

## 61-75

61-Confession is a massively important factor in a growing relationship because it's the only way to keep the door of honesty and transparency and vulnerability open. It may not be comfortable, but it's hugely necessary in healthy relationships. That includes our relationship with God... and God doesn't need it! It's not like you're going to tell God anything He doesn't know so it's obvious that the exercise must be for my benefit even if it is uncomfortable.

62-Kings and Chronicles provides a life insight that is just huge. Granted, heredity is a large factor in shaping issues of life for all of us. On the other hand, there is an equally important influence on life that sets people up for success or failure- environment. But, to a great degree, Kings and Chronicles proves that there is a factor of life that can override heredity and can override environment. That ultimate determinant is choice. Time and time again we see the biographies of men who come from basically the same hereditary line and the same environment scene but the thing that most determines the success or failure of their story is based in choice. Sons from lousy fathers chose God and succeeded. Sons from wonderful fathers rejected God and failed. Choice is the ultimate determinant of life.

63-There's a predictable pattern in the "angry" messages of the minor prophets. In almost every case the prophet pulls no punches about God's frustration and disappointment with His children, but then something pretty astounding happens. In nearly every one of those little books it's like God can only carry that tone of voice so far before His magnificent love and grace just has to take over. It's like a switch flips and He suddenly says, "Oh, come here! I want to snuggle you!" As hard as they are to read sometimes you really need to keep plowing in those little books so you can get the full and final picture.

64-In some ways the Bible actually gives you a living representation of the Luke 15 story of two brothers that come from the "prodigal" parable. Martha was appropriate and proper and very, very jealous of her much more emotional and "irresponsible" sister. And, curiously, it seems that the irresponsible sibling is the one that receives more of Heaven's approval and blessing than her proper and faithful sister. When you think about it Luke 10:38-42 certainly turns the tables on us just as surely as the statement to the older brother does in Luke 15.

65-Jesus was not the "young" man that many of us in modern, western culture believe Him to be. There are some who claim that the average life-span to be expected in the Roman world was about 44 years and not the 70 or 80 or whatever we assume life to be in our time. So, if Jesus doesn't get introduced into His active ministry until the age of 30 He actually was well into "middle age"... especially since he had, by that time, officially been a "man" for about 17 years already!

66-The official life-segment of the "active priest" in the Bible was to be installed at the age of 30 and he was forced into retirement at the age of 50. Several times Numbers 4 tells us that young Levite men were not allowed to be active in Tabernacle service until they turned 30. Curiously, Luke 3:23 tells us that Jesus did not begin active and public ministry until the same age!

67-Dorcas (of Acts 9) may have been so effective in her care for the widows and children that God just deemed that, at that time, the church could not do without her. After all, there were a lot of wonderful saints who went to their graves without any apostle intervening with a resurrection miracle. Wouldn't that be really something? Wouldn't it be amazing if God found me to be so valuable to the church that He just wouldn't let me die? What about you?

68-One word, in so many ways and so many times, encapsulates a tragic position in the schema of God- the word "outside." Outside the garden, outside the ark, outside the camp, outside the wedding feast, outside the gate, outside the New Jerusalem... It is a horrible place to be from Genesis 3 all the way to Revelation 20.

69-We would be terribly discombobulated if we ever went out one night to discover that the stars got scrambled and nothing was where it belonged. How would you feel if Orion got skewed or if the Big Dipper lost its shape or the Southern Cross suddenly was missing several stars? Isn't it amazing that God has given us this remarkable gift, this ongoing visible presentation of security and His permanence? That's the kind of thing that we are reminded of when we "consider the Heavens."

70-The New Jerusalem has gates and walls. That's not news to anyone who has read Revelation 21, but it may be a concept that you've never questioned. Why? We are used to gates and walls being a necessity to keep the bad guys out but that's irrelevant by chapter 21 because all the bad guys are eradicated in chapter 20. So, why are they necessary? Is it because God knows that we are more comfortable when we have boundaries even when they may not be, ultimately, necessary?

71-Some people really have "the radio voice." I know that I've been gifted with a unique voice and I only have Heaven to thank for it because I did nothing to earn it. There are some people who just have wonderful pipes and you have to admire it... but we haven't heard anything yet! What was John trying to describe when he said that listening to God's voice was like hearing "many waters" or cascading waterfalls? What will it be like to hear God sing? (Look it up, Zephaniah 3:17... How cool is that?)

72-Very few of the parables of Jesus were truly original with Him. That proven fact troubles some saints but I actually find it very gracious. Jesus chose to use stories already very familiar to His audience, but He always put a twist in them that took the listeners to a better and deeper truth. Just as He would begin I am sure people would say, "Oh, I know that one... wait a minute, that's not the way I heard it before... that says something about God that I never knew before." It's a genius method of teaching and I admire it.

73-You get a much better understanding of Jesus' famous parable in Matthew 18 when you read a kid's word into the story... "There was a man who owed the King a quajillion-quajillion dollars..." You might as well read it that way because that's what Jesus meant. In the language of the New Testament ("Koine" Greek) 10,000 was the biggest number available. You can say something like "144 thousands" but for a single block number when you want to express 100 million you have to say "ten thousand times ten thousand." That's why Jesus couldn't go any higher than 10,000... which still would have been 200 years of taxes to Rome from the two regions of Judea and Perea combined! Now, that's a quajillion!

74-In the King James Bible there's an untranslated Hebrew term that is really helpful for understanding the actions and intentions of God in the Exodus story- *MITZRAIM*. That's a name for Egypt but it's also very closely related to another important term in Hebrew, a word for "birth canal." Genesis 50:11 opens the door to a very colorful consideration. *Mitzraim* implies both Egypt and the fact that Egypt was the birth canal for a new, baby nation that got expelled through the water sack of the Red Sea. Isn't that great?

75-One element of the Passover story (Exodus 12) reminds us of how very considerate and concerned God is for the poor. Part of the mandates of how the Hebrews were to prepare to leave Egypt was how God defined their "going-away meal." They were absolutely required to have a lamb as part of it, but what if a family was too poor to have a lamb? No worries. God made it clear that He would accept their intentions even if it took a whole group of families pooling their resources to be able to get a lamb. You didn't have to be rich enough to have one of your own. Isn't that wonderful?