

GOOD TO THE LAST DROP



Not being a coffee drinker, I'm only moderately successful making a good cup. I start with all the right ingredients. I buy good coffee and fancy-flavored creamers. I mean, what coffee drinker wouldn't enjoy a southern butter pecan coffee? I think it sounds amazing. But, for me, concept and reality are two completely different things.

First, my brew is strong enough to be a champion weightlifter. The next time, it's so weak you'd be just as well off drinking a cup of water. Too much cream. Not enough sugar. The list goes on.

Because I'm unable to taste it, I can't know for certain I've gotten the recipe correct when I make a cup for my husband. Even worse is when I attempt a fancy drink like a flavored, frozen coffee for my sons. Not only is my kitchen a disaster when I finish, but most of the time, I've managed to make only a tolerable drink for my boys.

Procuring the highest-quality ingredients is only the first step. I must know how to blend them together in the best way to produce a drink enjoyable to the last drop. If I refuse to follow a recipe, my hit-or-miss attempt will provide varying results.

Knowing our personality traits is only a first step in learning to write well while doing so in ways that mix perfectly with our God-given design. We must also know what God intends us to make with those ingredients. We need God's recipe to create the perfect cup.

“ *To be who God wants us to be as writers, we must follow His recipe for our life.*

How great would it be if God detailed every part of His plan for us? If somewhere between the Testaments, there was a book with our name on it and verses filling the chapters that pertained directly to us? I'd be ecstatic if Heather Greer 1:1 read, "And God said, let Heather write books to encourage and grow others in their faith."

Talk about a neon sign! That would make things so much easier. So much clearer.

We won't get our own book of the Bible and probably no neon sign. Most of us won't even score a burning bush or talking donkey. And while a positive meeting with an agent or editor can be encouraging, it's not necessarily a sign pointing us down the path of the writer.

Don't let that discourage you. God isn't silent on the recipe for our lives. Many scriptures assure us of God's plans for us and give insight into what our purpose might be. And the big-picture lessons He shares with us are a necessity to incorporate into our writing.

Here are a few of my favorites to consider. Though they are all familiar scriptures, I encourage you not to skip over or skim through them. Take time to meditate on each scripture and ask God what His truth means for your life. Each one, added to our writing, becomes another step in the recipe to creating our perfect writing blend.

Jeremiah 29:11 NASB—*"For I know the plans that I have for you," declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.'*

His truth: God has plans for us, for our good to give us hope and a future.

John 15:16 NASB—*“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”*

His truth: We are called to bear God’s fruit.

Philippians 2:1-4 NASB—*“Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”*

His truth: We are called to be of one mind in love and humility, looking out for the interests of others, not our own interests only.

Ephesians 2:10 NASB—*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”*

His truth: We are created for good works that God has prepared for us to complete.

Micah 6:8 NASB—*“He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?”*

His truth: We are called to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God, not when it's easy but all the time, in every area of life.

Romans 12:1-2 NASB—*“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

His truth: We are called to worship God through offering our entire being, including letting our minds be scrubbed clean of the world's ideas and filled with God's way of thinking and acting.

1 Peter 4:10-11 NASB—*“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”*

His truth: We are called to use our gifts to serve others and bring God glory.

Ephesians 4:1-3 NASB—*“Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*

His truth: We are to live in a way that is worthy of God, being unified with other believers in humility and gentleness.

These scriptures only scratch the surface of who we're called to be and what we're called to do as followers of Christ. Sometimes, we discount these and other scriptures like them because they fail to provide us with the specifics of the unique purpose God has for us to fulfill.

Neglecting these truths would be a mistake. Like our personalities provide a base for understanding how we act and react, these scriptures are the solid foundation each believer must build on to accomplish whatever God tasks us to accomplish in the way He wants us to do it.

No matter what we do, if we do it without a godly attitude, our actions will only end up serving us, not others—and certainly not God. Before seeking our specific area of service, we need to make sure our hearts are in it for the right reasons.

Since you're reading this book, I'm going to assume you feel called to the written word in some way. Whether the dream to write came in your childhood or surprised you as an adult, it has been planted in your heart.

Maybe you're excited about teaching through articles. Your joy may spring from the idea of encouraging others through story. Script writing, blogging, crafting Bible studies, providing children's church take-home papers, writing book reviews. The choices are endless, but they all come down to the dream of writing.

The passion is there. You're learning about the craft of writing through books, conferences, and classes. The local writing group (or virtual one) you're part of provides the support you need for development as a writer. Ideas spring up without any prompting on your part. You've got the right ingredients to create something beautiful. The only thing missing is the recipe to understand how each element blends to craft the finished product.

God is our dream's creator. He gave us our personalities and experiences, our passions, and every other ingredient for the dream. That being the case, shouldn't we seek Him out for how He wants it

used and what He considers success for the dream? Shouldn't we confirm that the dream we think we should follow is the dream He means for us?

In *The Dream Giver*, Bruce Wilkinson weaves an allegory much like that of *Pilgrim's Progress*. At one point, the main character gives his dream back to the Dream Giver. Why? Because the Dream Giver gave it in the first place, and the main character needed to know it was the correct dream for his life.

This step is essential. If we don't seek God's plan for the dream, we may be combining all the best ingredients in the wrong amounts. The result isn't a perfectly blended dream. Like my attempts at making coffee, we end up with something tolerable. But who wants tolerable when amazing is available?

The goal isn't for those who partake of our dream to walk away knowing they'll politely decline next time it's offered. Our desire is for others to taste the perfect blend of ingredients coming together in a way that gives God glory and creates desire for more of the same. In this, we fulfill the purposes set out in the scriptures above.

To ensure we're doing what God wants with the ingredients He's given, we offer the dream back to Him. I did this early in my writing. I prayed over the dream, letting God know how much the dream meant to me. I also told Him that being inside His will for my life was my most important goal. If my dream wasn't His dream for me, I didn't want it. And if the desire was from Him but my vision of what it should be was not, I asked Him to correct my sight.

It took time, but God confirmed the dream in my heart in many ways. Now, each time I face periods of discouragement or doubt, I give the dream back to God. Every time, He has confirmed it and returned it to me.

Will that always be the case? I don't know. But I don't have to know if God has another dream waiting. If He does, the new dream will also create something beautiful with the ingredients God provides. Right now, I know the recipe He wants me to use, and I am confident that the results will be good till the last drop.

* * *

ACTION STEP

Spend time with the scriptures above. Ask God to show you His plan for the personality, interests, and talents He has given you. Give Him the dream of your heart and listen for His guidance in it.