where do my abilities come from, and how should I use them?

MATTHEW 25:29 | *To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away.*

ROMANS 12:6 | *In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you . . . ability . . . [use it] with as much faith as God has given you.*

The natural abilities you have are gifts from God, and they are often a clue to what God wants you to do with your life. Why would God give you certain talents and spiritual gifts and then not ask you to use them? You may have natural gifts in the areas of sports, music, teaching, crafts, public speaking, or some other area. Use whatever gifts you have been given to bring honor and glory to God, and you will be right where you need to be to discover God's will for you.

ABSOLUTES

Are there absolutes in life, and how can I know what they are?

JUDGES 21:25 | *In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.*

PROVERBS 12:19 | *Truthful words stand the test of time, but lies are soon exposed.*

ISAIAH 40:8 | *The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever.*

ROMANS 3:4 | *Even if everyone else is a liar, God is true. As the Scriptures say about him, “You will be proved right in what you say, and you will win your case in court.”*

2 TIMOTHY 3:16 | *All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.*

The Bible makes it clear that absolutes do exist and that absolute truth begins with God. It reveals the truths that make the world work, that make relationships work, and that determine your future. By studying these truths, you discover the way life works best. God’s truth sets you free from a meaningless and chaotic life to one that has purpose today; has a certain and eternal future; and can always be fair and full of joy. That is truth others will want to follow.

What are some of the absolutes of the Christian faith?

ACTS 2:24-25, 31 | *God released [Jesus] from the horrors of death and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its grip. King David said this about him: “I see that the LORD is always with me.” . . . David was looking into the future and speaking of the Messiah’s resurrection. He was saying that God would not leave him among the dead or allow his body to rot in the grave.*

1 CORINTHIANS 15:4-6, 20 | *[Christ] was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. . . . Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.*

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is an absolute truth of the Christian faith. Because he was raised from the dead, he has conquered death, and therefore his promise of eternal life to all who have faith in him is certain.

JOHN 3:16 | *God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.*

JOHN 11:25-26 | *Jesus [said], “I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die.”*

JOHN 14:6 | *Jesus [said], “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.”*

ROMANS 3:22, 30 | *We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. . . . There is only one God, and he makes people right with himself only by faith, whether they are Jews or Gentiles.*

ROMANS 6:23 | *The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

There is only one way for a person to enjoy eternal life with God in heaven. You can obtain this gift, called salvation, from God by believing that Jesus Christ died for your sins, by confessing your sins to Jesus so that you are forgiven for them, and by deciding that he is your one and only Lord.

ACTS 2:38-39 | *Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you.*

The presence of God's Holy Spirit is an absolute guarantee to those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord. The Holy Spirit gives you the strength and power to avoid Satan's temptations and to live for God.

EXODUS 20:1-4, 7-8, 12-17 | *God gave the people all these instructions: "I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. You must not have any other god but me. You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind. . . . You must not misuse the name of the LORD your God. . . . Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. . . . Honor your father and mother. . . . You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal.*

You must not testify falsely against your neighbor. You must not covet your neighbor's house. You must not covet your neighbor's wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor."

God gave us the Ten Commandments. They are absolute truths that apply to all people in all cultures for all time. Obeying these commandments will point your life in the right direction, make your life more fulfilling and satisfying, save you from much harm, and keep your focus on God, the only One who can grant you eternal life.

NUMBERS 23:19 | *God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so he does not change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?*

1 CHRONICLES 16:34 | *Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.*

PSALM 147:5 | *How great is our Lord! His power is absolute! His understanding is beyond comprehension!*

MALACHI 3:6 | *I am the LORD, and I do not change.*

ROMANS 8:38-39 | *Nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

HEBREWS 13:8 | *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

JAMES 1:17 | *Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow.*

God's character is unchanging. God is consistently all-powerful, absolutely good, the originator of truth, all-wise, and always faithful. And he loves you unconditionally.

ACTS 13:38-39 | *Through this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins. Everyone who believes in him is declared right with God.*

1 JOHN 1:9 | *If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us.*

God's forgiveness is absolute. When God forgives you, it is forever. He never takes it back.

ACCEPTANCE

I feel so unworthy—does God really accept me?

ROMANS 5:8 | *God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*

ROMANS 8:39 | *Nothing . . . will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

1 JOHN 4:9-10 | *God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.*

You are accepted by God because he made you and created you in his image. Nothing you can do will cause God to love you more because he loves you completely. And nothing you do can cause God to love you less. In fact, God simply accepts you, and he loves you so much that he sent his own Son to die for you, to take on himself the punishment you deserve for your sins. He died in your place so you can be accepted into eternity with him.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Why is accountability important?

PSALM 26:2 | *Put me on trial, LORD, and cross-examine me. Test my motives and my heart.*

PROVERBS 27:6 | *Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy.*

ROMANS 14:7-9, 12 | *We don't live for ourselves or die for ourselves. If we live, it's to honor the Lord. And if we die, it's to honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. Christ died and rose again for this very purpose—to be Lord both of the living and of the dead. . . . Each of us will give a personal account to God.*

The purpose of life, both now and forever, is to honor God. Who is helping you do that, and how do you know if you're doing it well? You need someone to keep you accountable. You also need God to hold you accountable. You don't want to wait until the end of life to find out from God if your

life was lived well. Go to him now, by reading his Word, to make sure that your thoughts, words, and actions are in tune with his and honoring to him. And ask godly friends how you are doing. Accountability keeps you honest, joyful, and on the right path so that when you come face-to-face with God, you can be sure he will be pleased.

ADVERSITY/TROUBLE

Why does God allow troubles to come my way even after I've become a Christian?

ROMANS 5:3 | *We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance.*

JAMES 1:2-4 | *When troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.*

The one thing you can count on about adversity is that it will come—the issue is what you will do when it arrives. Adversity is hard to understand, but there is evidence in life of its benefits: If you never got sick, your body would never develop the immunity to fight off greater diseases. In the same way, if God didn't build up your immunity to adversity, you would crumble under the powerful trouble that life and Satan bring. So when adversity comes, regardless of the source, always move quickly toward God and keep him in your sight. Then you will develop the strength to overcome it.

PHILIPPIANS 1:12-14 | *Everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ. And because of my imprisonment, most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God's message without fear.*

God uses your circumstances to help you grow. Then you can help others grow. Anyone can be joyful and faithful when life is going well, but when life gets tough, believers have a unique opportunity to show how a relationship with God brings comfort, confidence, and hope.

Is God absent in my times of pain and trouble?

PSALM 9:10 | *Those who know your name trust in you, for you, O LORD, do not abandon those who search for you.*

PSALM 27:10 | *Even if my father and mother abandon me, the LORD will hold me close.*

When you accidentally cut yourself, you become completely focused on how bad it is and on how to stop the bleeding. In the same way, when you feel God has abandoned you, it is because you have become so focused on easing the pain of your problems that you have neglected God, forgetting that he has promised to help you in your difficulties. To abandon you, God would have to stop loving you, and he cannot do that, for he is love.

Although it is impossible to avoid all adversity, what are things I can do to avoid some of it?

PSALM 119:9 | *How can a young person stay pure? By obeying your word.*

PSALM 119:105 | *Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.*

The consequences of sin often bring unneeded adversity into your life. By obeying God's Word, you can avoid many kinds of adversity you might otherwise inflict on yourself.

PROVERBS 21:23 | *Watch your tongue and keep your mouth shut, and you will stay out of trouble.*

JAMES 3:2, 5-6 | *If we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way. . . . The tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. And the tongue is a flame of fire.*

Controlling your tongue can help you avoid adversity. Many times trouble can be avoided by being careful about what you say.

PROVERBS 15:19 | *A lazy person's way is blocked with briars, but the path of the upright is an open highway.*

Honest work can help avoid adversity.

PROVERBS 11:14 | *Without wise leadership, a nation falls; there is safety in having many advisers.*

PROVERBS 13:13 | *People who despise advice are asking for trouble; those who respect a command will succeed.*

Following advice from godly people will help you avoid trouble.

ANGER OF GOD

What makes God angry?

PSALM 7:10-11 | *God is my shield, saving those whose hearts are true and right. God is an honest judge. He is angry with the wicked every day.*

ROMANS 1:18 | *God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness.*

EPHESIANS 2:2-3 | *You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else.*

God gets angry, but only for the right reasons. Because God is perfectly sinless and holy, he gets angry when you sin because he knows that sin hurts your relationship with him—it separates you from him. And it’s only through a relationship with him that life can have meaning and purpose.

It is good that God gets angry at sin because that shows how much he longs to have a pure and perfect relationship with you. It is because of his anger at sin that he made a plan to get rid of it; then you can live forever in heaven with him, where there is no sin and no death.

APPROVAL

Do I have to earn God's approval?

ROMANS 3:27-28 | *Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith. So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.*

GALATIANS 2:19 | *When I tried to keep the law, it condemned me. So I died to the law—I stopped trying to meet all its requirements—so that I might live for God.*

You cannot earn God's approval because he already approves of you! Your approval is not based on performance but on the fact that you are his creation. When you obey God, you are expressing your gratitude to God and love for him, not trying to win his approval.

ROMANS 3:23; 10:9 | *Everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. . . . [But] if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

While God loves you unconditionally, he does not approve of your sinful behavior. When you understand that it is your sin that separates you from God and that Jesus died and rose again to take away your sin so you can be reconciled to God, you realize how much God values you. When, at the moment of salvation, you confess your sins to him, seek his forgiveness, and commit to following Jesus, you are approved to enter heaven for eternity. There's a difference between God's unconditional love for you (he doesn't love you more

or less because you became a Christian) and his conditional salvation (he saves only those who admit they have sinned and need his forgiveness). Understanding that difference is a matter of life and death.

ASTROLOGY

Is astrology wrong?

EXODUS 20:3 | *You must not have any other god but me.*

DEUTERONOMY 18:10-11 | *Do not let your people practice fortune-telling, or use sorcery, or interpret omens, or engage in witchcraft, or cast spells, or function as mediums or psychics, or call forth the spirits of the dead.*

2 KINGS 21:6 | *Manasseh . . . sacrificed his own son in the fire. He practiced sorcery and divination, and he consulted with mediums and psychics. He did much that was evil in the LORD's sight, arousing his anger.*

Astrology is wrong because it worships the heavens instead of the God who created the heavens. And worshipping anything or anyone other than God is idolatry.

Can astrology give me direction?

GENESIS 1:16-17 | *God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set these lights in the sky to light the earth.*

Don't seek advice from the stars, but from God, the Creator of the stars. Only he can give you direction for your life,

because he created you, too. You should never worship the Creation instead of the Creator. *God* controls all celestial events, so only *he* can point you in the right direction.

BACKSLIDING

How can I avoid drifting away from God?

MATTHEW 26:41 | *Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak!*

HEBREWS 2:1 | *We must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it.*

Backsliding means taking a step backward in your spiritual walk with God, falling back into a sinful lifestyle or habit that weakens your relationship with him. Each time you backslide, you become more comfortable with the sinful habit you have given in to and your heart becomes a bit harder, making it more difficult to hear God calling you to come close to him. But each time you obey God's Word rather than disobey, each time you offer a prayer to God, and each time you remind yourself to be alert to temptation, you will take a step toward God rather than away. It sounds simple, but it takes discipline and practice to keep from backsliding.

BEGINNINGS

Is it really possible for me to get a fresh start?

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 | *Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*