

1.

These passages teach that God is the owner of all things, including me and everything that God has placed in my stewardship. I can more consistently recognize God's ownership of my possessions by asking him in prayer how I can best use what he has given me to further his kingdom.

2.

These verses teach that God is sovereign over all things. He works all things for good for those who love him and controls all of history in His providence to bring about his will and ultimate plan for redemption and judgment.

3.

I recognize that God can intervene in our lives, however I sometimes struggle with understanding why He allows certain things to happen. While I understand theologically that God uses hardship to refine us and conform us more closely to his image, in practicality I probably don't respond the way he wants as often as I should and instead grow discouraged rather than thankful. I do believe God assisted in a bluntly direct way with my current financial situation. I had grown a bit cynical and likely would have chalked it up to coincidence had it not been so obvious. I got a next-day in-person interview request at a large company for a role I had applied to months before, no phone screen, and was given the offer within 1 week while I was teetering over the decision to sell or not to sell my house due to financial hardship. My mom gifted me a significant amount of money to help pay some of my student loans maybe an hour before the hiring manager reached out to extend an offer above what I had planned to ask for, all on the day directly before we took a impromptu trip (cross-country ticket purchased on a whim 2 weeks earlier) back home to visit family and clear my head and the confusion in my heart with where we are living and why. That doesn't happen by itself, and the timing was clearly God's way of pointing that out. He can change my situation, and all of my countless hours scheming and trying to change it did not produce the result that he produced in a day. He has authority over my life, and I need to be thankful both when His authority produces perceived difficulties or if it produces prosperity, as I know both are tools in His hand to be used at the right time to accomplish the intended work.

4.

It does bother me when I see the wicked prosper, although it probably bothers me more often for the wrong reason (covetousness) rather than the right reason (perceived reward for offense toward God). God chastens his people and desires them to be holy rather than just happy or prosperous in this life. His aim is for them to grow in Christ-likeness until he calls them home, and often times prosperity in this world produces pride, which is a dangerous sin. God's concern with the wicked is not so – He has no cause to chasten them in this life, for already their end is destruction. God has chosen a people to be his own out of all the earth, not because there was anything in them deserving his loving kindness, but that his grace and mercy would be forever displayed in their eternal inheritance. The wicked are no more wicked than the righteous would otherwise have been, but now the righteous have been born again through the spirit of God unto holiness and God's desire for them is to walk with him and be holy, not necessarily wealthy.

5.

God is not the author of evil nor does he produce evil, but he can use even the evil things in this world to accomplish his will. It is important to remember this because the natural reaction when we face difficulties, or at least when I face difficulties, is to think that God isn't there or that he doesn't care. Yet, we see in Joseph's life and also in Job's life that the evil things done to them were allowed by God, and then used by God to accomplish something that would not have otherwise been accomplished. In the moment, we feel the suffering and do not have the perspective of God's ultimate plan, yet it is

comforting to know that he has one and it reminds us to walk in faith when we cannot see. I have failed to do this more often than I would care to admit.

6.

I'm not sure that this passage speaks explicitly or completely to the question of why should we work, but it does make clear that by our work it should be evident that we are followers of Christ, as demonstrated by walking properly before outsiders. It also speaks to not depending on others. While this statement may mean a few things, I'm reading into it that we should either not be influenced to evil out of dependence, or that we should not assume debt. Since these verses come one after the other, walking properly and depending on no one, I assume that the intention is to not depend on others in such a way as to prevent us from walking properly before God and outsiders. Indebtedness can do this.

7.

The Lord has promised to meet my needs. I often perceive my wants to be my needs and then fall into the trap of believing that God has left my needs unmet. Yet, he has never let me go hungry. It is a reminder that we should hold ourselves in low esteem, deserving of nothing good in this world regardless of our efforts or comparison to those who have worked no harder than us, and instead to be thankful for whatever we do have, knowing that we would probably be OK with even less than that. Easier said than done, yes? Our true need is God, but the world the flesh and the devil often would have us forget it.

8.

My understanding of a steward is one who watches over something that has been entrusted into their care but of which they are not the owner. Our requirement as stewards is that we be found faithful. Faithful to God, faithful to the ministry he has given us, and faithful with the resources that he has provided us to carry out that ministry.

9.

One, faithfulness is a matter of the heart. The object or the size of the task is not the issue, the issue is the orientation of one's heart. Two, God tests our faith. Three, only the faithful are entrusted with true riches, which are spiritual. I can apply these to my life by considering the intentions of my heart.

10.

God will judge sin. I try to be consistently honest.