

“The Certainty of Things”
Pastor Wally Contreras
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“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.” (Luke 1:1-4)

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Webster’s 1828 Dictionary defines “certainty” to mean: “1. A fixed or real state; truth; fact. (Know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out these nations. Joshua 23:13. Luke 1:4.) 2. Full assurance of mind; exemption from doubt.” What are some things that I “know” with certainty and then identify how it is that I have such a level of certainty associated with that knowledge?

Conspiracy theorists believe with “certainty” that what they believe is true. How frequently do I assume something to be “true” simply because I read about it on the internet or heard it from a friend?

Scripture tells me, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1) When it comes to my understanding of things like God’s grace, salvation, my spiritual walk, discipleship, spiritual disciplines (practices), the Holy Spirit, etc., do I “test” what it is I hear, see, and/or read or do I just assume that because it “sounds” right or so-and-so said/wrote it, it must be true? Explain.

Is it important that I “have certainty concerning the things [I] have been taught” (Luke 1:4) regarding Jesus or do I believe that it is simply a matter of faith and that needing a level of certainty regarding the “things [I] have been taught” regarding Him shows a lack of faith and why?

If I was notified that I was going to get a 15 minute, face-to-face meeting with Jesus tomorrow, what question(s) would I want to ask Him and why would I feel the need to ask Him those questions (e.g., so I can know...with certainty)?

Since, in all likelihood, I'm not going to get that 15 minute interview with Jesus tomorrow, what are some other ways for me to obtain the answer(s) to my question(s) until that glorious day when I will see Him face-to-face?

It was Luke's desire to write "an orderly account" of his interactions with Jesus. What are some "disciplines" (or practices) are necessary for me to maintain "an orderly account" of my interactions with Jesus?

Pastor Wally spoke of journaling. To help with that exhortation, Ravi Zacharias International Ministries (RZIM) provided the following ideas when it comes to journaling: "After reading the diary of missionary David Brainerd, Jim Elliot mused in his own journal in 1949. Commenting on the value of Christian biographies in light of Hebrews 13:7, he penned, "Consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith." Reflecting on the lives of heroes of the faith, Elliot was stirred to compose a one-sentence prayer, "O Lord, let me be granted grace to 'imitate their faith.'" Less than seven years later Elliot would be martyred as a missionary attempting to reach the Huaorani people of Ecuador.

"Within the pages of a journal disciples of Jesus Christ wrestle living within this world and yet, not being of it. They narrate their adventures, document their life events, process thoughts and emotions, and navigate their faith through pen and ink. But what exactly should a Christian chronicle or ponder within the pages of a journal? The following list of 100 prompts is to guide and inspire in practicing the spiritual discipline of journaling.

"Make a list...

1. What are you grateful for in this moment?
2. A to-do list for the day, and then mark priorities
3. People to pray for who do not have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ
4. Goals: for your private life, your career, or in the spiritual disciplines

Describe...

5. Something you see
6. What you hear
7. How you feel
8. A food or drink you tasted
9. A place you visited
10. A person you met
11. Your struggles
12. Your joys
13. Your losses

Write down...

14. A beautiful poem
15. A meaningful quote
16. An inspiring illustration or story
17. Ideas to incorporate in your work
18. Ideas to decorate or arrange your home
19. Your travels, through a day or through a year
20. Random ideas you may want to consider when you have more time
21. The path you traveled that day
22. A conversation you had with God
23. Exciting news
24. Upsetting or sad news
25. Thoughts on a book, a blog, or a podcast
26. Meaningful daily events

27. A funny story
28. Your testimony
29. A conversation
30. What you want to say to someone else, but you know this would not be wise. Pray through your response with God, asking for his perspective.

Reflections on...

31. A sermon, perhaps key ideas or principles
32. A book or article you read
33. During and/or after significant life transitions
34. A decision you must make
35. What is depressing you
36. What brings you joy
37. What gives you energy
38. What drains your energy
39. Your day's journey
40. Your favorite music/podcast/book/television series
41. Your limitations and how to live in spite of them
42. Your temptations and how to avoid them
43. A personal trial
44. A treasured victory
45. Ways to serve your loved ones, friends, and work colleagues
46. A testimony of God's faithfulness that day/week/year

Relating to reading and studying the Bible...

47. A scripture to meditate on throughout the day
48. An application from a devotional on which to focus

49. Prayers of response to what was read or studied in scripture
50. A scripture God brings to mind during the day in answer to your pleas or in a time of need
51. Insights or questions on a passage
52. Convictions on how to apply a biblical principle or verse

Questions...

53. Questions about God himself
54. ...His character
55. ...His ways of interacting with the world
56. Questions you want to ask God
57. ...When you do not understand what He is doing
58. ...When He seems far away
59. ...When a dream has been destroyed
60. ...When you are experiencing a life you didn't sign up for
61. Questions about the Bible
62. Questions about whatever is confusing

Record things you do not want to forget...

63. Adorable things children say or do
64. Inspirational quotes
65. Important family events and/or dates
66. Significant events in the lives of loved ones
67. A time when you laughed and who you were with
68. How someone encouraged you
69. How you encouraged someone else

Relating to prayer...

70. Favorite prayers from church history
 71. Meaningful liturgical prayers from your faith tradition
 72. Prayers for your calling and/or ministry
 73. Prayer requests from others and your prayers for them
 74. Answers to prayer
 75. Confession of sin
 76. Prayers about your hurts, fears, or compulsions
 77. Prayers reflecting your longings and the desires of your heart
 78. Prayers about your anger, loneliness, or a crisis
 79. Prayers for loved ones
 80. Prayers for missionaries close to your heart
 81. A prayer response to something the Holy Spirit impressed on you
 82. Outline your day and pray through it with your Heavenly Father
 83. Concerns relating to health, work, finances, or other struggles
- Items to place in a journal (adding a few thoughts or details)...
84. Family pictures (print one occasionally instead of keeping all of them digital)
 85. Movie ticket stub, including insights from the movie and/or whom you went with
 86. Clippings from a paper or magazine
 87. Pictures from a catalog
 88. Drawings, of your own or from your children
 89. Collage you create of your goals
 90. An article or essay that affected you
 91. Photocopies or printouts of special stories/illustrations

92. Pictures of places and experiences
93. Photos with a caption
94. Notes or cards from loved ones or friends
95. Encouraging emails from loved ones or friends

Other Ideas...

96. Compose a song, poem, or story
97. Sketch an image of one of your day's experiences
98. Sketch a drawing to express your emotional state
99. Put down on paper whatever will not stop swirling around in your mind
100. Attach a printout of one of your favorite hymns

End a time of journaling with a prayer:

Thank you, Holy Father, for your Presence. Guide me on my pilgrim journey with You.

“When disciples of Jesus Christ acknowledge God’s Presence, they invite the Creator of the universe to engage with them in an intimate way. As subjective perceptions and experiences spill over onto the pages of a journal, the Holy Spirit is able to use the impressions and ramblings of Christians to refocus their minds and remold their hearts. They begin to see his faithfulness and inter-workings throughout the hours and days and years of their pilgrimages through temporal time as they journey towards a future eternal hope.”