**Eph 4 - The Body Builds The Body Retreat 2020**  **©2020 WF Cobb Truthbase.net *DailyTruthbase.blogspot***

*To prep & help those who "watch for your souls", take some time to "take heed to yourselves" by answering the following 3 questions:*

Eph 4:12 (Gifted men) for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of The Body of Christ, 13 until...~basic maturity 14...not tossed by...cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head= Christ> 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, acc to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of The Body for the edifying of itself in love. [1Pt 4:8 above all...fervent love for one-another {1:22 you have purified your souls (mind/will/emotions/ambitions) by obeying the truth thru the Spirit *eis* sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart}]

*BC: It really has been tumultuous year, yet God has been faithful (just like He was in getting Israel out of Egypt and Egypt out of Israel*

**I. For what would most like to praise God in response to His work/blessing in your life over the past year?**

*It really has been a tumultuous year, yet God has been faithful-just like He was in getting Israel out of Egypt and Egypt out of Israel*

*Ps 34:3 Oh, magnify Yahweh with me, and let us exalt His name together.* ***4 I sought Yahweh, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. 5 They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed.*** *6 This poor man cried out, and Yahweh heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. 7 The angel of Yahweh encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them....10 The young lions lack and suffer hunger;* ***But those who seek Yahweh shall not lack any good thing.***

A. From the end of 2019 and most of the 2020 has definitely been a year of challenge and growth for me. Covid hit New York city, stock market as well as my self-confidence and hope for the future in the beginning of 2020. I remembered last year when I set my TOYL objectives and goals, I specifically mentioned I want growth, maturity but I don’t want any hardships. I thought if God loves me, He would let me live my life smoothly without any difficulties. Suffering is a vaccine against short-sightedness of the soul.” Since end of 2019 till now, it’s been a roller coaster ride for me, getting let go, landing a job, getting terminated...I praise God for all the help and guidance along this journey...continue to self-school myself, advance myself and explore other skills...experience God’s miracles of making strangers on Linkedin willing to coach me on the phone for an hour, delivering my resumes to their friends. Body members would sacrifice their time to do mock interviews with me over the phone or in their office. When I didn’t have income,...God has provided and protected me in various ways in various forms...it was a great testimony to show my family how God stood by me and strengthened me when I didn’t have a job, I can still be hopeful because of God. There are still many things that I praised God for this year, such as the people that I met, health, recovering financial loss, able to work from home, fellowship, healing, health and safety. Besides those, I most praise God for the hope He has given us. Especially, the recent sermons about Revelation, first and second death, book of life all that. I learned about this life is not all there is. There’s a lot to learn and get to in God’s eternal world and how I should prepare myself by putting off the old values and putting on God’s values.

B. Health protection at the family cruise in Feb, good time with family and got to know my mum better.  God saved mum’s life in April when she had a serious stroke and God has helped her to recover gradually. I received much prayers and care and love from body members during this difficult time. I also praise God for His goodness that He helped us to rent out the apartment to cover expenses for my mum. God has been gracious to my mother by giving her more time in life to get to know Him.

C. I’m praising God: for providing all the strength and grace to deal with the loss of my dear mom. This was my first loss of a key person in my life. Although she has left a void in my life, I have learned to submit to God’s will for her and my family.

for joy in difficult times/processes and ongoing testing of my endurance and faith. 2020 has been ‘the best of times and the worst of times.’ Sometimes the best of times emerges out of the worst of times!

*D. Psalm 84:4-7 Blessed are those who dwell in your house. They are always praising you. Selah. Blessed are those whose strength is in you; who have set their hearts on pilgrimage/your way. Passing through the valley of Baca/Weeping, they make it a place of springs. Yes, autumn rain covers it with blessings. They go from strength to strength. Everyone of them appears before God in Zion.*

 This is a long time favorite psalm of mine with the picture of consistency in praising God and the strength & blessings that come from having your heart set in the right place even in the midst of difficult times. This year in particular, I’m blown away by God’s graciousness in providing and protecting. The world certainly seems to be falling apart and yet over the past year I’ve experienced such a quiet confidence in knowing God will preserve me for as long as He has use for me

E. Gaining experiential understanding and knowledge that God allows difficulty and challenges, not just good/smooth-sailing, for my benefits and to accomplish His agenda (which can be unknown to me).  This is uncomfortable and unwelcome at first, examples such as...

I praise God for being at work via Phil 2:13 as I have continued to yield my will to embrace whatever He wants, when He wants it, where He wants it (including His priorities). I praise God for faithfully guiding, providing for His work and blessing thru ongoing COVID ramifications. *Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. -Ps 37:5*

F. God’s ongoing encouragement through the Word. Unbelievably perfect timing being in the OT for QTs throughout the process in the right section at the right time to be trained by the Word as we went thru the entire relocation process to respond in a way that’s pleasing to God: Abraham being willing to obediently go where God told him, the I’s leaving Egypt following the cloud/fire (sojourner mentality), commands to posses the land (SOO many times and at key moments when things looked questionable), Joshua and Caleb’s wholehearted obedience, commands to be strong and courageous to conquer the enemies in God’s strength, the choice to choose life and embrace His promise that He would bless them in the land if they continued to obey, and seeing the consequences of the the I’s failing to fully obey (partial obedience to partial disobedience to being conquered.…destruction).  Week after week, God has provided lessons I needed to embrace His plan, to uproot faulty expectations or adjust wrong priorities or perspectives.

God has just blown me away with proving that His grace is sufficient for me and having all sufficiency in all things to have an

abundance for every good work (which wasn’t really the business, but working on trusting Him, serving others in the Body and other

priorities that he had for me this year). I hope that this whole situation will cause God’s glory to be seen because all the provision

did not come from an iota of manipulation or strategizing on my part. God provided and of course, I had to respond and work on it, but I couldn’t have caused all the help which was poured on me and is actually positioning our business for future flexibility and prosperity. Even just this week, we were invited to give an exclusive discount to Google employees, which should open up another avenue for future revenue. It seems like God is laying the groundwork for the future...

G. Praise God for the Body’s commitment to Biblical unity, for established relationships and for the technology to stay connected.

H. Praising God for providing such wonderful relationships in this Body. I had a relationship with God I didn’t have strong enough convictions about the Truth to keep me from wandering away. I certainly didn’t truly treasure God’s Word, nor did I understand what discipleship was and how much God had in store for people beyond just getting sins forgiven. Year after year I have been the recipient of so much sacrificial giving of resources (earthly treasures, talent and skills and time) to love and serve and most importantly help me to finish well. I’ve been really encouraged of late to focus on understanding and purifying my motives and values and I’m grateful to be a part of a Body that actually cares about being pleasing to God. It’s something I see other people working towards. I’m still a work in progress like everyone, but the confidence I have in my walk with God is so different from a decade ago and it’s equipped me with more boldness to encourage and help others develop a relationship with God as well.

I. I praise God for the opportunity to invest in X, who has grown spiritually and their relationship with God the past year. It’s been a delight to be part of God's plan: *1Cor 3:6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow - 2Cor 6:1 co-wk w/God*

**II. How have you grown as a fruitful, reproductive disciple/follower of the Lord Jesus, and what has helped/hindered?**

A. I’m still a work in progress. Some days I can be very disciplined and good, some days I feel I’m going backward. My discipleship journey is like a continuous searching process. From the help of Body members- honest feedback to clear my doubts and confusion. From different tests God had thrown me- opportunity to cry out to Him and lean on Him. Hindered: laziness, nonbeliever friends confused my value, *worldly* priorities

B. Mum’s incident has deepened my dependence and trust in God. I was anxious about mum’s recovery and ongoing health care and how I would support it. God has provided adequate resources like manpower and financial support throughout the whole process, during the whole month when she was at the hospital. The hospital bill was a lot but God provided....This sickness seemed to get my mother a bit more interested in learning more about God and she may have accepted Christ in August, something that I would not have foreseen. Encouragement and prayers from the body during the difficult time which I greatly appreciate:

*“The God of all grace is all sufficient, and all wise, and can strengthen as you place the situation in His hands.”* That's really the only thing you can actually do for peace. He can heal and/or guide the doctors. It sounds like she is getting good care.  He allowed this situation in my mom's life for reasons and purposes that are infinitely wise and ultimately good. We just don't see how yet, but we do know He is trustworthy and in control. So no need for anxiety. Phil 4

The glory sermon series has deepened my understanding of glory, which is essential in the Christian walk.

C. “Why do we do what we do?” that question revealed well-rooted fundamental personal flaws/characteristics/values/behaviors. God gave me the courage to continue digging. I had been living in darkness about meaningful parts of my life. The self-analysis revealed I lack self-esteem (rooted in childhood trauma) and gave an understanding re: why I have dysfunctional co-dependent rlshps, deriving my worth and value from others, not God. The need to feel valued is a big source of anxiety with work and family as I consistently look for people’s approval of my comments, ideas, etc., leading to deeply rooted insecurity, bondage and addiction to approval from others.

I believe I have moved from being a good server (which now that I understand my weaknesses mentioned above, does come rather easily to me) and moved toward being a more discerning server—serving God and his children does not mean solving their issues or coming to their rescue in the way I have been doing in some of my closest personal relationships.

Now that I have discovered the ‘Vine’, I have come to the realization that in order to attain all the nutrition from the root (Christ), I as the branch should be in better shape spiritually and emotionally; otherwise, I cannot get all the necessary nutrition to grow and bear the best/most fruit. It’s hard for Christ to inhabit my heart when my mind is battling the above—I’m in need of major renewing of my mind.

D. Becoming more mature in managing emotions and developing character such as patience, anger, frustration by re-directing them to seeking God’s perspective and away from seeing things solely from my own perspective, driven by my own circumstances and needs

Trusting God on his timing and orchestration instead of brute forcing my own way, waste tons of my own energy, efforts and time, and also damaging/tramping on others. E.g. Those who care about pleasing God care about what God cares about, such as spiritual welfare of people, instead of reacting to how I am being wronged, or how things are not going to my plan/timeline or how efficient things are done, I am mindful that there are things outside of myself for which God might be at work. *(Rm 8:28 love God...acc to His purpose)*

E1. One of the areas I uncovered last year and began tackling was a lack of emotional self-control...discussions with X and observing myself, I began to realize just how many of my actions were being determined merely by how I felt in the moment. This year I’ve been working on detaching my actions from what I feel like doing in the moment and replacing it with what I think God would have me prioritize. Though I’m still in the process of becoming more discerning in all decisions (big and small) I have continued reading a daily Proverb close to every day in my QT. I picked this up again at the end of last year and it’s been really profitable for keeping God’s wisdom and principles in front of my face and at the forefront of my mind. I look at that consistent intake as a reservoir to draw from to help direct daily decisions rather than moving to the next thing on a “whim” (something I discovered I have many of). Then instead of my emotions directing what I do, I’m finding more and more that what I’m doing directs my emotions. This is helpful for when I have to do things I have more innate resistance to (i.e. interacting over perceived conflict, monotonous chores, etc) because I can recognize it’s best in the moment, ask for God’s power-assist to get it done and then proceed knowing God is pleased.

E2.Two Proverbs in particular that I frequently find myself dwelling on are: *Pr 14:1 A wise woman builds her house. But a foolish woman tears hers down with her own hands.” Pr 21:5 The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, But those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty.* I’ve tried to ask myself more consistently - what is this action building towards - am I following thru on things I’ve begun building? Or am I doing something foolish that is tearing down work I’ve already done? Am I rushing into something? Have I taken the time to really think through/consider and understand if something or how I’m going about it is really best?

Something that’s really helped frame these questions are all the sermons we’ve had over the past several months on glory and the kingdom.

E3. Another helpful process for growth this year was some dying to self in identifying and working on changing some really self-centered values. I think this coupled with increased emotional self control is helping me to be more God pleasing in my interactions with others. It’s not perfect yet, but a lot of people-pleasing, unarticulated expectations and other selfish thinking that gets in the way of hearing others and simply trying to meet needs is clearing up.

X gave me a set of more structured questions to answer as an aid in this area.  *PUT OFF: X action which is caused by X value.*

*RENEW: 1. Locate Scripture to back up what God thinks about this action and wrong value.*

 *2. Locate Scripture to back up what God wants the new thing to be (what is rewardable/holy).*

*PUT ON: X action will be replaced by Y action which is caused by Y value. What exactly does it look like (in your MIND and action)? What will the result look like? How will you know the new thing is now the new you and not just an action put over the old you? Identify/ visualize who you will be as a result.*

\*Like goals, written place to go back to remind me what I’ve put off, what the result of transformed values should look like as well as the biblical motivation behind it.

F. Getting deeper in destroying the influence of my family’s secular (satan's???) values, which God continues to challenge me to excavate. I shifted my focus on external appearance & possessions to focus on righteousness and God’s value of me, irregardless of what my family says to me, and continuously forgiving them for not meeting my expectations nor seeming to value me. Reducing interaction...and spending quality time in the Word, examining values, focusing on ministry and talking to Body members has really helped. And of course, DTB. I feel much stronger and established in the right thots and values.

G. Recognizing that resisting, doubting, feeling overwhelmed and down all demonstrate a lack of humility because I’m not trusting that God knows what He’s doing in allowing the people, circumstances and timing in my life that I don’t prefer. I know I learned this from something in DTB. Being quick to let go of my own perspective has helped me to grow in God’s perspective and focus on righteousness. I’m learning to choose what’s right over my preference (that includes seeking 1st the kingdom when filtering thru my to do list) and learning to let some perfectly good things be undone. *[good is often the enemy of best=God's perfect will -Rm 12]*

H. While I have a faithful willingness, loyalty and desire to go wherever God leads, this year has tested *(Ps 11)* the follow thru on what is required to fully obey and fully follow, growing in grace/power to go wherever He leads (no turning back no matter how hard it is). Joshua left nothing undone in all that Moses had commanded him (which God had commanded Moses). This year has called for a greater increase in dependence (into the “unknown”), in interdependence, self-denial and service acc to God’s priorities.  I’m seeking to grow and be Spirit-led/ filled in those areas. I’ve grown in delighting in God alone as things change. God gives and takes away in His perfect plan and timing. I believe I’ve continued to seek and embrace His priorities, responding to the Spirit and examining and rooting out bad values, which every follower must do (even if it takes a minute to get there).

DTB: God requires exact obedience, that magnifies Him as the priority of our lives. *[No Lord of the Left-overs - Malachi]*

I. Opportunities to develop discernment - God highlighted some blocks I had (people-pleasing, value on harmony, lust for validation)

Looking to grow more in: Interdependence - not each person doing their part but more of a synergy as God blesses our teamwork and unity; Proactive - in limiting myself, in anticipating needs, jumping into projects; Denying/transforming my preference *[Rm 15:1-3 not please self but God]* to work independently - because it’s how I problem solve (ie, feel most comfortable problem solving), which is not always the best for the group; Keeping work in balance - determining God’s will for my time each day and not allowing work to take up more mental and emotional energy than God would want *[no worship work]*; Communication - looking to grow in proactive communication and clarification.

J. I am still working on growing in some personal disciplines such as being more prayerful and exercising regularly. I know

that I need to change my paradigm and mindset in both, valuing the long-term benefits rather than focusing on the negatives.

*Ps 33:13 Yahweh looks from heaven. He sees all the sons of men. 14 From the place of his habitation he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, 15 he who fashions all of their hearts; and he considers all of their works......****18 Behold, Yahweh***’***s eye is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his hesed/loyal covenantal love; 19 to deliver their soul from death, to keep them alive in famine.***

K. The glory and Kingdom sermons have helped keep the proper *(God's)* perspective as well with all the craziness going on in the world and so many temporal things to possibly fear (govt controls, economic depression, what’s coming, etc) or to do (fixing things, starting a new...

No fretting! *Do not fret because of evildoers..they shall be cut off; but those who wait on the Lord, They shall inherit the earth.* *Ps 37:1,9*

**III. What could the Body at BAC do to help you make progress toward your Life Purpose/Plan of glorifying God and being more pleasing/righteous in His sight?**

A. The continued focus as a Body on laying up treasure in heaven, being pure and pleasing in God’s sight, finishing well and the willingness to exhort and admonish is greatly appreciated. Thank you for everything all of you do!!!! *Heb 6:10 God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who thru faith and patience inherit the promises.(10:36 after you've done the will of God, might receive the promise/reward {v35})*

B. Sermons on Truthbase.net, DTB, and TOYL materials as evergreen and go-to-materials to listen to, review, learn, revisit topics, very useful for self-administering and ministering to others

C. Accountability with X; Co-laboring with X in Bible studies. I so appreciated the support from the Body in ministry this past year... really come a long way...tackled and rooted out some lies and thinking that had come up repeatedly and was hindering from hearing and understanding and ultimately growing with a purified heart. The ongoing investment and patient perseverance is producing fruit.

D. As a Body - stay connected via technology. Encourage/edify one another thru all the change. Don’t get too bogged down in our always increasing “to do” lists but focus on increasing dependence (*intimacy*) on God, interdependence with one another and making good/wise/ God-pleasing choices with our time. Let God prune overgrown leaves that choke fruitfulness and focus on future inheritance and service, not comfort in the land. Trust Him for success and prospering in the land (as we aren’t perfect in our efforts).

E. Learning to seek God’s timing and help in ministering to others. I’ve learned to wait more dependently (and not forget) and God has worked out the timing for me to perfectly address observations in people’s lives (rather than forcing the issue and damaging the relationship). Sometimes I feel a drive to address something I see, but recognize the fleshly drive vs the HS, and have witnessed the HS provide the opportunity to address something when the person has better hearing.

F. The co-laboring efforts of the Body have really helped. Getting input and everyone working together on helping someone *(Gal 6; Phil 4)*. Also, Scriptures teach that we should be longsuffering. Romans 12 has reminded me that the commands to endure, forgive, not take vengeance and longsuffering are directed towards the Body. I need to suppress my initial reaction/surprise when people don't learn or change as quickly as I *(or God)* expect. Recognizing that longsuffering, grace (cause it's not natural) and prioritizing a person's true needs (and serving them) over my irritation are basic requirements to love others to God's standard. An eternal mindset has helped me to renew my mind, and focus on the right objective, thereby also getting God's help.

G. X's sympathetic yet loving ear and quality time has been a great investment and has helped me grow significantly these last years. Please continue to record the sermons – I tap into this wealth often and no matter how old some of them are, they are so applicable today. The one suggestion I’d make is to revisit TOYL every 3-5 years.

H. Continue to edify *Heb 10:24 consider to provoke to love-good deeds; 1Cor 14:26 each has a...teaching...for edification {of others})* share both praises and sometimes even setback/struggle so I can learn not only from the Biblical characters but also from my own contemporaries

Very recently someone had an edification that referenced Is 22 and an “unpardonable sin” which was rooted in independence vs dependence and not taking sin seriously. Any ongoing follower of the Lord Jesus has to continue to give up any root of independence to pursue dependence and interdependence and become skilled in spiritual warfare to fight off satan’s attempts for disunity rooted in independence (Essence of sin). Self-preservation and/or comfort here are OUT. This is vital for ongoing fruit from the Body.

H. Praying for how God wants us to impact others…I know it starts with fervent love for one another that others can see and abiding in the Vine. Will look forward to seeing how God guides our efforts and cultivates for the future.