Hi,

Today’s updates:

* My 12:00 noon Tuesday class on Genesis will meet this week, [on my personal Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/scottengle).
* The links to my on-line classes, the video recordings of the classes, the class audio podcasts, and the archive of these daily emails can all be found at [www.scottengle.org](http://scottengle.org/scotts-weekly-classes/). All the postings are up-to-date.
* I’ve been told that my YouTube page/channel can be hard to find. A simple solution would be to [go to the link (here)](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChtwqaUcpZbwyTWnkp6INwQ?view_as=subscriber) and then bookmark the page or subscribe to my channel. Also -- all the “covid” Sunday classes since March are on the YouTube page, not the Vimeo page we used when we were meeting in person (the archived videos are all still there, going back a number of years). One of these days, I’ll figure out how to also post the Sunday “covid” videos on Vimeo. . . . one day. ;)

We are talking about transformation this week, for it is only in rebirth and transformation (gift and task) that we can ever hope to rid ourselves of the various “isms,” such as racism, that plague the human heart. I know of no better example of what God can accomplish in the human heart than the story of Mabie Mobley, the mother of Emmet Till.

In 1955, Mabie Mobley and her son Emmett lived in a poor black neighborhood in Chicago. That summer, Emmett, who was 14, went to spend some time with his uncle in Money, Mississippi. One afternoon, Emmett and a few friends went to the neighborhood candy store. Emmett went into the store while his friends waited outside. I guess the lady who ran the store was pretty cute, because when Emmett came out his friends were snickering and asked him what he thought of the woman. Emmett smiled and gave it the old wolf whistle. The woman was white and the story got back to her husband and brother-in-law, who didn’t much like what this “colored boy” had done. At 2:30 am the next Sunday morning, two men burst into the home of Emmett’s uncle and carried the boy away. Emmett’s body was found a couple of days later, in a pond. He had been brutally beaten and shot. He was unrecognizable. The two men were arrested and tried, and were acquitted in an hour by an all-male, all-white jury.

In an interview with Studs Terkel, Mabie reflected on the murder of her son:

Mabie was asked this “Don’t you harbor any bitterness toward the two men . . . It would be unnatural not to.” She replied: “It certainly would be unnatural not to, yet I’d have to say I’m unnatural . . . What they had done was not for me to punish and it was not for me to go around hugging hate to myself, because hate would destroy me. It wouldn’t hurt them . . . I did not wish them dead. I did not wish them in jail. If I had to, I could take their four little children – they each had two – and I could raise those children as if they were my own and I could have loved them . . . Now that is a strange thing to say, but I haven’t spent one night hating those people. . . I was brought up in the Church of God and Christ. I believe the Lord meant what he said and try to live according to the way I’ve been taught.”

Such a heart is nearly incomprehensible to me. Yes, her heart was God’s work but it was also Ms. Mobley’s work -- gift and task. And it takes more than merely trying, it takes training, perhaps a lifetime of work and effort.

**Philippians 3:12-16 (The Message)**

**I’m not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me. Friends, don’t get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I’ve got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. I’m off and running, and I’m not turning back.**

**So let’s keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us. If any of you have something else in mind, something less than total commitment, God will clear your blurred vision—you’ll see it yet! Now that we’re on the right track, let’s stay on it.**

**1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (The Message)**

**You’ve all been to the stadium and seen the athletes race. Everyone runs; one wins. Run to win. All good athletes train hard. They do it for a gold medal that tarnishes and fades. You’re after one that’s gold eternally.**

**I don’t know about you, but I’m running hard for the finish line. I’m giving it everything I’ve got. No sloppy living for me! I’m staying alert and in top condition. I’m not going to get caught napping, telling everyone else all about it and then missing out myself.**

Warning. Sports metaphors lie ahead . . .

Poking fun at men’s fondness for comparing life to football, baseball, golf, and every other sport has become standard Hollywood fare in recent years. But even 2,000 years ago, the Apostle Paul couldn’t help himself. It isn’t hard to find the catchy sports metaphor in Paul’s letters. We don’t know if Paul was an athlete himself or if he was fond of athletics or if he simply understood their importance in the Greco-Roman world. But Paul did know that there is much that we can learn about life, the Christian life, from the games we play. He writes, you’ve got to keep your “eye on the goal,” stay “on the right track,” make “a total commitment,” “run the race, “run hard,” stay in “top condition,” and “train hard.”

*When trying is not enough*

In his book, *Finding the Life You’ve Always Wanted*, John Ortberg uses a sports metaphor himself. Suppose you woke up tomorrow morning and decided to run a marathon. You put on some running shoes, don the right apparel, and head out the door to begin your 26.2 mile run. Could you do it? What if you tried hard? Really, really hard? If you gave it the ole’ 110%? The obvious answer is no, of course not. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn’t simply head out the door and run 26 miles. If I want to run a marathon, I’m going to have to train for it. Effort alone won’t cut it. I once taught people to fly jet airplanes. There again, effort was essential, but it took a year of hard training to create an Air Force pilot. Nobody flies a jet by effort alone the first time they try, or the second, or the tenth. They train.

So it is with all the great endeavors of our lives. It takes learning and training and discipline. And what could be a greater endeavor than becoming the person God has created each of us to be, a loving disciple of Jesus with the power, as Dallas Willard puts, “to work the works of the kingdom.” When Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, Greece, he was training hard in the things of God. He knew that without training, our resolve to be trusting and obedient disciples dissolves into unkept resolutions.

*Training for the fruit*

Of course, it is one thing to say that we are going to train ourselves to be a mature disciple of Jesus, but it’s another to know how. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul tells the Christians that those who are led by the Spirit will bear the fruit of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” But how do you train yourself to be gentle or to be joyful? I can *try* to be patient (boy, have I tried . . . and failed), but how do I *train* myself to be patient?

Ortberg knows that he needs to slow down if he is going to embrace the life God offers him. But he also acknowledges that he suffers from “hurry-up sickness.” I know just what he means. I make a careful and complex calculation as I arrive with my basket at the grocery store checkout. I scan the lines, estimate the speed of the checkers, note which lines have a dedicated bagger, and, after factoring in estimated tender times (how many check writers), I choose my line and then, too often, end up enormously frustrated because my “competition” (the person standing in my “place” in the line I didn’t choose) gets out faster than I do. Patti and I have been known to stand in two ticket lines at the movies. Whoever gets to the window first buys the tickets! Yes, it is a sickness. After all, what do I really do with those five minutes I might save? Surely less than I imagine.

How do I possibly learn patience? How do I learn to slow down and catch my breath? Ortberg has tried picking the longest line on purpose, hoping he’d learn to like it. I haven’t yet worked up the strength of will to emulate his training method. But I do know that if I don’t actually train myself to be more patient, I won’t ever get there. Yes, God helps me in this, but I must still learn to be patient.

How about prayer? Christians with deep and meaningful prayer lives didn’t arrive there by accident. They learned to pray. They trained to pray. They were disciplined, praying even when they didn’t feel like it or thought they had nothing to say.

*Doing v. Being*

In *The Divine Conspiracy*, Dallas Willard helps us to see that this training is not so much about *doing* as it is about *being*. Our goal is to be evermore Christlike. In our training and our trying, our aim is not just to control our behavior, but to be transformed. My goal is to *be* a patient person, not just to behave patiently. We want to *be* joyful. We want to *be* loving. We want to *be* kind. It is transformation we seek, not merely better performance. We can never live Sermon-on-the-Mount lives by reducing Jesus’ teachings to a list of rules. The life we seek is a transformed life, we need a metamorphosis.

‘til tomorrow, grace and peace,

Scott