

## THE GIFT

### "THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE" REVELATION 22:12-17

#### **This Week's Core Competency**

**Hope** – I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ. Hebrews 6:19-20, *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf.*

The hope that enables us to cope as believers amounts to all that is entailed in the return of Jesus Christ. In the epilogue of the book of Revelation Jesus says, "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. Jesus is coming back, and when he does, he is going to judge everyone. The fact that he is going to do so as God, "the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End" (v. 13), strongly implies that God is a personal God; he is going to personally reward each one of us according to our works. The judgment about which Jesus speaks is really three judgments. The first occurs after his return for the church; it's the judgment on believers' works (cf., 1Co 3:10-15; 2Co 5:10). About it one author writes, "The site of this judgment is the bema of Christ. Earthly bemas were raised, thronelike platforms on which rulers or judges sat when making speeches (Acts 12:21) or hearing and deciding cases (18:12-17). Only believers will stand in this judgment, for Paul made clear that it relates to those who have built on the Foundation,

***God gives us His salvation, but He pays us for our good works..***

– Zane Hodges

Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11-12). The nature of the believer's works will be examined in this judgment to distinguish worthy works from worthless ones. These works are the deeds done by the believer during his Christian life. All will be reviewed and examined. Some will pass the test because they were good; others will fail because they were worthless. Both good and bad motives will be exposed; then every believer will receive praise from God (1 Cor. 4:5). What grace!" (Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 597, 98).

The second occurs at his glorious appearing; it's the judgment on Jews and Gentiles. People who are alive when Christ returns will be judged by him. Our Lord referred to this judgment in Matthew 25. The first part of the chapter contains two parables that allude to his judgment on Jews—the parable of the ten virgins (vv. 1-13) and the parable of the talents (vv. 14-30). Both parables point to the fact that those who believe will be watching, waiting, and faithfully serving when he returns, while their unbelieving counterparts will be totally surprised and totally unprepared for his arrival. The second part alludes to his judgment on Gentiles—the separation of the sheep from the goats (vv. 31-46). All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the believing sheep from the unbelieving goats. To the sheep on his right he will say, "come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world" (v. 34). But to the goats on his left he will say, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (v. 41). About this judgment a different author writes, "At the Second

cont. pg. 2

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Advent Christ will judge Jews and Gentiles. The Jews will be judged on the basis of their preparedness for His return (Matt. 25:1-13) and their faithfulness as stewards of the Word of God (Matt. 25:14-30). The saved Jews will enter the millennial kingdom (Matt. 25:21), while the unsaved will be cast into outer darkness (Matt. 25:30). Unbelieving Gentiles will be judged in the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Kidron Valley: Zech. 14:4) regarding their treatment of the Jews (Joel 3:2; Matt. 25:40). A positive response would indicate their belief in Messiah; these will inherit the kingdom (Matt 25:34), while the unbelieving will be turned away into everlasting punishment (Matt 25:46)" (Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 393). Old Testament saints and tribulation saints are resurrected and rewarded at this time as well (Da 12:1-3).

The last occurs when according to Revelation 20:7 "the thousand years are over" and time's up; it's the judgment on the unsaved dead—the great white throne judgment (Rev 20:11-14). This judgment will not involve a separation of believers from unbelievers because all those who appear before Christ at this judgment are doomed. "The Book of Life that will be opened at the Great White Throne judgment will not contain the name of anyone who will be in that judgment. The books of works that will also be opened will prove that all who are being judged deserve eternal condemnation (and may be used to determine degrees of punishment). It is not that all their works were evil, but all were dead works, done by spiritually dead people. It is as if the Judge will say, 'I will show you by the record of your own deeds that you deserve condemnation.' So everyone who will appear in this judgment will be cast into the lake of fire forever" (Ryrie, 601).

## day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

### Revelation 22:12-17

12 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.  
13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

14 "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. 15 Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

#### Cf., corollary passages

##### Romans 6:15-23

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads

to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.

18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

19 I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.

20 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.

21 What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!

22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

##### John 4:10

10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

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## EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- \* In the margin next to v. 12 write, "Cf., vv. 7, 20."
- \* Circle "reward" in v. 12.
- \* Box "according to" indicating *conformity* in v. 12.
- \* Highlight v. 13.
- \* Circle "blessed" in v. 14.
- \* Bracket "wash their robes" in v. 14.
- \* Box "that" indicating *purpose* (or *result*) in v. 14.
- \* Bracket "of life" in v. 14.
- \* Underline "outside" in v. 15.
- \* Circle "dogs" in v. 15.
- \* Double underline "Root" and "Offspring" in v. 16.
- \* Circle "Morning Star" in v. 16.
- \* Bracket "of life" in v. 17.

## day **2** EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Jesus says, "I am coming soon" in verses 7, 12, 20. What's the point of the repetition?
  2. According to verse 12, he is going to return with his "reward" (*misthos*) for everyone. Does that mean everyone is going to be saved in the end? Explain.
  3. What do you infer about Jesus from what he says about himself in verse 13?
  4. What has verse 13 got to do with verse 12?
  5. Identify those who are "blessed" in verse 14 and how so.
  6. Identify those who are "outside" and where (cf., 21:8).
  7. Jesus is the "bright Morning Star." Explain the meaning of the *metaphor* "Morning Star."
  8. Is "water of life" (cf., "tree of life" in v. 19) to be interpreted *literally* or *figuratively*? Explain.
  9. **Discussion:** Talk about what Jesus' words mean *to you*, practically speaking.
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## day 3

## EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

The book of Revelation isn't a letter, but it opens with letters (2:1-3:21) and closes much like a letter (22:6-21). And letter closings are a mixed bag. Paul, for example, usually closes his letters by greeting various acquaintances, offering words of encouragement, making personal requests, listing spiritual exhortations, and so on. As a result, his letter closings can appear "haphazardly drawn and pointless" and read somewhat like a grocery list (Robert W. Wall, *Revelation*, NIBC, 261). The same might be said for the epilogue of Revelation. And yet, a number of recurring ideas appear in it. The reliability of the book is one. In verse 6 the angel affirms that its words are "trustworthy and true," and in verses 18-19 John warns against adding anything to or taking anything away from them. The consequent need to pay attention to them is a second. Jesus, himself, says, "Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book" and then says that when he returns, he will reward everyone "according to what he has done" (v. 12). His second coming is a third and likely the dominant one. Three times he says, "I am coming soon" (vv. 7, 12, 20); after which, John replies, "Amen, Come Lord Jesus" (v. 20).

"I'll be back!" Jesus' words change everything. He's returning as judge and jury to recompense every person according to their works, thereby putting an end to today's "I'm OK, you're OK" theology. "My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done," he warns. In light of what theologians call our Lord's *imminent appearing*, we might say he's on his way with rewards for the righteous and retribution for the wicked, which makes the bumper sticker reading, "Jesus is coming back, and he's not happy," or words to that effect, half true. Given his choice of words, Jesus appears to be alluding to what the Old Testament says about God. His first phrase sounds like what the prophet says in Isaiah 40:10, "See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him." Likewise in 62:11 he says, "The LORD has made proclamation to the ends of the earth: 'Say to the Daughter of Zion, "See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him."'" His second phrase sounds like a widespread proverbial expression. In Proverbs 24:12, about God "who weighs the heart" and "guards your life" the wisdom

writer says, "Will he not repay each person according to what he has done?" Jesus can apply these statements about God to himself because he is God. Does he not go on to say, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End," all of which are titles used in the Old Testament for God?

The practical implication of what Jesus says is impossible to miss. People need to "*wash their robes* that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city" (v. 15) and thereby live for eternity in God's presence. What's more, they need to remain faithful. Access to the New Jerusalem, in which are found the river of life and the tree of life, is limited to people who have been cleansed from their sins. The idea of having clean robes has already appeared in Revelation; the martyred saints in 7:14 are described as those who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Whereas the tense of the verb "wash" in 7:14 [aorist] points to a past action, the same verb but different tense in 22:14 [present] points to a continuing present action. This suggests that in 22:15 Jesus is alluding to both *justification*, i.e., the saints' vindication before God, and *sanctification*, i.e., their faithful obedience—for which judge Jesus rewards them in the heavenly city. By way of contrast, people who don't wash their robes are denied access to the New Jerusalem and have to remain outside "in the fiery lake of burning sulfur" (21:8)—which is the retribution due them. These words of Jesus fly in the face of an all inclusive universalism that argues Jesus accepts everyone and condemns no one regardless.

While this passage doesn't teach universalism, it does extend a fourfold invitation to all to "take the free gift of the water of life." While it is possible to take the first two invitations as requests directed to Christ for his return and the second two as invitations to the world to receive eternal life, the first half of the verse is more likely explained by the last half. One commentator explains: "The Spirit issues the invitation through the prophets for men everywhere to come; the church re-echoes the invitation saying, Come. Those who hear and heed the invitation add their voices saying, Come; and in conclusion John adds his own words inviting all who read his prophecy to come and drink of the water of life" (George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 295).

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## The Message of the Passage

*Jesus is returning as judge with rewards for the righteous and retribution for the wicked, so prepare to meet him by receiving the free gift of eternal life and continuing to do good works.*

### day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the first two "living questions" below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following living questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

### notes **N** **STUDY** – the commentaries to answer the questions.

vv. 6b-21 "As literature, John's final words function as his 'Amen' (cf. 22:21); similar to other epistolary benedictions we find within the NT, they comprise *a collection of various traditional exhortations and literary conventions, rather loosely assembled*, which together intend to summarize and focus the entire composition in a profoundly pastoral manner. Hardly pointless theologically, this material provides Revelation's reader with an overarching perspective on the book's importance for Christian discipleship; it is like an epilogue that rounds out the composition and makes it whole and complete" (Wall, 261, 62 italics added). The nature of the epilogue makes it difficult to analyze and outline. For example, the NET Bible treats vv. 12-13 as a parenthetical statement of Jesus inserted into the words of John in vv. 8-15 whereas the *NIV Study Bible* red letter edition treats vv. 12-16 as the words of Jesus.

v. 12 **coming** "This is obviously a major emphasis of the epilogue (22:7; 10, 12, 20), reiterating the prologue (1:1, 7). It is also the basis for the warnings of 22:10, 14-15. As stated above, the nearness of the parousia throughout the NT is the basis for the call to ethical commitment. Since Christ is returning soon, we had better be ready at all times, lest he find us unprepared like the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13) or the servant who wasted his talent (Matt 25:14-30)" (Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, BECNT, 787).

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# notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 12 **reward** "The distribution of rewards on the basis of works is taught throughout Scripture. Jeremiah 17:10 is representative: 'I the Lord search the mind and try the heart, to give to every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.' Paul teaches that God 'will render to every man according to his works' (Rom 2:6), and Peter declares that God 'judges each one impartially according to his deeds' (1 Pet 1:17). The reward will be spiritual blessedness to the righteous but judgment for those who are evil" (Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT, 393). "A careful study of *misthos* [reward] shows that it does not automatically refer only to a positive 'reward.' It refers literally to 'payment for work done,' and as such it can refer to 'punishment' (Herodotus 8.116-17; 2 Macc. 8:33) as well as 'reward' (BAGD 523, which correctly states that the meaning here is 'reward or punishment as the case may be'). Indeed, this fits the context remarkably well, with the saved and unsaved side by side in both Rev. 22:10 and 22:14-15" (Osborne, 788; see also Wall, 270). "Those who catch the allusion to Isaiah will recognize even more plainly that Jesus claims to be divine here, for God promised to come with his reward ('his reward is with him') in Isaiah 40:10, 62:11" (Craig S. Keener, *The NIV Application Commentary: Revelation*, 515).

v. 13 **Alpha and . . .** "The Apocalypse has already called God 'the Alpha and the Omega' (1:8; 21:6) and 'the Beginning and the End' (21:6), and Christ has been called 'the First and the Last' (1:17; 2:8). Now all these titles, which are used in the OT of God, are combined and applied to Christ to highlight his deity" (G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC, 1138). These titles may be examples of a figure of speech called *merism*, "a form of *synecdoche* in which the totality or whole is substituted by two contrasting or opposite parts" (Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 151). Hence the following comment. "The titles refer to the sovereignty of God and Christ over history. They control the beginning of creation and its end, and therefore they control every aspect of history in between" (Osborne, 789).

v. 14 **blessed** "Pertaining to being happy, with the implication of enjoying favorable circumstances" (L&N, s.v., *makarios*, 25.119). To be "blessed" is to be "happy," "fortunate," or "receive benefit" in that something of value has been conferred. Here, "those who wash their robes" have been granted access to the tree of life and the holy city by God.

v. 14 **wash** Cf., "who do his commandments" (NKJV). While difficult to decide, commentators in general supported by most translations favor "who wash their robes" which seems to suit better the immediate context—as one writes observes, "Obedience to commandments is not the ground on which eternal life is bestowed" (Walter Scott, *Exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 446). The verb encompasses both aspects of salvation, justification and sanctification. "One is reminded of Jesus' injunction to Peter, 'He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet' (Jn 13:10)" (Mounce, 393-94).

v. 15 **outside** "The verse does not intend to teach that in the eternal state all manner of wicked men will be living just outside the heavenly city" (394). "The idea is both exclusion and shame, perhaps with the added idea of the Valley of Hinnom (Gehenna), where the trash was burned outside the walls of Jerusalem (cf. Isa. 66:24; Mark 9:48; so Sweet 1979:317)" (Osborne, 790).

v. 15 **dogs** "Dogs" is a pejorative term used figuratively to refer to evildoers—in contrast to those "who wash their robes"—who are denied entrance into the city and access to the tree of life.

v. 16 **Root, Offspring** The meaning of the metaphors is variously interpreted. Taken together they simply indicate that Jesus "is the shoot that grows out of the stump of Jesse (Isa. 11:1; see Isa. 53:2), the great Son of David (Matt. 1:1; 9:27; 15:22; 21:9; Rom. 1:3; II Tim 2:8; Rev. 5:5)" (Ladd, 294). Taken separately, one commentator interprets the first "as a military metaphor [cf., 5:5] drawn from Isa. 11:1 and 10 ('the root of Jesse . . . will stand as a banner for the peoples'), which for the Jews connoted the Warrior Messiah who would destroy their enemies (see on 5:5) . . . but he is also David's 'Offspring.' Here he is seen as the fulfillment of all the Davidic messianic hope" (Osborne, 792). Another takes "root" a bit differently; he writes: "Jesus was the ancestor of David, not just His offspring, 'the root' as well as 'the descendant of David' (cf. Isa. 11:1). Consequently He fulfills all the prophecies concerning David's family" (Constable, 243).

v. 17 **of life** Cf., 21:6. To drink life-giving water (Jn 4:14) and to eat life-giving bread (Jn 6:35, 51-56) are both figures for appropriating eternal life through faith in Jesus. The invitations in this verse are all likely addressed to all who are thirsty. "It is better to interpret the first half of the verse by the second half and understand the entire invitation to be addressed to the world. When the Lord comes, it will be too late; there will come a time when repentance is impossible. But that hour has not yet come" (Ladd, 294-95).

## Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

In ancient times it was customary for a king to send out heralds to proclaim important announcements in the kingdom. With no billboards, radio, TV or internet, these horsemen would ride throughout the kingdom sharing the news. If townspeople saw a herald coming, they would stop and listen because they knew something important had happened. On a cool evening in the small town of Bethlehem the King of Kings had an announcement to make. Instead of sending men on horses, He sent His herald angels to announce some very important news—His Son was born! Jesus, the promised Messiah, had come to earth to redeem us and give us hope. The words to the beloved carol, Hark! The Herald Angels Sing! were penned by Charles Wesley who had 18 brothers and sisters. Even so, his mother made a point to continually remind each of them that God had a special plan for them. Charles knew that Jesus' special plan was for "God and sinners to be reconciled." What hope and joy that gives us! As we go about this busy Christmas season, let's not forget that many people need a herald. Many people need to know about the birth, life and death of the Savior. Our hope and joy is found in that announcement. It gives us courage to not only live for today but to wait in expectant hope for eternity! "Glory to the newborn King!"

### What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Romans 6:15-23

1. According to verse 18, when you have trusted Christ, what are you set free from?
2. What are the benefits and result from being a slave to God? (v. 22)
3. What is the gift of God? (v. 23)

### What Do You Think

The Bible tells us a little about heaven but there is much we won't know until we get there. The greatest part of heaven will be being in the presence of God. Talk with your parents and siblings this week about what heaven might be like.

### What R U Going To Do

Be a herald this week! Make Christmas cards telling people about the birth of Jesus. Draw pictures and put the memory verse from the series on it. John 3:16-17. Give them to your neighbors, a retirement home, send to relatives. Share the Good News!

### Core Comp

Hope - I can cope with the problems of life and death with the help of Jesus.

### Memory Verse

Jn 3:17 - *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

## KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse \_\_\_\_\_, completed Scrolls \_\_\_\_\_, brought Bible \_\_\_\_\_, brought a friend \_\_\_\_\_.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.  
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money**

#### *2 Corinthians 8:7*

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** *Ephesians*

#### *6:19-20*

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

### **Hope** *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

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**Wendy Hollabaugh** (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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