

Discipleship

Toward Creating Reproducing Disciples

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Teacher's Manual

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Lesson 1

Understanding Salvation

I. What is Man's Condition outside God?

God created man as a three part being. He created man in the image of God. Unfortunately man fell from that state and the human race has been thoroughly corrupted by sin in spirit, soul and body.

A. Man is born in sin and a slave to it.

Sin entered the human race as a result of the original sin of Adam and Eve. As a result of this, since all mankind came from Adam, every human being is born with a sin nature.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned... Romans 5:12

While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. II Peter 2:19

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one. Psalm 14:1-3

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.
Psalm 51:5

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
I John 1:8

B. Man has no inclination toward God.

... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... Romans 3:23

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. John 3:19

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?
Jeremiah 17:9

C. Man has no understanding of the things of God.

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

I Corinthians 2:14

D. Man's mind and conscience were affected by this separation from God.

To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. Titus 1:15

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight... Colossians 1:21-22

E. Man is spiritually dead.

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins... Ephesians 2:1

F. Man is on the road to eternal damnation.

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

Proverbs 14:12

If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. John 15:6

...in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power... II Thessalonians 1:8-9

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.... Then He will also say to those on the left hand, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Matthew 25:31-33, 41

He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. Mark 16:16

II. Who is the source of Salvation?

Because man is born in sin and is powerless to remedy his own condition, it is necessary that someone come to the rescue of man. The word that is translated “salvation” in the Bible [sozo] means: *to save, rescue, deliver, heal*. Who can save mankind from his sinful condition.

A. Sinful man does not have the power to redeem another sinful man.

None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him... Psalm 49:7

He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved.
Psalm 62:2

1. We cannot redeem ourselves through additional sacrifices of animals.

No other sacrifice is needed for our salvation. Christ’s work on the cross was a complete work.

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins...And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. Hebrews 10:1-4, 11-14

2. Our dead ancestors cannot redeem us.

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12

B. God must take the initiative to redeem man.

1. God is our salvation.

Also draw out the spear, and stop those who pursue me. Say to my soul, “I am your salvation.” Psalm 35:3

Truly my soul silently waits for God; from Him comes my salvation.
Psalm 62:1

2. Jesus is the only person through whom we can be saved.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6

III. How did God provide salvation for us in Jesus?

Thankfully God not only had a plan for our creation, but He also had a plan for our redemption or salvation. Just as thoroughly as sin contaminated mankind, God's salvation will deliver or heal mankind.

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I Thessalonians 5:23

A. Jesus came to earth to live a life of obedience to God.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

Philippians 2:5-7

B. Jesus would substitute His life for ours.

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. Isaiah 53:4-7

1. We would receive His righteousness.

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. II Corinthians 5:21

2. He would receive our punishment of being dead and separated from God.

For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. II Corinthians 5:14-15

For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:23

3. Jesus death would provide for a regeneration or rebirth of our old spirit.

Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." John 3:3-5

IV. What must we do to receive this salvation?

A. We must believe in Jesus through faith.

*But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, **through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.** For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Romans 3:21-26*

B. We must believe that He died and rose again.

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. I Corinthians 15:1-6

C. We must receive Him into our world to become children of God.

He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:11-13

D. We must acknowledge Him as Lord of our lives.

....that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes

unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Romans 10:9-10

V. From what must we saved?

A. We are saved from sin.

And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins. Matthew 1:21

B. We are saved from emptiness and the traditions of men.

...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers... I Peter 1:18

C. We are saved from our enemies.

That we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us... Luke 1:71

D. We are saved from the curse of the law.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" Galatians 3:13

E. We are saved from wickedness and lawlessness.

...who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Titus 2:14

F. We are saved from being lost.

...for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. Luke 19:10

G. We are saved from fear.

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Psalm 27:1

H. We are saved from condemnation.

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:1-2

VI. What is the nature of God's Salvation?

A. God's salvation is abundant.

O Israel, hope in the LORD; for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption. Psalm 130:7

B. God's salvation is eternal.

And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him... Hebrews 5:9

C. God's salvation is available now.

For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. II Corinthians 6:2

D. God's salvation is for everyone.

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." Acts 2:38-39

E. God's salvation is both complete and progressive.

1. Our spirits are saved when we are born again.

But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. I Corinthians 6:17

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. Romans 8:9

2. Our souls are being saved through the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification.

...not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit... Titus 3:5

3. Our bodies will one day be redeemed at the Second Coming of the Christ.

Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. Romans 8:28

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” I Corinthians 15:51-55

VII. How should we respond to this great salvation?

A. We must not neglect this great salvation.

...how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him...

Hebrews 2:3

B. We must be glad and rejoice in His salvation.

Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven. Luke 10:20

But I have trusted in Your mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.

Psalms 13:5

C. We must proclaim this salvation every day.

Sing to the LORD, bless His name; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. Psalm 96:2

D. We must actively walk in our salvation.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light... Ephesians 5:8

This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. I John 1:5-7

E. We must share our faith with others.

Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy... Psalm 107:2

For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. Acts 4:20

Lesson 2 Repentance

I. What does it mean for a person to repent?

A. Repentance is a change of mind resulting in a complete turnaround.

1. The word “repent” means to turn around and go the other way regarding a matter. It refers to an internal change of heart and mind that results in a new direction for the whole life.
2. Repentance is translated from an Old Testament Hebrew word (*Aram*) meaning to turn back, to return, and to recover and from a New Testament Greek word (*metanoia*) meaning a fundamental changing of the mind.
3. Charles Finney defined repentance as an “intellectual and hearty giving up of all controversy with God upon all and every point. It implies a conviction that God is wholly right, and the sinner is wholly wrong, and a thorough and hearty abandonment of all excuses and apologies for sin.”

Therefore thus says the LORD: “If you return, then I will bring you back; you shall stand before Me; if you take out the precious from the vile, you shall be as My mouth. Let them return to you, but you must not return to them. Jeremiah 15:19

B. Repentance is not to be seen as something negative but as a doorway into God’s salvation.

*For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted...
II Corinthians 7:10a*

II. What are some wrong concepts about repentance?

There are many concepts that have been confused with true repentance. The tragedy is that if we accept any one of these false concepts it will keep us from experiencing genuine repentance.

A. Repentance is NOT feeling “convicted” or sorry for what I have done.

Conviction of sin will always come before genuine repentance, but not all who are convicted will truly repent.

And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid [KJV,

trembled] and answered, “Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.” Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him. But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound. Acts 24:24-27

B. Repentance is NOT feeling bad or a having a sense of regret because of the consequences of our sin.

The Bible calls this kind of regret “worldly sorrow.” Worldly sorrow is simply being sorry for “getting caught” or being sorry for the resulting consequences of our sin but not necessarily being sorry for the actual crime or offense committed. Someone may regret that they fornicating because it resulted in an unplanned pregnancy or a sexually transmitted disease, but this does not equate to true repentance. Given the same set of circumstances this person would probably repeat the same sin (II Corinthians 7:10).

...worldly sorrow brings death. II Corinthians 10b

C. Repentance is NOT saying “I am sorry” or even owning up to or confessing what I have done.

Confession of sin is necessary for all true repentance, but many people stop with simple confession and do not change their minds and turn from their sin.

Even many support or recovery groups focus on sharing testimonies and confessing bad behavior without a true inner change. This is confession, but not necessarily complete repentance.

D. Repentance is NOT asking for forgiveness or paying restitution out of a sense of guilt to pacify an offended party.

Many people ask for forgiveness from the one they have hurt without any real heart change taking place. This is often because they value the relationship or hate the awkwardness that their sinful behavior has produced.

E. Repentance is NOT external change or reformation of lifestyle with no heart change.

Reformation in this sense is simply trying to “turn over a new leaf” in the strength of the natural man. This will never be successful without a genuine heart change. This is true of many New Year’s resolutions.

F. Repentance is NOT merely “believing” in God.

Many people will religiously claim to believe in God but are not willing to repent. This is “mental faith.” Mental faith is merely the mental acceptance and assent to a

set of creeds or doctrines but without any real change of heart and life. Even the demons believe in God (Jam. 2:19).

You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble!

G. Repentance is NOT “going to church” or being religious.

The Pharisees in Christ’s day were very religious but they were hypocrites. John the Baptist challenged them to bring forth fruit consistent with true repentance (Mt. 3:8). It is possible to maintain a form of religion but never experience the genuine power of repentance (II Tim. 3:5).

All of these things mentioned above may be aspects of true repentance, but they are NOT true repentance in and of themselves.

III. Why is Repentance necessary?

A. God has commanded us to repent (Acts 17:30-31).

Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.

B. Without repentance we cannot be saved (II Cor. 7:10).

For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

C. Without repentance we cannot perceive or experience the Kingdom of God (Mt. 3:2; John 3:3, 5).

Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”... 5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

D. Without repentance we are destined to be ruined by our sin (Ezek. 18:30-32; Luke 13:3).

Therefore, I will judge each of you, O people of Israel, according to your actions, says the Sovereign LORD. Turn from your sins! Don’t let them destroy you! Put all your rebellion behind you, and get for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why

should you die, O people of Israel? I don't want you to die, says the Sovereign LORD. Turn back and live! Ezekiel 18:30-32, NLT

E. Without repentance we will not build our life on a sure foundation (II Tim. 2:19; Heb. 6:1-2).

Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." II Timothy 2:19

F. Without ongoing repentance we will lose our position of influence (Rev. 2:5).

Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent.

IV. What is the acid test for or fruit of true repentance?

If genuine repentance has taken place on the inside of man there will be outward signs or fruits of this inward work. Although no one can judge the heart of another, there should be external evidence that the heart has been truly changed. John the Baptist did not merely accept the Pharisee's confession that they desired a baptism unto repentance; he challenged them to also "bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Mt. 3:8).

If genuine repentance has taken place, it should be evidenced by the following:

A. Godly sorrow for sin (II Cor. 7:9-11).

B. Confession of sin and a plea for mercy (I John 1:9; Luke 15:21; 18:13-14).

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. I John 1:9

C. Turning from or forsaking of sinful ways (Pro. 28:13; Acts 19:17-20).

He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy. Proverbs 28:13

D. Renunciation of sin (Ezek. 14:6; Acts 19:18-20; II Cor. 4:2).

Therefore say to the house of Israel, "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices!" Ezekiel 14:6, NIV

And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. Acts 19:18-20

The word renounce in the New Testament literally means “to say off for oneself” or “to disown.”

E. Godly hatred for sin (Ezek. 36:31-33).

“Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations. Not for your sake do I do this,” says the Lord GOD, “let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!” Thus says the Lord GOD: “On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable you to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt.” Ezekiel 36:31-33

F. A positive change in one’s behavior or putting on the new man (Acts 26:20; Eph. 4:22-24; I Th. 1:9; Col. 3:1-14).

...that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:22-24

G. Restitution for the wrongs done, wherever possible (Lev. 6:1-7; Luke 19:8).

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.” Luke 19:8-9

H. A fresh earnestness in the things of God (II Cor. 7:11b).

See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done.

V. What are the results of true repentance?

A. We experience life (Ezek. 18:32; John 10:10).

I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.
John 10:10b

B. There is a pardoning and remission of sins (Is. 55:7).

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

C. We live in continual prosperity (Dan. 4:27).

Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity.

D. We are refreshed by the Lord (Acts 3:19).

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...

E. There is great joy in heaven (Luke 15:7, 10).

Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. Luke 15:10

Lesson 3

Faith toward God

I. What does it mean to have faith in God?

The Bible makes it clear that faith in God on our part is necessary to enter into God's great salvation.

- A. The dictionary defines faith as "trust, firm persuasion, assurance, firm conviction, confidence in another and another's word."
- B. The Bible defines faith in Hebrews 11:1 "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

What is faith? It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see. –NLT

NOW FAITH is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses]. –Amp

- C. Faith is agreeing with God's Word through our confession and a lifestyle of obedience to it.
- D. R.A. Torrey states, "To believe God is to rely upon or have unhesitating assurance of the truth of God's testimony, even though it is unsupported by any other evidence, and to rely upon or have unfaltering assurance of the fulfillment if His promises, even though everything seen seems against fulfillment."

II. Why can we render this kind of faith in God?

A. Because God is good.

- 1. Some people struggle with the idea of God being good.

Many believers struggle in their walk with God and even having faith in God because they do not see Him as a "good" God. Many believers are trying to have faith in God but they are inhibited by a wrong view of God. There are several possible reasons for this.

People struggle to have the right concept of God because:

- a. They may have had poor role models in the authority figures of their life.

- b. They may have had some terrible life experiences that they have attributed to God or acts of God.
 - c. They may have been taught improperly (often for the purpose of manipulation) and see God as an angry judge who is very demanding and impossible to please.
2. Some people have developed wrong concepts of God.

Some of these wrong concepts include:

- a. Wrong Concept: God's nature is not necessarily good or bad.

What the Bible says:

Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations. Psalm 100:3-5

So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God." Luke 18:19

- b. Wrong Concept: God only wants to make me miserable by giving me bad things that do not satisfy.

What the Bible says:

Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. Psalm 103:5

For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly. Psalm 84:11

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! Matthew 7:11

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

James 1:17

God gives us good gifts; these are gifts which are fitting and suitable for us. What is suitable for one person might not be suitable for another. God's gifts are good because He knows us better than we know ourselves.

- d. Wrong Concept: God disciplines me because He is angry with me.

What the Bible says:

“For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Hebrews 13:6-8

- e. Wrong Concept: God created some bad things to bring evil to the world.

What the Bible says:

Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day. Genesis 1:31

Everything God created was good but the devil is the one who introduced sin and who steals, kills and destroys by perverting things God created.

- f. Wrong Concept: God is eager to judge me for my sin.

What the Bible says:

The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. Psalm 103:8

He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. Psalm 103:9-12

B. Because God has a good plan for my life (Gen. 50:20; Jer. 29:11; Rom. 8:28).

But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Genesis 50:20

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Jeremiah 29:11

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

Many people struggle in faith toward God because their minds have been programmed to more readily receive failure than success, disaster than blessing.

When we understand the character and nature of God, having faith in Him becomes easier.

C. Because God is able to bring it to pass what He has promised.

1. God is able to save completely those who come to God by Him (Heb. 7:25, NIV).
2. God is able to forgive my sins (Luke 5:21).
3. God is able to open blind eyes (Mt. 9:28).
4. God is able to cleanse the leper and incurable diseases (Mark 1:40).
5. God is able to provide water from a rock and manna from heaven.
6. God is able to make all grace abound to us (II Cor. 9:8).
7. God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think (Eph. 3:30).

D. Because God will never change.

It is difficult to have faith in anything that is constantly changing because we never know from one day to the next what our status will be.

The following is adapted from *Knowing God* by J.I. Packer

God is unchanging!

1. His life does not change.

“For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob. Yet from the days of your fathers you have gone away from My ordinances and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD of hosts. Malachi 3:6-7

Like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail. Hebrews 1:12

2. His character does not change.

Whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God above, who created all heaven's lights. Unlike them, he never changes or casts shifting shadows. In his goodness he chose to make us his own children by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his choice possession. James 1:17-18

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Hebrews 13:8

3. His truth does not change.

The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever. Psalm 40:7-8

Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven...Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever. Psalm 119:89, 152

4. His ways do not change.

He stood and measured the earth; He looked and startled the nations. And the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills bowed. His ways are everlasting. Hebrews 3:6

5. His purposes do not change.

God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? Numbers 23:19

The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations. Psalm 33:11

E. Because I am a candidate for His goodness.

Yes you are! Often we understand many wonderful things about God but somehow we think they are for someone else. God is not remote; He is not impersonal but in Christ He has fully adopted you so you can experience Him as your Father.

1. You have been adopted by Father God.

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs-- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. Romans 8:15-17

2. Your needs are already known by Father God.

Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like

one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” Matthew 6:26-33

3. You have full access to God and His resources whenever you want.

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16

III. How is faith expressed in the life of the believer?

A. It is expressed by our opening our heart to the Word of God.

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Romans 10:17

B. It is expressed by the confession of our mouth or saying what God says.

...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9

Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. Matthew 10:32

C. It is expressed by a life of obedience to the word received.

What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. James 2:14-26

IV. How do we increase our faith?

A. Settle in your heart that God's word is true.

As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the LORD is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him. Psalm 18:30

The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever. Psalm 119:160

B. Put yourself in the place of hearing the word.

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Romans 10:17

*This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ...Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?
Galatians 3:2, 5*

C. Be a doer of the word and not just a hearer.

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. James 1:22-25

D. Exercise the faith you have.

And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. For she said to herself, "If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well." But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, "Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well." And the woman was made well from that hour. Mathew 9:20-22

Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. Matthew 14:25-29

Lesson 4

The Power of Forgiveness

I. What do we know about God that serves as a foundation to our understanding of forgiveness?

God wants us to know that He is a forgiving God (Ex. 34:6-7; Neh. 9:17; Psalm 130). God actually delights in showing mercy.

And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation.”
Exodus 34:6-7

They refused to obey, and they were not mindful of Your wonders that You did among them. But they hardened their necks, and in their rebellion they appointed a leader to return to their bondage. But you God are ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness, and did not forsake them. Nehemiah 9:17

Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD; Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope. My soul waits for the Lord More than those who watch for the morning--Yes, more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the LORD; for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.” Psalm 130

The good news of the Gospel is not that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Man’s conscience bears witness to that. The good news is that there is forgiveness of sins.

II. What is the nature of God’s forgiveness?

God has a unique ability to forgive and forget. With all of His other attributes, He is actually able to purposefully forget. The God Who is all-powerful, everywhere-present and all-knowing does not know everything.

A. The nature of God’s forgiveness is seen in the phrases that He uses to describe His forgiveness.

When He forgives our sins, He—

1. He remembers our sins no more (Jer. 31:34).
2. He removes our sins as far from Him as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12).
3. He casts our sins into the depths of the sea, never to be retrieved again (Mic. 7:18-20).

Even in our world when you want to dispose of something so that it can never be retrieved, you go to the deepest part of the ocean where no man has ever been.

B. The nature of God's forgiveness is reflected in the definition of the word "forgive."

1. The word "forgive: means "to cancel or pardon."
2. To forgive is to absolve from liability to punishment for a crime or fault committed.
3. Forgiveness is the voluntary release of a person over which one has legal control.

When God forgives it does not mean that He temporarily suspends punishment which He may at some later time inflict. God's forgiveness is complete and it is eternal.

C. The nature of God's forgiveness is reflected in the Presidential Pardon.

In the United States there is a prerogative that only the President has. It is called the "Presidential Pardon."

God's forgiveness is very much like the presidential pardon. There are five characteristics of a presidential pardon:

1. It must be exercised by one who has the power to pardon.
2. No other judge or magistrate can overturn the pardon.
3. The crime for which the pardon is granted is completely erased from all police or FBI records.
4. You can never be tried for that particular crime again.
5. That crime can never be held against you again.

In other words, it is just as if the crime never occurred. Even on a job application that asks for whether or not you have ever been convicted of a crime, you can legally say "NO!"

III. What are the conditions that we must meet to receive God's pardon?

God is poised to forgive, but we must trigger that forgiveness by meeting certain criteria. The six conditions for forgiveness include the following:

A. We must call upon the Lord (Ps. 86:5).

The Lord is abundant in mercy to all who call upon Him.

Even though we have offended or sinned against others, we have first and foremost sinned against God (Ps. 51:4). Forgiveness depends on the one who has been sinned against.

Against you and you only have I sinned...

B. We must confess our sin (I John 1:9).

If we confess our sin, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

C. We must repent of our sin (Acts 8:22).

To do this you must have a change of heart and mind and godly sorrow for sin. We must see the damnable nature of what we have done.

D. We must be willing to forsake our sin (Pro. 28:13).

Whosoever confesses and forsakes his sins will have mercy.

E. We must be willing to forgive others (Ps. 18:25; Mt. 5:23-24; 6:12-15; Mark 11:25; Luke 6:37; Col. 3:13).

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. Colossians 3:12-14

We will come back to this later.

F. We must accept the pardon.

God is gracious, but He will not force the acceptance of His grace upon man.

Ill. George Wilson

In 1829 George Wilson of Pennsylvania was sentenced to be hanged for robbing the mail and murder. President Andrew Jackson pardoned him but Wilson refused the pardon. Wilson indicated that the pardon was not valid unless it was accepted. The Supreme Court was called upon to decide the matter. Chief Justice John Marshall gave the following decision:

“A pardon is a piece of paper, the value of which depends upon its acceptance by the person implicated. It is hardly supposed that one under sentence of death would refuse to accept a pardon, but if it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must be hanged!”

Accepting our forgiveness has to do with forgiving ourselves. Forgiveness is completed by our acceptance. If we do not accept God’s forgiveness we stay in our prison house.

IV. How important is it for us to forgive others?

A. Jesus indicated that we do not have a choice in the matter of forgiving others.

It is our Christian duty to forgive (Mark 11:25). It is a command of Jesus.

And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

B. Jesus taught us that our forgiveness of others is a condition for our receiving God’s forgiveness (Mt. 6:14-15; Mark 11:26; Luke 6:35-37).

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matthew 6:14-15

But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Luke 6:35-37

C. Jesus taught that we are to quickly forgive when those who have offended us repent (Luke 17:3-4).

Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, “I repent,” you shall forgive him.

This admonition of the Lord seems too easy, too quick. Surely we need to make people suffer a little more for what they have done. Surely we must make them wait for our judgment or our forgiveness. After all...

Wait! Is that how you want God to forgive you?

D. Jesus taught that we are to forgive without keeping accounts (Mt. 18:21-22; Luke 17:4).

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." Matthew 18:21-22

Actually if we are forgiving the way Jesus suggested that we forgive, we cannot keep track of the number of times the offense has happened. Once we forgive it the list is cleared and we go back to number one.

E. Jesus taught that forgiving others was not dependent upon their asking for our forgiveness (Mark 11:25).

And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

1. Jesus demonstrated this on the cross (Luke 23:34).

Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

2. Stephen demonstrated this at his stoning (Acts 7:60).

Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

We do not have to wait until we "feel like it" to forgive. This is a command of God and not subject to our feelings. We do not forgive because we feel like it; we forgive as an offering to Christ based on our love for Him. We forgive because we are those who walk in the constant awareness that we are an object of totally undeserved forgiveness. We also forgive because when we do not forgive we live in torment.

F. Jesus taught that if we do not forgive we will experience negative fruit.

1. **Our prayers will be hindered (Mark 11:25).**

And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

2. Our gifts and ministries will be rendered ineffective (Mt. 5:23-24).

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

3. God may withdraw His forgiveness (Mt. 18:35).

So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.

4. We will personally suffer and dwell in a prison house of our own making (Mt. 18:23-35).

Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. 26 The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, "Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all." 27 Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. 28 But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, "Pay me what you owe!" 29 So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you all." 30 And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. 31 So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. 32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. 33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" 34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. 35 So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.

Jesus told the parable of the unforgiving servant. From this parable we learn many things:

- a. There is no possible way that we could ever repay God the debt that we owe to him.
- b. The forgiveness that we received from God is totally undeserved because our debt was real.
- c. What others owe to us is totally insignificant when compared to the debt that we owed to God.

- a. By not extending forgiveness to others we demonstrate a lack of true appreciation for and gratitude concerning God’s unspeakable gift to us.
- b. God is further offended when we do not reciprocate His generosity. We are viewed as a “wicked” servant.
- c. When we refuse to forgive, this implies that God will withdraw His forgiveness from us.

5. We will experience the fruit of bitterness (Heb. 12:14-15).

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled...

When we do not forgive others physiologically and psychologically we experience some negative reactions. This has been demonstrated from a medical point of view.

- High blood pressure
- Increased levels of stress
- Hostility in relationships
- Anger and intolerance
- Increased heart rate
- Higher instance of substance abuse
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Difficulty in developing wholesome friendships
- Headaches and chronic pain
- Inability to commit to others

Is this really where you want to live?

V. What does it mean to extend forgiveness to others?

Extending God’s forgiveness means several things:

- A. It means that we express our forgiveness in words.**
- B. It means that we refuse to bring the matter up to the offending party again.**
- C. It means that we treat the offending party as if it had never happened.**

D. It means that we refuse to talk to others about it anymore.

E. It means that we refuse to dwell on the offense in our minds.

VI. How can we effectively receive God's forgiveness and forgive ourselves?

Forgiving ourselves is just as important as forgiving others. Paul indicated that in order for us to win the race that we are running, we must have the ability to forget some things (Phil. 3:12-15). We have to be able to forget the past and move forward into the future.

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

A. Forgetting is not a normal human ability.

The New Testament word for "forget" means "to neglect or no longer care for."

B. Forgetting means that we are to no longer nurture certain things in our mind.

1. There are certain things that we are to disregard and no longer care for in our minds.
2. There are certain things that we are not to let predominate our thinking or thought life.
3. There are certain things upon which we are not to fix our attention or gaze.
4. There are certain things that we are not to cultivate, water or feed.
5. There are certain things that we must let starve to death for lack of nourishment.

C. Forgetting involves the discipline of one's thought life (Phil. 4:8).

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy-- meditate on these things.

VII. What are the results of forgiveness?

When forgiveness is granted and received it brings forth some wonderful results. These results include:

A. Justification (Acts 13:38-39).

In other words we are justified before God and man. We can go forward just as if nothing had happened.

B. Clearing of the Conscience (II Cor. 7:11).

In other words we can be healed from within and the past does not need to leave its mark on us.

C. Joy (Ps. 51:12).

This means instead of bitterness there can be joy. The joy of our salvation returns.

D. Restoration (Acts 3:19).

This means that our relationship with God and our relationship with others are restored back to where they were prior to the offense.

E. Love for God (Luke 7:36-48)

Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. 37 And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, 38 and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner." 40 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it." 41 "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." 44 Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. 45 You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. 46 You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. 47 Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved

much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.” 48 Then He said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

There is no sin so gross nor so often repeated that it cannot be forgiven. Jesus admonition about forgiving “seventy times seven” reflects the heart of God when it comes to forgiveness. God’s forgiveness extends to such things as abortion, divorce, homosexuality, adultery, fornication, stealing, child abuse, failure in business, failure in parenting and failure in ministry.

Paul reminded the Christians in Corinth that they all came from troubled backgrounds (I Cor. 6:9-11).

Such were some of you...

Jesus reminded us that those who have been forgiven much, love much (Luke 7:47).

Those who have been forgiven much, love much.

Note: At the end of this lesson pray for people still in a personal prison house. Walk them through the conditions of forgiveness. Announce freedom and pardon to them.

Lesson 5 Water Baptism

I. What is meaning of the word “baptize”?

Christian baptism finds its origin in the command of Christ after His triumphant resurrection from the grave.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Matthew 28:19-20

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. Mark 16:16

A. The word “baptize” (English) or “*baptidzo*” (Greek) means “to dip, to overwhelm, to plunge or to submerge.” It actually means “to cause something to be dipped” or “to immerse something beneath the surface of water, or some other fluid” (In most cases the act of immersion was temporary and not permanent).

B. We are commanded of Christ to “baptize” believers. If this word were translated instead of transliterated, the command in the New Testament would read,

*“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, **immersing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”*

II. Why is the believer to be baptized?

A. Because Jesus commanded that believers be baptized and, therefore, it is a matter of obedience.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit... Matthew 28:19

B. Because the apostles commanded converts to be baptized (Acts 2:37-39; 10:44-48).

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 2:38

C. Because baptism is part of the believer’s foundation.

Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits. Hebrews 6:1-3

D. Because Jesus was baptized as a model for us to follow (Mt. 3:13-17).

E. Because Jesus closely connected baptism with the experience of salvation.

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. Mark 16:16

Water baptism is an essential part of obedience; it is not optional. To refuse baptism is to live in disobedience to the clearly revealed word of God.

III. What are the prerequisites for baptism?

The physical act of baptism in and of itself cannot save anyone. It is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as one's savior that brings an individual to salvation. Therefore, baptism is only effectual for those who have met certain requirements. Those receiving baptism must have already laid the first two foundation stones in the Christian experience, namely—

A. Repentance (Acts 2:38)

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

This means one is not baptized merely because he wants to be part of the church.

B. Faith (Acts 8:12; 10:47; Mark 16:16)

But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Acts 8:12

This means that one must be old enough to know what he or she is doing. This requirement of faith rules out infant baptism.

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. Mark 16:16

IV. What takes place in water baptism?

We are baptized simply because we are commanded by God to do so. However, as we respond to the Word of the Lord in faith, some very important things will take place.

Every person who goes into the waters of baptism should expect to experience five things by faith.

A. They should expect to be identified with the Lord Jesus Christ in His death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; 3:1).

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food...

I Corinthians 10:1-3

1. We identify with Him in His death.

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Romans 6:3

2. We identify with Him in His burial.

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. Romans 6:4

3. We identify with Him in His resurrection.

Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. Colossians 1:12

B. They should expect a new power over life dominating sins (Rom. 6:11-18).

When we are baptized, we lose our old master (sin, Satan) and become servants of righteousness.

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin- because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master,

because you are not under law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey-whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:5-23

C. They should expect a spiritual cleansing and renewal.

The water itself effects no cleansing, but as we respond in faith to the commands of Christ, the Holy Spirit works in connection with the God prescribed means.

And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name. Acts 22:16

D. They should expect an identification with the name of the Lord (Acts 2:38; 8:12, 16; 10:48).

Because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Acts 8:16

So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days. Acts 10:48

On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Acts 19:5

Kenyon puts it this way, “Baptism in this sense is equivalent to marriage. When the wife puts on marriage she takes her husband’s name and enters into her husband’s possessions and has legal right to her husband’s home. When the believer is baptized into the Name of Christ, he puts on all that is in Christ. He not only puts on the Name but takes his legal rights and his privileges in Christ.”

E. They should expect to experience a spiritual circumcision of the heart (Rom. 2:29; Col. 2:11-12).

V. **What is the significance of circumcision of the heart in connection with water baptism?**

In the Old Testament God gave a covenant to Abraham in which He required those who were participating in the covenant to accept and experience the sign and seal of the covenant which was natural circumcision of the flesh (Gen. 17:10-14). In the New Testament God has taken that seal and made it a spiritual requirement. In water baptism we receive the spiritual experience of circumcision of the heart to which the natural rite pointed. The natural rite consisted of four elements that are all symbolic of something that takes place in the circumcision of the heart.

This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner--those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant. Genesis 17:10-14

A. **The cutting away of the flesh.**

In baptism we put off the old man (Col. 2:11-15).

When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised,” but not by a physical procedure. It was a spiritual procedure—the cutting away of your sinful nature. For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to a new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all our sins. He canceled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ’s cross. In this way, God disarmed the evil rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross of Christ.

Colossians 2:11-15, NLT

B. **The shedding of blood.**

In baptism a death to self is to take place (Rom. 6:3)

C. **The eighth day.**

Natural circumcision took place on the eighth day, which is symbolic of new beginning and resurrection life (I Pet. 3:20-21). In baptism we experience a new beginning and newness of life.

D. A new name given.

In baptism we have a new name invoked over us—the Lord Jesus Christ.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him... Colossians 1:19

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form... Colossians 2:9

Note: All through the Scripture a name change indicated a change in nature as well (Abraham, Sarah, Jacob). As God works through you in baptism, expect your nature to change.

VI. How should we be baptized?

A. Baptism requires that the candidate go down into the water.

Scriptural baptism is baptism by immersion (burial).

So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Acts 8:38

When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. Matthew 3:16

B. Baptism is to be administered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus commanded that baptism was to be administered in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19-20), which name the disciples came to see on the basis of Jesus' ascension and exaltation (Acts 2:33-36), was the Lord Jesus Christ. When the disciples baptized, they baptized in this manner (Acts 2:36-41; 8:12-16, 35-38; 10:48).

An appropriate statement to be made in conjunction with baptism would be:

“Upon the confession of your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; in the name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

This formula:

1. Quotes the command of Christ as declared in the Gospels.
2. Invokes the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ as demonstrated in the Book of Acts.

VII. What is the responsibility of the baptized?

Even as the waters of the Red Sea served as a separation between the Egyptian life of slavery and the land of God's provision for the Israelites of old, so the waters of baptism should serve as a permanent landmark in the life of the believer. Baptism should signal three things:

(The following is from *God and His Word* by Ernest Gentile)

A. A Break with the Old Way of Life.

This means a willingness to sever all connections with ungodliness and those who live in ungodliness. It signifies the start of the Christian life and dedication to Christ and the work of His Church. Baptism into His Name passes the ownership of our life over to the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. A New Standard of Living.

This means that from baptism on, there will be a determination to live by the principles of the Kingdom of God. This entails both its blessings and its obligations.

C. A Disciple of Jesus.

This means that the person being baptized should see himself as a follower of Jesus, a student and a witness to others of all that Jesus stands for.

Conclusion

It is very obvious that baptism is more than just an external experience in the Christian life. God wants to do something lasting and permanent at this special time. Sad to say, many people go down into the waters of baptism dry and come up wet and that is the extent of their experience. But if each individual would respond in faith to all that God says is available in baptism, baptism will be one of the greatest experiences of their Christian walk.

Lesson 6

Holy Spirit Baptism

I. What is the relationship of the Old Testament believer to the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit?

- A. The Spirit came upon various men in Old Testament times that enabled them to do special feats of strength (Judg. 11:29).

Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh, and passed through Mizpah of Gilead; and from Mizpah of Gilead he advanced toward the people of Ammon.

- B. The Spirit of the Lord rested upon men (Num. 11:25).

Then the LORD came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and placed the same upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did so again.

- C. Men were filled with the Spirit in a temporary fashion to perform certain God-ordained tasks (Ex. 31:3).

And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship...

In Old Testament times the Holy Spirit seemed to come upon and then withdraw from certain individuals as the need arose (I Sam. 10:6, 10; 16:14). One of the signs of the Messiah is that He would be one on whom the Holy Spirit would descend and remain (John 1:32-33).

And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'" John 1:32-33

II. How was the ministry of the Holy Spirit seen in the life of Jesus?

It is important to see how the Holy Spirit moved in the life of Christ, for Christ is a pattern of that which is to flow into the Church which is His Body (Eph. 1:22-23).

A. Christ was:

Born of the Spirit (Luke 1:35)

Filled with Spirit (John 3:34)

Baptized with Spirit (Mt. 3:16-17)
Led of the Spirit (Mt. 4:1)
Sealed by Spirit (John 6:27)
Empowered by Spirit (Luke 4:14)
Anointed by Spirit (Acts 10:38)

B. The Church is to be:

Born of the Spirit (John 3:5)
Filled with Spirit (Eph. 3:19)
Baptized with Spirit (Acts 1:5)
Led of Spirit (Rom. 8:14)
Sealed by Spirit (Eph. 1:13)
Empowered by Spirit (Acts 1:8)
Anointed by Spirit (I John 2:27)

III. Is the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” a scriptural term?

Yes! It was used by John the Baptist (John 1:33), by Jesus (Acts 1:5) and by Peter (Acts 11:16).

...for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. Acts 1:5

IV. What is the relationship of Christ to the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

A. Jesus was baptized in the Holy Spirit after His water baptism in the Jordan (Mt. 3:16-17; John 1:19-34). The Spirit came and remained on Him.

When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Matthew 3:16-17

B. Part of Jesus’ ministry is to baptize with the Holy Spirit (John 1:33). To make sure that this was not misunderstood, Jesus did not personally baptize anyone with water (John 4:2).

And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’” John 1:32-33

- C. Jesus prophesied that this would be a believer's experience given on the basis of His exaltation and glorification (John 7:38-39).

“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

- D. Jesus received this provision for the Church from the Father when He ascended into heaven (Acts 2:33).

Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

V. What does the Bible tell us about the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

- A. It is the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4-5; 2:33, 39).

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” Acts 1:4-5

- B. It literally means to be “immersed” in the Holy Spirit (John 1:33; Acts 1:5; Acts 11:16).

- C. It is the enduing with power to do the commands of Christ (Acts 1:8; Luke 24:49).

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Acts 1:8

- D. It is a definite experience which we can know that we have or have not received (Acts 19:1-2).

And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”

- E. It is an operation of the Spirit distinct from and subsequent to the conversion experience (Acts 8:12, 14-16).

But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized...Now when

the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

- F. It is something to be experienced as part of the Christian foundation (Acts 2:37-39).

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

VI. What is the initial evidence of receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

The only way to arrive at a conclusive answer to this question is by examining every case where individuals or groups of people received this experience in the New Testament.

- A. On the day of Pentecost, the waiting disciples were all “filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4).

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

- B. In Samaria, when Peter and John laid hands on those who were converted under Philip’s ministry, we are told that “Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given...” (Acts 8:18). Evidently, there was a visible sign that Simon saw, which is alluded to in Verse 21 when Peter informed Simon that he did not have “part nor lot in this matter (lit. speech or utterance).

- C. The Gentiles experienced an outpouring of the Spirit after Peter’s sermon at the house of Cornelius and everyone present knew it “for they heard them speak with and magnify God” (Acts 10:44-46).

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.

- D. The disciples that Paul encountered in Ephesus “spoke with tongues, and prophesied (Acts 19:6) when Paul laid hands on them. In every case where we have people experiencing the Baptism of the Spirit, we find a common denominator. There was an immediate evidence of “speaking with other tongues.”

And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

Ernest Gentile puts it this way, “The Bible does not say that you **MUST** speak in tongues to have the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, but it does teach us by illustration that if you have the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, you will be given the immediate evidence of speaking in tongues.”

VII. Who may receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

All believers in Christ are candidates for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Mark 16:17).

“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Acts 2:38-39

For those who believe in Christ, the actual reception of the Spirit baptism is sometimes conditioned on the believer’s knowing that there is such an experience available to them and that it is for now (Acts 19:1-6).

VIII. How does one receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

We do not receive the gifts of God by the works of the flesh (Gal.3:2). All the gifts of God are of grace and are to be received by faith (Eph. 2:8-10). There are, however, several things that will help us to release our faith in this area:

- A. Fulfill the prerequisites of repentance and faith before asking for this experience.
- B. Ask Jesus, the baptizer, with the Holy Spirit, to give you this gift (Mt. 3:11; Luke 11:9-13).

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Matthew 3:11-12

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him! Luke 11:13

- C. Yield your “unruly member” as an instrument of righteousness, not doubting that God will give you something other than what you desire.
- D. Exercise your faith by speaking in an unknown language unto the Lord.

- E. Once you have received the gift of the Holy Ghost, use your tongue daily as it is a key to spiritual vitality (Jude 20; I Cor. 14:15, 18).

IX. What are some biblical reasons for speaking with other tongues?

- A. It is one of the signs of the believer (Mark 16:17-18).

And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.

- B. It is a way for our spirit to be built up in faith (I Cor. 14:4a).

He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself...

- C. It is a way to magnify the Lord (Acts 10:46).

For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.

- D. It is a part of our spiritual armor (Eph. 6:17-18).

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints...

- E. It is spoken of as a refreshing (Is. 28:11-12 with I Cor. 14:21).

For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people, to whom He said, "This is the rest with which you may cause the weary to rest," and, "This is the refreshing"; yet they would not hear. Isaiah 28:11-12

Conclusion

God wants every believer who is born of the Spirit to be baptized in the Spirit as well. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary in every Christian for the service that Christ demands and expects of us. Jesus and the Apostles all waited to enter into their ministry until this "endowment with power" was experienced. Let us never see such a wonderful provision of God as an option, but let us seek and find (Mt. 7:7) as we hunger and thirst (Mt. 5:6).

Lesson 7

The Christian Foundation

I. What is the nature of foundations?

A. The word “foundation” is a term most often used in relation to buildings.

In the Bible we are described as God’s building.

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? I Corinthians 3:16

For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building.
I Corinthians 3:9

...but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end. Hebrews 3:6

It’s encouraging to know that we are not just an ordinary building but we are called “God’s building.” This means that God is very interested and involved in the process of ensuring that a solid foundation is laid in our lives.

B. Buildings are only as strong as their foundations.

A foundation is something that is put in place first before the building is built; yet many Christians only come to understand the importance of foundations long after they get saved. In most cases this means they have built their lives in the wrong order. Fortunately in God’s grace we can go back and rebuild our foundation to ensure our stability for the future.

C. A foundation is actively placed but hidden from public view.

The word in the Bible for foundation speaks of something that is put down as the substructure of a building. This is significant because even though it is unseen it is vitally important. It is derived from a word which means to place, sink down, settle, set, ordain, purpose or conceive.

D. A solid foundation can be very costly to build properly.

And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it- lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, “This man began to build and was not able to finish.” Luke 14:27-30

II. Who is our foundation?

A. Jesus is the only sure foundation.

In order to have a solid foundation, Jesus Christ must be at the center of our lives. Everyone's life is built on something, but is Christ at the center?

For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 3:9-11

This is the "stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone." Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:11-12

B. The foundation of Christ is laid based on our hearing and doing what He says.

This is seen in Jesus' parable of the builders (Mt. 7:24-27; Luke 6:46-49). The difference between the two builders is that while both heard the word, only the wise man practiced the word that he heard.

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall. Matthew 7:24-27

III. Do all Christians have this foundation in their lives?

No!

A. There are many who know what to do, but do not do it (Rom. 1:32; Mt. 23:1-4).

Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. Romans 1:32, NIV

Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they

bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." Matthew 23:1-4

B. There are many who have ears but do not hear (Mt. 13:10-14).

The disciples were having trouble figuring out why Jesus changed His style of teaching. Up to this time all of His teaching was very clear. Now He started teaching in parables where the truth was hidden. When you study this passage and the context, it is clear that the religious leaders were not open to Jesus' teaching. They had now accused Jesus of having a demon and doing His work under the inspiration of Satan. Jesus warned the religious leaders about committing the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and then changed His manner of teaching.

And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive...'

C. There are those who deceive themselves by believing that receiving the word is the same and living the word (Jam. 1:22-25).

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

When we only hear the word but do not put the word into practice...

- We deceive ourselves (We think that knowing is the same as doing).
- We forget the word easily.
- We do not receive the blessing of obedience to the word.

D. Those that have ears are instructed to hear (Mt. 13:9; Rev. 2:2, 11, 17, 29; 3:3, 6, 13, 22).

He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Jesus suggests to us that we all have two sets of ears. We have natural ears and we have spiritual ears. As far as God is concerned we have not heard spiritually until we have acted upon that which we have heard.

IV. What serves as a basis for our foundation being laid?

The basis of for our foundation is our personal relationship to Christ. How we respond to the commands of Christ indicates our relationship to Him.

What kind of relationship do you have to Jesus? Is He your friend or pal? Is He your brother? Is He your personal servant? The way you see the relationship has a huge bearing on how you respond to His voice when He speaks.

A. It should be a relationship of love (John 14:15).

If you love Me, keep My commandments. John 14:15

B. It should be a relationship of sheep to shepherd (John 10:26-28; Luke 7:8).

But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. John 10:26-28

C. It should be a relationship of lordship and obedience (Mt. 8:8-10; Luke 6:46; 7:8).

The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" Matthew 8:8-10

But why do you call Me "Lord, Lord," and not do the things which I say? Luke 6:46

D. It should be a relationship of discipleship (Mt. 21:6; 26:19; Luke 9:15).

So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. Matthew 21:6

The greatest thing that can be said of a disciple is that they followed the wishes of their master and did what he asked.

All of these relationships should inspire us to be "swift to hear" (Jam. 1:19). How does one hear quickly? You hear quickly by responding quickly to what the Lord is saying.

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath...

V. What are the benefits and privileges for those who are both hearers and doers of the word?

A. They live “blessed” lives (Mt. 24:46; Luke 11:27-28; 12:43).

And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You! But He said, “More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” Luke 11:27-28

The word “blessed” means “fortunate, well-off and happy.” It denotes the transcendent happiness of a life beyond care, labor and death (Kittle). It can also mean “rich.” It speaks of those who are much to be envied, who live above the cares of others and who are favored with a happy destiny.

B. They receive special instruction and insight from the Lord (Luke 6:27; Mt. 13:16-17).

But I say to you who hear... Luke 6:27

Jesus has special instructions for those who have an ear to hear. He lets them in on His special secrets (I Th. 5:4). As such they are protected from the winds of doctrine that blow on the earth (John 7:17).

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

C. They are considered His closest friends (John 15:13-15).

Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

Abraham was call a friend of God (Jam. 2:23). We have that same opportunity to be a friend of God. We cannot be God’s friend or walk with God unless we are in agreement with His words in our life (Amos 3:3).

D. They are placed in the same category as His mother and brothers (Mt. 12:50; Mark 3:35; Luke 8:19-21).

Then His mother and brothers came to Him, and could not approach Him because of the crowd. And it was told Him by some, who said, “Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You.” But He answered and said to them, “My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.”

Luke 8:19-21

The natural relationships that are described in this passage are the closest of all human relationships. Yet Jesus said that if we are hearers and doers of the word of God we have a closer relationship to Him than even that of His mother and brothers.

E. They find a place of safety, security and protection in His fold (John 10:26-28; I John 2:15-17).

But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

John 10:26-28

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

I John 2:15-16

Lesson 8

The Believer and Prayer

The purpose of this lesson is to develop an understanding of the basic Christian discipline of prayer, to help believers to see the importance of prayer and to challenge believers in regard to the regular and systematic practices of prayer in their lives.

Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the Lord.
Jeremiah 29:12-14

I. What is Prayer?

- A. Prayer is spending time in conversation with God.
- B. Prayer is the act of beseeching God earnestly for someone or something.
- C. Prayer involves communion with God and a recognition of His presence.
- D. Prayer involves listening to what God wants to say.

II. Who provides the greatest example of prayer?

Jesus.

Jesus Christ, who was the only perfect man, gave us a perfect example of communion with the Heavenly Father and, in doing so, demonstrated His absolute dependence on the Father.

- A. Jesus often withdrew from the multitudes to spend time alone with the Father (Mt. 14:23; 6:46; Luke 5:16).**

However, the report went around concerning Him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities. So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed. Luke 5:15-16

- B. Jesus liked to pray early in the morning (Mark 1:35).**

Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.

- C. At times Jesus spent all night in prayer especially when He had important decisions to make (Luke 6:12-13).**

Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles.

D. Jesus' prayer life aroused the desire for prayer among the disciples (Luke 11:1).

Could we say that our personal prayer life is stirring others up to pray?

Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

E. Jesus included others in key times of prayer (Luke 9:28-29).

Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening.

F. Jesus prayed on key occasions.

1. In the context of His baptism (Luke 3:21).
2. On the mount of transfiguration (Luke 9:28).
3. Prior to his leaving the earth (John 17)
4. In the garden of Gethsemane (Mt. 26:36-46).
5. On the cross (Mt. 27:46; Luke 23:46).

G. Jesus entire earthly walk (the days of His flesh) was marked by prayer (Heb. 5:7-8).

...who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

III. What are some of the main components of prayer?

There are five principle components of prayer.

A. Praising God for Who He is.

This is where we rehearse back to God His awesome attributes—His excellent greatness (Ps. 150:2; Ps. 145:1-3).

I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable. Psalm 145:1-3

B. Thanking God for what He has done.

This is where we acknowledge the fact that everything we have comes from God and show appreciation even for the seemingly small things (I Th. 5:18; Ps. 100:4-5).

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. I Thessalonians 5:16-18

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations. Psalm 100:4-5

C. Asking God for things that we need.

This is when we petition God to come to our aid and give us those things that are consistent with His promises and His will for our lives (Phil. 4:6).

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God...

D. Confessing our sins to God and asking for His mercy.

This is where we acknowledge our shortcomings and failures before the God that we have offended (Ps. 32:5-6; I John 1:9). It also involves reinforcing our desire to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord.

I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. 6 For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You in a time when You may be found; surely in a flood of great waters they shall not come near him. Psalm 32:5-6

E. Sharing our heart with God concerning our destiny and our innermost desires.

This is where we share our dreams, our visions, our desires, our longings, our goals, our plans and lay them all before the Lord (Ps. 27:4).

One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple.

IV. What attitudes should be involved in prayer?

A. We should pray in faith (Heb. 11:6).

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

B. We should come humbly before the Lord (II Chr. 7:14).

...if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

C. We should come desiring God's will (I John 5:14-15).

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

D. We should come with pure motivation (Ps. 24:3-5; Is. 58:6-7).

Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. Psalm 24:3-5

E. We should come without hypocrisy (Mt. 6:5-18).

V. What are some important considerations if prayer is to become a reality in our lives?

Jesus was the busiest man on the face of the earth and yet, even at His busiest times, He knew that He had to withdraw Himself for prayer.

Three things are necessary in dealing with the pitch and tempo of life.

A. A Quiet Place

1. For Jesus it was the wilderness (Luke 5:15-16), a mountain (Luke 6:12-13) or any solitary place (Mark 1:35).

Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles. Luke 6:12-13

2. For the men of old it was a personal altar.

The word altar simply means “a place of slaughter or sacrifice.” For holy men and women of old, it was that personal place of sacrifice that became their own personal sanctuary or “holy place.”

- a. Noah had his altar (Gen. 8:20).
 - b. Abraham had his altar (Gen. 22:9-14).
 - c. Jacob had his altars (Gen. 28:16-19; 33:20; 35:7).
 - d. Moses had his altar (Ex. 17:15).
 - e. Joshua had his altar (Josh. 8:30).
 - f. Gideon had his altar (Judg. 6:24).
 - g. Samuel had his altar (I Sam. 7:12).
 - h. David had his altar (II Sam. 24:24-25).
 - i. Solomon had his altar (II Chr. 6:13).
 - j. Elijah had his altar on Mount Carmel (I Kgs. 18:30-40).
3. As believers who have a passion for prayer and communion with the Lord we need to have our secret place of communion (Mt. 6:6).

But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

Your quiet place could be an attic, a garage, a closet, a car, under a tree or an apron over your head.

B. A Quiet Time

The most common time in the Bible for prayer is the first part of the day. Someone has once said, “Hem in both ends of your day with prayer and it won’t be so likely to unravel.”

1. Jesus prayed early in the morning (Mark 1:35).

Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.

2. The Psalmist encouraged an early morning encounter with God (Ps. 5: 3; 55:17; 88:13; 119:147).

Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation. Give heed to the voice of my cry, My King and my God, for to You I will pray. My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up.

Psalm 5:1-3

But to You I have cried out, O LORD, and in the morning my prayer comes before You. Psalm 88:13

I rise before the dawning of the morning, and cry for help. Psalm 119:147

3. The important thing is to develop a daily routine of prayer.

There is a price to pay for this. The more you can build a habit, the harder it will be for you to miss the time. This time should be seen as your “appointment with God.”

C. A Quiet Mind (Psalm 131)

LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, nor with things too profound for me. Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with his mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time forth and forever.

This will involve a certain amount of thought control. If we are going to hear from God we must shut out the other voices that are clamoring for our attention.

VI. In what realms should our prayer life be practiced?

A. Individually

Much of our prayer life will be in secret on a daily basis (Mt. 6:5-7).

B. With two or three others

Often we will solicit the prayer support of others to see special needs met (Mt. 18:19-20).

Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.

C. Corporately

The whole church will also have a corporate life together in prayer (Acts 2:42; 4:24; 13:1-3).

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Acts 2:42

1. The house of the Lord is to be a house of prayer (Mt. 21:13).

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2. The house of the Lord is a place where the voices of God's people will be heard in prayer, praise and thanksgiving (Ps. 64:1; 66:19; 18:6).

Lesson 9

The Believer and the Word

I. What is the importance of the word of God in our lives?

The word of God is the food that gives life to and sustains the believer in their earthly walk. The word of God is the believer's food for their journey.

A. Jesus indicated that the word of God was the source of life to Him (Mt. 4:4).

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Matthew 4:1-4

B. Jesus encouraged us to labor for and to feed on the food of the word (John 6:22-27).

Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him." John 6:26-27

1. Jesus spoke of a bread that when you eat you never hunger (John 6:35).

And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

2. Jesus spoke of a water that when you drink you will never thirst (John 4:13-14).

Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

3. However, the responsibility is on the believer to hunger and thirst and to eat and to drink (Mt. 5:6; Is. 55:1-2).

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.
Matthew 5:6

Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink--even if you have no money! Come, take your choice of wine or milk—it's all free! Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food that does you no good? Listen, and I will tell you where to get food that is good for the soul! Isaiah 55:1-2, NLT

II. What are some symbols connected with the Word of God and what do they tell us?

A. The Word of God is a hammer (Jer. 23:29).

It is able to break up and make an impression on hard hearts.

“Is not My word like a fire?” says the LORD, “And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?”

B. The Word of God is a mirror (Jam. 1:23-25).

It reveals to man his true spiritual condition.

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

C. The Word of God is a two-edged sword (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12).

It works for us to bring victory to our lives. It works on us to convict and divide (II Tim. 3:16; Jam. 1:23-24).

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor [lit. judge or critic] of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

D. The Word of God is a judge (Heb. 4:12).

In the Greek, the word for “discerner” literally means “critic” or “judge.” The Word of God passes right judgment on the innermost nature of man. It is like an umpire or the one who calls the shots.

E. The Word of God is water (John 15:3; Eph. 5:26).

It refreshes, cleanses and purifies the soul from the defilements of sin.

F. The Word of God is seed (Luke 8:11; I Pet. 1:22-23).

It is sown in the heart to bring forth a spiritual harvest.

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,²³ having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever. I Peter 1:22-23

G. The Word of God is food (Jer. 15:16).

It is that which imparts strength to the spiritual man (Deut. 8:3; Ps. 119:103; Job 23:12).

Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts.

Jeremiah 15:16

1. It is milk for babes (I Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:12-13).

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. I Peter 2:1-3

2. It is bread for the mature (Is. 55:1-2; Mt. 4:4).

So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD. Deuteronomy 8:3

3. It is strong meat or solid food for the adult (I Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12-14).
4. It is as sweet and delightful as honey (Ps. 19:10; 119:103).

How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth.

Psalms 119:103

H. The Word of God is a lamp (Ps. 119:105; Pro. 6:23; II Pet. 1:19).

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119:105

1. It imparts life to darkened man (John 6:63; II Cor. 3:18).
2. It exposes areas of sin in our lives (Heb. 4:12-13).
3. It gives direction and guidance (Pro. 6:22-23).

I. The Word of God is true riches (Ps. 19:10; 119:72).

It makes the possessor rich and wise.

The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver.

Psalm 119:72

J. The Word of God is a fire (Jer. 20:9; 23:29).

Then I said, "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name." But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones, I was weary of holding it back, and I could not. Jeremiah 20:9

1. It warms the heart.
2. It gives zeal for service.
3. It exposes the wood, hay and stubble in our lives (I Cor. 3:12-15).

III. How important is it to get a word from the Lord on a daily basis?

A. Jesus indicated that we need daily bread (Mt. 6:11).

Give us this day our daily bread.

B. God has indicated that we need the His word to keep us alive (Mt. 4:4b).

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

IV. How can I grow in the Word?

Constant growth is something we devote our lives to. It involves the following habits (Adapted from *The Word of the King* by Tendai Chitsike):

A. I grow in His Word by hearing it.

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Acts 2:42

These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Acts 17:11

B. I grow in His Word by reading it.

...as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. I Peter 2:2-3

C. I grow in His Word by studying it.

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. II Timothy 2:15

D. I grow in His Word by meditating on it.

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Joshua 1:8

E. I grow in His Word by memorizing it.

Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You. Psalm 119:11

F. I grow in His Word by confessing it.

Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him. Matthew 4:10-11

G. I grow in His Word by doing it.

But He said, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" Luke 11:28

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. James 1:22

V. What are the first steps to Bible reading and meditation?

A. Seeing the need for it.

If you do not accept the importance of this area in your life you will not do anything else about it. We must not let our sense of need be governed by how we feel on any given day. We must believe that we need the word of God more than we need the food we eat.

1. We must believe that we will not prosper without it.
2. We must believe that our survival depends upon it.

3. We must believe that we will die without it.

When you actually believe something, it changes the way that you live.

B. Making a personal commitment to it.

As with anything of value in our life we must make a commitment to the principle of regular Bible study or feeding on the word. This commitment is made to the Lord, but it often helps to solicit a prayer partner with whom to be accountable. This can be a spouse, a close friend or simply another believer with the same heart and drive.

C. Choosing a translation of the Bible for it.

You may use many different translations of the Bible for personal devotional enrichment. You should choose one that is both readable and accurate.

D. Adopting a plan for it.

When we fail to plan, we plan to fail. We must always translate specific desires or commitments into specific plans or they will simply never happen. How are you going to go about your Bible reading and meditation? Where do you begin?

E. Establishing a schedule for it.

If you do not set an actual time aside for Bible reading and study it is likely that you will not do it. Your personal Bible reading may occur in conjunction with your normal prayer time or it may be another designated time where the primary focus will be on digging deeper into the word. Whenever it is, it should be time when you are fresh and can give proper attention to it.

F. Keeping the schedule that you have established for it.

This is where discipline comes in. Most people begin well but lack the discipline to carry on. No matter what happens in terms of keeping your schedule, make sure to get right back into it when you realize you have been negligent.

John Wesley taught several useful tips for effective Bible reading, including:

1. Set apart time every morning and evening for reading.
2. Read with a determination to know the whole will of God, and a resolution to do it.
3. Pray seriously and earnestly before and after reading, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal His Word to you and write it on your heart.

4. Pause frequently and examine your heart and life by what you read.
5. Whatever revelation you receive, begin to execute the first moment you can.

G. Being willing to invest in it.

This means being willing to spend money on your Bible reading habit. How much do we spend on hobbies and recreation? Often when we look at the price of a good Bible we gasp in shock. However, we can go out to eat or go to a movie and spend that amount of money without even thinking. A good student of the word is willing to invest resources into their spiritual growth and development.

VI. How does one choose a translation or version of the Bible?

There are many versions and translations of the Bible to choose from. Different translations are suitable to different purposes.

A. For devotional reading.

Almost any version will do for devotional reading. In fact, it is good to collect many different translations throughout your lifetime and read different versions each year in your devotional times. This keeps the reading from becoming stale and often sheds a new light on the more familiar passages.

There are two types of versions that are inspirational when you are reading for personal devotions.

1. Paraphrase

A paraphrase, like *The Living Bible*, *The Message* or *Phillip's Paraphrase*, attempts to understand the meaning of the passage and put it into the context of the modern world. Many paraphrases are not based on the original Greek text, but are based on the reading of other contemporary versions.

2. Thought for thought translations

A thought for thought translation like the *New International Version* is usually based on the original languages, but is not so concerned about a word for word translation of the Greek. The translators attempted to understand the Greek mind and translate the thought or concept into the contemporary mind or understanding.

B. For deeper study.

For deeper study it is usually better to use a more literal translation of the Bible. Because your deeper study will involve digging into the actual Greek words and

concepts, it is more rewarding to work from a text that will be true to actual word equivalents.

VII. What are some common Bible reading plans?

There are many Bible reading plans that can be adopted all with the view of reading the Bible through each year of one's life. Specific Bible reading plans can be purchased at a Christian bookstore or downloaded from the internet. Most of these plans run through a calendar year.

To read the Bible through in a calendar year one must only read three chapters of the Bible a day. I usually recommend that people read five chapters a day so that when they miss a day for whatever reason they do not end up with a lot of "catch up" reading to do. Getting behind often brings discouragement and can lead to "giving up" on the plan.

A. Reading through from Genesis to Revelation.

In this case you simply leave a marker in your Bible and return to the spot where you left off.

B. Alternating Old Testament reading with New Testament reading.

In this case you keep a marker in the Old Testament and another marker in the New Testament. If you read five chapters a day, in one year you can go through the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice.

C. Reading a portion of the Old or New Testament and a chapter in Proverbs and a chapter in Psalms.

Reading in Proverbs and the Psalms more often than the other books will keep your heart and mind in Christ Jesus. Since there are 31 chapters in the Book of Proverbs you can use the day of the month to determine the chapter to be read. Because of the varying length of the Psalms (they vary from 2 verses to 176 verses), they should be read by the volume of verses rather than a chapter on any given day.

Lesson 10

Renewing the Mind

I. What is renewal of the mind?

When a person surrenders their life to the Jesus Christ and becomes a believer they are totally and immediately transformed or regenerated in their spirit-man. The Holy Spirit takes up residence in the spirit of man and the person becomes a child of God.

Unfortunately, man's mind or thinking processes are not changed so immediately. In fact, when we become believers we are initiated into a process called "sanctification" that is directed by the Holy Spirit with the purpose that our soul-man (our mind, our will and our emotions) can experience the same transformation that are spirit-man has experienced.

The significant battlefield that all believers face is in the area of their minds and their thinking.

The Bible tells us that we are to be renewed in the spirit of our minds. The word in the Bible that is translated "renewed" means to "make new again." In order for a person to become all that God has designed for them to be his or her mind must be refashioned according to God's original design (Eph. 4:23-24; Rom. 12:2).

...and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:23-24

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Romans 12:2

II. Why is renewal of the mind so important?

A. Renewal of the mind is important because our thinking to a large extent determines our behavior.

B. Renewal of the mind is important because thoughts affect our motives which will ultimately be judged by God (I Chr. 28:9b).

...for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts.

C. Renewal of the mind is important because sin stems from evil thinking (Mt. 15:18-19, NLT).

But evil words come from an evil heart and defile the person who says them. For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all other sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander.

- D. Renewal of the mind is important because our thoughts are exposed by God's Word (Heb. 4:12, NLT).

For the word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are.

III. What is the state of man's mind apart from Christ?

Our mind apart from Christ is in an unredeemed state.

- A. The unredeemed mind is defiled (Tit. 1:15).**

To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.

- B. The unredeemed mind is blinded (II Cor. 4:3-4).**

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

- C. The unredeemed mind is alienated from and hostile to God (Col. 1:21).**

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled

- D. The unredeemed mind is futile (Ps. 94:11).**

The LORD knows the thoughts of man, that they are futile.

The LORD knows people's thoughts, that they are worthless! --NLT

- E. The unredeemed mind is set on the things of the flesh (Rom. 8:5-7).**

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

- F. The unredeemed mind is focused on earthly or temporal things (Phil. 3:18-19).**

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame--who set their mind on earthly things.

IV. What are some of the things that influence the way we think?

Our thinking is influenced by:

- A. Our upbringing.
- B. Our past experiences both positive and negative.
- C. Our education and religious training.
- D. Our personal observations.
- E. Our fleshly interests.
- F. Our role-models, particularly those we respect.
- G. The media.

V. What is the goal of a renewed mind?

A. Our goal is to think like God thinks about everything (Is. 55:7-9).

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.

B. Our goal is to have the mind of Christ (I Cor. 2:16).

For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

C. Our goal is to experience true knowledge from God's perspective (Col. 3:9-10).

Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him...

D. Our goal is to have a heart and mind that reflect God's standards and laws (Heb. 8:10).

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

VI. How can we experience a renewed mind?

A. We must have a desire or hunger for a renewed mind (Ps. 19:7-10).

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

B. We must approach the word of God with a spirit of humility (Phil. 2:5-7).

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

C. We must yield to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives (Tit. 3:4-6).

But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior...

D. We must commit ourselves to the reading of and meditation on the word of God (Ps. 1:1-3).

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.

E. We must set our minds on things above (Col. 3:1-3).

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

F. We must dwell on things that are true, right and pure (Phil. 4:8).

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy-- meditate on these things.

G. We must maintain a daily or continual commitment to the process of renewal (II Cor. 4:16).

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

Lesson 11

The Authority of the Believer

I. What is the authority of the believer?

- A. The word authority [*exousia*] in scripture means “ability, privilege, force, capacity, delegated influence or jurisdiction.”

A traffic policeman does not pray, “Oh Lord, in the name of the city fathers please make this traffic stop.” No, he exercises the authority he knows he has. In the same way, believers need to learn what authority is and use it boldly.

- B. Authority is often confused with other things in scripture (Luke 10:19).

1. Authority is not the same as power.

In Luke 10:19 many Bible translations use the word power twice but two different words are used in the Greek. The first one speaks of authority while the second speaks of power. A traffic policeman often faces large crowds and fast moving vehicles. They are all more powerful than he is, but they stop at the raising of his hand. This is because he has authority and they are compelled to recognize it.

2. Authority is not the same as being filled with the Spirit.
3. Authority is not the same as exercising spiritual gifts.
4. Authority is not the same as prevailing prayer.

- C. The believer’s authority is the inherent right of the believer because of his position with Christ in the heavenly realms (Eph 2:6).

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:4-7

We experience spiritual authority as believers because we were raised with Christ at His resurrection. This position and authority is not something that we have earned or deserve by virtue of our own works.

II. What is the nature of authority?

A. God ultimately possesses all authority (I Chr. 29:10b-12).

Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.

B. God delegates His authority to man (Mt. 9:8; Rom. 13:1-2).

When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to men. Matthew 9:8, NIV

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. Romans 13:1-2

C. All human authority is delegated authority and therefore accountable to God's authority (Rom. 13:1-2; 14:12).

So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Romans 14:12

D. All delegated authority is limited authority (Acts 4:18-20; 5:29).

Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" ... 29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!" Acts 4:18-20; 5:29

It's important to know that we have not been given authority over another's will. We see from Genesis that God created man for dominion and not to be dominated by another man. Satan's desire is to take people captive to his will. God's desire is to liberate our wills so that we freely choose to obey and glorify Him.

III. What is the nature of Christ's authority?

A. Christ's authority includes all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt. 28:18).

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

B. Christ's authority is far above all other authority (Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:16; 2:10).

...which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church... Ephesians 1:20-22

C. All authority is subject to Christ's authority (I Pet. 3:22; Jude 25).

[Christ] who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him. I Peter 3:22

D. Christ demonstrated authority while on earth.

1. This is seen in His teaching (Mark 1:22).

And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

2. This is seen in His forgiving of sins (Mt. 9:6).

But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins-- then He said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."

3. This is seen in His commanding of evil spirits (Mark 1:27).

Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him."

4. This is seen in His control over elements of nature (Luke 8:25).

And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!"

E. Christ's authority extends into the ages to come.

1. This includes authority over life and death (John 10:17-18).

Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.

2. This includes authority to grant eternal life (John 17:1-2).

Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.

3. This includes executing judgment (John 5:26-27).

For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.

IV. What authority is given to the believer in Christ?

A. Jesus authorized believers to function in His authority when he gave them authority to use His name (Mark 16:15-18).

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

B. The leaders of the Early Church used this authority in their life and ministry.

1. The Early Church demonstrated power over nature.

Jesus had walked on the water. Jesus had calmed the storms. But Philip was transported supernaturally from one location to another (Acts 8:39). What a tremendous miracle that took place as Philip walked in obedience to the voice of the Holy Spirit. As Philip positioned himself to be God's instrument to preach the Gospel, the Holy Spirit worked with him with signs following.

2. The Early Church demonstrated power over evil spirits (Acts 8:7; 13:4-12; 16:16-20; 19:11-20).

And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city. Acts 8:6-8

3. The Early Church demonstrated power over sickness and disease (Acts 9:33-34).

Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. Luke 9:1-2

4. The Early Church demonstrated power over death.

This does not mean that the early church leaders prayed for every person who died, but at times they ministered this way at the leading of the Holy Spirit. Dorcas was raised from the dead by Peter who followed the example of Jesus (Acts 9:40). Paul and a company of believers prayed over Eutychus who had fallen to his death in a church gathering and he was brought back to life (Acts 20:7-12).

C. All believers can walk in the same authority as the Early Church.

V. What is the basis of the believer's authority?

A. The basis for the believer's authority is the work of Christ on the cross (Col. 2:15, NLT).

In this way, God disarmed the evil rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross of Christ.

B. The basis for the believer's authority is their being "in Christ" (II Cor. 5:17-18).

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation...

C. The basis for the believer's authority is their being genuinely submitted to Christ and other delegated authorities in their life (Mt. 8:9-13).

We only have authority when we submit to the authorities in our lives. The army corporal only has authority when he submits to the captain who is over him.

D. The basis for the believer's authority is being called or appointed by the Lord (Mark 6:7; John 15:16).

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. John 15:16

E. The basis for the believer's authority is operating in God's ordained area of rule in our life (II Cor. 10:12-16).

We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the field God has assigned to us, a field that reaches even to you. II Corinthians 10:13

VI. What guidelines should govern the exercise of our authority?

A. We should begin by exercising authority over our own heart and our own will (II Cor. 10:3-6).

B. We should use our authority for the well-being of others (I Cor. 9:18).

1. Our authority should be used to build people up rather than tear them down (II Cor. 10:8, NLT).

I may seem to be boasting too much about the authority given to us by the Lord. But this authority is to build you up, not to tear you down. And I will not be put to shame by having my work among you destroyed.

2. Our authority should be used to feed or provide for others rather than to feed or provide for ourselves (I Pet. 5:2-3; Ezek. 34:2-3).

Care for the flock of God entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly--not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your good example. I Peter 5:2-3, NLT

3. Our authority should be used to protect the vulnerable rather than expose the vulnerable to danger.
4. Our authority should be used to advance God's kingdom rather than advancing our personal agenda.

C. We should use our authority to overcome the works of the darkness (Eph. 6:12).

D. We should expect to be given more authority as we are faithful with the authority that we have been given (Luke 19:17).

E. We should expect our authority to be enhanced as we function in unity with other believers (Mt. 18:18-20).

VII. How do I qualify to use my authority?

A. I qualify to use my authority by receiving it (Mark 10:15; John 1:12).

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:12-13

We should not run away from our responsibilities as believers, but we should embrace the call of God in our lives.

B. I qualify to use my authority by believing (I John 4:4).

Satan's greatest weapon in our lives is deception. If he can convince us that he is more powerful and that we must yield to him we have lost the battle. A believer who understands his or her authority is a threat to the kingdom of darkness.

C. I qualify to use my authority by walking in humility (Phil. 2:5-11).

It is important for us to remember that all authority is delegated. It comes from God. When we start to exercise our authority and see the results we must not yield to the idea that we have authority in and of ourselves. We are representing Christ and hence operating in His name.

D. I qualify to use my authority by walking with boldness (Acts 4:29-31).

Humility is not timidity. Humility involves agreeing with the truth about what God says about us and expressing it boldly. It is important for the believer to consciously stay in his seat of authority.

E. I qualify to use my authority by having my armor in place and standing my ground (Eph. 6:10-18).

Lesson 12

Overcoming Temptation

I. What is temptation?

A. Temptation is the enticement to sin and to violate God's moral law.

1. Enticement comes through the "Tempter"—the devil (I Th. 3:5).

- a. The devil is our adversary or enemy who works against the purpose of God in our lives (I Pet. 5:8).

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

- b. The devil is a liar who promises pleasure but delivers only death (John 8:44b, NIV).

He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

- c. The devil is a deceiver who attempts to induce us to believe a lie about themselves and about God (Rev. 12:9).

2. Enticement comes through our own lustful desires or appetites (Jam. 1:14; I John 2:16).

For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. I John 2:16

The three primary appetites of man are described as:

- a. The lust of the flesh or perverted sensual or physical cravings (i.e. sexual immorality, addictions, etc.).

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Galatians 5:24, NIV

- b. The lust of the eyes or excessive desire for the things of the world (i.e. greed, covetousness, materialism, etc.).

Do not love the world or the things in the world. I John 2:15a

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Matthew 6:33

- c. The pride of life or self-promotion and the personal desire for position, power and glory.

Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD. Jeremiah 9:23-24

B. Temptation takes place when one is potentially drawn away and enticed by one's own evil desire (Jam. 1:13-15).

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

C. Temptation to sin never comes from God (Jam. 1:13).

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

D. Temptation, in and of itself, is not sin; it is the yielding of our minds and bodies to that temptation that becomes sin (Rom. 6:11-14).

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

1. Eve was tempted by the devil in the Garden of Eden and sinned (Gen. 3:1-8).
2. Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness and did not sin (Mt. 4:1-11; Heb. 4:15)

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

II. What is the nature of temptation?

A. Temptation is common to all mankind and is, therefore, inevitable (I Cor. 10:13).

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

B. No one, apart from Christ, has a perfect record in overcoming temptation (Is. 53:6; Rom. 3:23; I John 1:8)

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... Romans 3:23

C. Jesus understands and can identify with us in all areas of temptation (Heb 2:17-18).

Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

D. For the believer there is always a way of escape from temptation (I Cor. 10:13).

F. When we yield to temptation it always leads to tragic results (Pro. 14:12).

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

III. How do we overcome temptation?

A. We overcome temptation by first receiving God's salvation in Christ (I John 3:8).

He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Christ came to free us from the power of sin. Without His help we cannot succeed.

B. We overcome temptation by recognizing that we are weak by nature and that we can indeed fall (Mt. 14:38b; I Cor. 10:12).

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. I Corinthians 10:12

When we overestimate our own power over temptation we do not guard ourselves the way that we should. We overestimate our own strength when we:

1. Live too close to the world and function in the "gray" areas of life (Jam. 1:27; I Th. 5:22).

Abstain from all appearance of evil. I Thessalonians 5:22, KJV

2. Maintain close relationships with those who encourage us toward sinful behavior (I Cor. 15:33).

Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."

3. Do not structure our life with personal accountability to others (Eccl. 4:9-12).
4. Walk instead of run away from potentially sinful situations (Gen 39:12; I Cor. 6:18; 10:14; II Tim 2:22).

Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. I Corinthians 6:18

5. Believe that we can keep the devil contained to our thought life (Ps. 19:14; Pro. 4:23; 22:5).

Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do.

Proverbs 4:23, NLT

6. Do not maintain the disciplines of prayer and personal Bible reading (Mt. 6:13; Luke 22:40).

He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." Luke 22:40

C. We overcome temptation by putting on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10-17).

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil...above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. Ephesians 6:11, 16

D. We overcome temptation by being rooted in and using God's Word—the Sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17; Mt. 4:4, 7, 10; Ps. 119:11).

Jesus overcame the temptations of the devil because He knew the Scripture better than the devil did.

Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You. Psalm 119:11

E. We overcome temptation by understanding the enemy's methods and not being ignorant of his tactics (II Cor. 2:11; 1 Pet 5:8)

...lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.

II Corinthians 2:11

F. We overcome temptation by having a strategy to do so (Pro. 21:5).

We cannot be passive when it comes to dealing with these areas of our life. We are to resist the devil (Jam. 4:7b) and take drastic measures to remove his influence in our lives (Mt. 18:9).

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. James 4:7-8

G. We overcome temptation by bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (II Cor. 10:3-6).

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

H. We overcome temptation by cultivating our love relationship with God and focusing on living a life that pleases Him (Heb. 12:1-2).

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Lesson 13

Sharing the Gospel

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen. Matthew 28:19-20

I. What does the word “Evangelism” mean?

The Greek word from which we get our English word “evangelism” simply means “to tell” or “to announce good news.” In Christian circles, this word refers to the “good news” or the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

II. Why is the “Good News” necessary?

- A. God, who is absolutely righteous and holy, created man in His own likeness and image (Gen. 1:26-28).
- B. The first man, Adam, fell into sin and out of fellowship with God, thus marring the image in which he was created (Gen. 3:1-21).
- C. Because we are all offspring of Adam and we were made in the image of our father Adam (Gen. 5:3), every man born into the world is born in sin and “brought forth in iniquity” (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 3:9-12; 5:12).

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Psalm 51:5, NIV

1. **Apart from Christ, all people are sinners and are under the sentence of death (Rom. 5:12; Heb. 9:27).**

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned... Romans 5:12

2. **Apart from Christ, all people are dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1).**

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. Ephesians 2:1-3

3. **Apart from Christ, all people are children of wrath (Eph. 2:3).**
4. **Apart from Christ, all people are alienated from the life of God (Eph. 4:17-18).**

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart...

5. **Apart from Christ, even upright, moral and decent people are lost and need to be saved (Rom. 3:23; John 3:3).**

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... Romans 3:23

6. **Apart from Christ, all people are destined for eternal damnation (Rev. 20:10-15).**

All those who do not come into a right relationship with God prior to their death will end up in the lake of fire after their death for eternity.

- D. Man has been separated from God for so long that he has become used to the unnatural and he actually loves darkness rather than light (John 3:19).

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

- E. There is no possible way for a sinful, disobedient man to dwell or have intimate fellowship with a holy and absolutely righteous God.

III. What is the “Good News”?

- A. God took the initiative in bringing man back into fellowship with Himself by sending Jesus Christ to be the head of a new race (Gal. 3:26-29).
 1. Christ was also the image of God (Heb. 1:3).
 2. Christ did not fall into sin as Adam did (Heb. 4:15).
 3. Though undeserving, Christ received the full penalty for sin in Himself (Rom. 5:8).
- B. All who receive Christ as Savior, accept the finished work of Calvary as the only way to salvation, repent of their sins and acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ receive the new birth experience and are born into Christ (John 3:1-5; Acts 2:38-39; John 14:6).

1. In Christ we are made righteous (Rom. 4:5, 22-25).
 2. In Christ there is no condemnation (Rom. 8:1-2).
 3. In Christ we are conformed to the image (Rom. 8:28-30).
 4. In Christ we have peace with God (Rom. 5:1).
 5. In Christ we have access to the Father (Rom. 5:2).
- C. Man is ultimately restored to a place of full fellowship with the Father and becomes a partaker of the riches of His glory (Eph. 1:18; Col. 1:27; Rom. 9:23).
- D. God has provided one way of salvation for all men, whether Jew or Gentile (Rom. 3:10; 5:21).

IV. Who is responsible to tell the “Good News”?

A. God does His work through His people—the church, not angels (Mt. 16:18; II Cor. 5:9-21; I Pet. 1:12).

B. The message of the Gospel must find its voice in God’s people (Rom. 10:13-15).

For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!”

C. The church (God’s people) must reach the world prior to the Second Coming of Christ, because after that there will be no more opportunity (I Th. 4:13-18; II Th. 1:3-12).

...since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power... II Thessalonians 1:6-9

D. If the church does not do it, it will not get done (Eph. 3:8-12).

To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the

manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.

V. What does it mean to be a witness?

A. To be a witness is to be ready to give testimony of what you have seen and heard (Acts 4:18-20; I John 1:1-4).

So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” Acts 4:18-20

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life--the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us--that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. I John 1:1-4

B. To be a witness is to live a life that attests to your confession (I Th. 1:5-7).

This is a life that is able to say, “Follow me as I follow the Lord” (I Cor. 11:1; I Tim. 4:12).

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. I Thessalonians 1:5-7

Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. I Corinthians 11:1

C. To be a witness is to let our light shine though the good works that we do (Mt. 5:16; Acts 10:36-39).

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16

The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ--He is Lord of all--37 that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: 38 how

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. 39 And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Acts 10:36-39

D. To be a witness is to share the gospel message when the door of opportunity is open (Luke 21:13; Acts 4:33; 13:31-32; Eph. 6:19-20; Col. 4:2-4).

And [pray] for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. Ephesians 6:19-20

Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. Colossians 4:2-4

VI. What are the different styles of evangelism?

There are different styles of evangelism that are commonly identified. The believer uses a combination of all of them at various times and with different people depending on the situation and the actual openness of those with whom they are sharing.

A. The Confrontational Approach (Acts 2:22-41)

In this approach the believer pushes for an opportunity to share the message of the Gospel with little or no previous relationship.

Usefulness of this approach:

- You can minister to strangers whom you might not see again.
- Your message tends to be clearer.
- Your agenda is very clear.
- People can get saved sooner than later.

B. The Intellectual Approach (Acts 17:15-34)

In this approach the believer uses intellectual arguments and philosophical reasonings to bring openness to their hearer.

Usefulness of this approach:

- It appeals to people who think Christians are mindless in their faith.
- It shows that you have thought through the things that you believe.
- It helps to present the gospel in a relevant way.

- It often makes unbelievers curious.

C. The Testimonial Approach (John 9:1-15, 25)

In this approach the believer utilizes their life story or personal testimony of the work of God in their lives. This is a very effective especially for those who are new in the faith.

Usefulness of this approach:

- Just like with the man born blind, no one can argue with your testimony.
- It is very personal and relatable.

D. The Relational Approach (Luke 5:27-29)

In this approach the believer establishes a long term relationship with the people in their life course including relatives, neighbors, work mates and the other people that they see regularly in their life course. In this case they wait for the right occasion and the opportune time to share their faith.

Usefulness of this approach:

- There is more time to get to know the person's needs.
- There is more time for trust to build.
- People are often drawn to God as you share your life with them.

E. The Invitational Approach (John 4)

In this approach the believer invites the non-believer to Christian activities and events where the message of the Gospel will be heard.

Usefulness of this approach:

- There is less pressure for you to have all the answers.
- You can point people to a group event which might be less intimidating than a one on one interrogation.
- You can point a group of friends to a larger meeting where the whole group could come to know God at once.
- There is the opportunity for them to see others who are following Christ.

F. The Servant Approach (Acts 9)

In this approach the believer looks for ways to serve non-believers through random acts of kindness. This usually involves serving people in very practical areas of felt need. The kindness of the believer opens the heart of those being served.

Usefulness of this approach:

- People will often want to know why you have shown them kindness.
- People will often give you an opportunity to share the Gospel after they have seen your heart.
- Even if they do not get saved immediately, you have helped someone and changed their perspective on Christianity.

VII. How do I encourage people toward an actual “decision” for Christ?

While not everyone will be ready for this step, there will be some people that are ready to make a decision for Christ. When you discern that they are ready you can walk them through some basic steps. Ask and, if necessary, briefly discuss the following questions before you pray.

- A. Do you realize that you are a sinner (Rom. 3:23)?
- B. Do you realize that Jesus died on the cross for your sin (Rom. 5:8)?
- C. Are you willing to repent of and turn away from your sins (Acts 17:30)?
- D. Are you willing to receive Christ into your life as the Lord of your life (John 1:12)?
Do you understand what that means?
- E. Are you willing to come under the authority of the Word of God? Do you have a Bible? Have you ever read the Bible?
- F. Are you willing to begin a new lifestyle under the direction of God’s Word?
- G. Are you willing to do it now (II Cor. 6:2)?

VIII. How can I lead people in the “sinner’s prayer”?

Many people who come to this point do not really know how to pray or they do not really know what to say in this kind of prayer. By assisting them in praying you can help them be more specific with God.

- A. Have them repeat a prayer along these lines:

Dear Lord,

Today I realize that I am truly a sinner. I realize that my sins have separated me from God. I call upon You as the only One that can save me. I thank You that You love me and that You sent your Son to die in my place on the cross. I repent of all my sins and all of those things that have separated me from You. I am willing to put away my sinful ways and live the way that You have designed for me to live. I acknowledge You as the Lord of the universe and the Lord of my life. I believe that Christ died for me and rose again from the dead. I want to live a life that pleases You in every way. Help me to know what to do. Help me to do what I know is right to do. Thank You for saving my soul.

- B. Ask them to pray to God additionally in their own words. As they pray listen to what they say because it might help you to discern their understanding of what they are actually doing.

IX. How should I follow-up on them in the days following?

- A. Call them the next day to find out how things are going. Pray with them every time you talk to them.
- B. Warn them that Satan and even their relatives and friends may try to talk them out of what they just experienced.
- C. Talk to them about the importance of gathering with other believers for support and encouragement.
- D. Call them on Saturday night and encourage them to come to the service on Sunday.
- E. Talk to them about the Discipleship course and how it can change their life.
- F. Encourage them to come with you to or to get involved one of the many Small Groups.

X. How should I encourage them in the longer term?

- A. Stress the importance of fellowship with other believers.
- B. Introduce them to other believers with whom you feel they may have an affinity.
- C. Assist them in being able to attend activities for their age or lifestyle group.
- D. Encourage them to take initiative to make some new friends.

Lesson 14

Relating to Authority

Introduction

The subject of authority is not a subject that is very popular in modern society. Most people are “free spirits” who do not want to have anyone telling them what to do. This is not an attitude that we had to learn, it was passed on to us by Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were the first ones to challenge God’s authority to rule over their lives.

Part of God’s restoration in our lives involves bringing us back into right relationship to authority. God has established various levels of authority in our lives. Many of the problems that we face in life have to do with an improper relationship to these authorities. If we are to have successful human relationships it is critical that we allow God to assist us in getting this aspect of our lives into biblical order.

I. What is authority?

Authority is the right to command or act, the right to govern or rule and the right to exercise power. “Authority is the right and capacity of an individual to perform what he wills and who, by virtue of his position or office, can command obedience” (H.D. McDonald, *Elwell Evangelical Dictionary*).

The Bible clearly teaches that all authority is from God, but that God has delegated His authority to other humans with whom we must learn to properly relate.

II. What is the purpose of authority?

God has established authorities in our lives for several reasons.

A. Authority has been established by God to help us properly relate to God.

At times it is difficult to relate to God who we have not seen. Duly appointed authorities in our lives who are functioning as God intended can help us to see “God in the flesh.”

B. Authority has been given by God to help us develop wisdom, understanding, knowledge and character (Luke 2:49-52).

Even Jesus grew in these areas as He submitted to His earthly parents.

And He said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to

them. Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

C. Authority has been given by God to help protect us from exploitation.

Being under rightful authorities in our life provides a spiritual covering to us that can ensure protection from forces that would seek to destroy us (Ps. 91:1-13).

In Psalm 91 we are promised protection, deliverance and a place of refuge. We are promised angels who will keep charge over us to guard us against plague, famine and enemy attack. But all these promises are conditioned upon our being properly related to God's covering. According to this Psalm, we are protected because:

1. We are dwelling in the secret place of the Most High (vs. 1).
2. We are abiding under the shadow of the Almighty (vs. 1).
3. We are taking refuge under His wings (vs. 4).
4. We have made the Lord our habitation (vs. 9).

D. Authority has been given by God to come along side of us to give guidance and direction to the critical decisions of our life (Pro. 6:20-23).

My son, keep your father's command, and do not forsake the law of your mother. 21 Bind them continually upon your heart; tie them around your neck. 22 When you roam, they will lead you; when you sleep, they will keep you; and when you awake, they will speak with you. 23 For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life...

E. Authority has been established by God to maintain order and to assist us in fulfilling purpose.

Without an understanding of authority, it is possible for "everyone to do what is right in their own eyes." This attitude will lead to chaos as self-will and self-centeredness will prevail.

"Everyone is under certain God-ordained authorities, such as parents, government, and the church. The purpose of God-ordained authority is to provide protection, direction, instruction, and provision." –Bill Gothard

III. What authorities must I relate to as a Christian?

There are two primary types of authority, absolute authority and delegated or limited authority.

A. Absolute Authority

God is the source of all authority (Rom. 13:1-2). His authority is absolute and He demands complete submission and obedience. God is head over all human or delegated authority. God is also the only one Who can ordain human authorities.

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. Romans 13:1-2

God has all absolute authority for several reasons.

1. God created the world and everything in it (Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11).

You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created. Revelation 4:11

2. God owns the earth and everything in it (Ps. 24:1).

The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.

3. God has given life to everything that lives (Acts 17:24-28).

God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. 26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, "For we are also His offspring."

4. God sustains the earth and everything in it by His word (Ps. 119:89-91; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:3).

For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. Colossians 1:16-17

B. Delegated or Limited Authorities

God has delegated His authority on the earth to human channels. God fully expects us to respond to these channels of His authority the same way that we would respond to Him. Jesus said that “If you receive Me, you receive Him that sent Me” (Luke 9:48; John 5:23, 43). There are five levels of delegated authority.

1. God has delegated authority to the individual to rule over his or her own soul (Pro. 4:23).

Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.

2. God has delegated authority in the natural family.

- a. There is authority carried by the parents together (Ex. 20:12; Pro. 6:20-21; 30:17; Luke 2:51; Rom. 1:30; Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20).

Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.
Colossians 3:20

The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it. Proverbs 30:17

- b. There is additional authority carried by the husband and father (Gen. 3:16; Mal. 1:6; I Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; Tit. 2:5; I Pet. 1:3-6).

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Ephesians 5:22-24

3. God has delegated authority in the realm of civil government (Rom 13:1-7; I Pet. 2:13-17).

Jesus said that we were to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s (Mt. 22:15-21).

Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men--as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.
I Peter 2:13-17

- a. We are commanded to be subject to the higher powers and give honor to whom honor is due (Tit. 3:1-2).

Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.

- b. We are commanded to honor the king. It does not say we are to honor “good” kings.

4. God has delegated authority in the local church (Acts 20:28; I Th. 5:12-13; I Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17; I Pet. 5:1-5).

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves. I Thessalonians 5:12-13

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. Hebrews 13:17

5. God wants us to respond to the authority structure related to our work life (Mal 1:6; Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-23; I Tim 6:1-2; Tit. 2:9-10; I Pet. 2:18).

This includes master/servant or employer/employee relationships.

Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. Ephesians 6:5-8

Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. Titus 2:9-10

IV. What does biblical submission to authority look like?

The fact that there is authority indicates that there is also the issue of submission or obedience to authority. Submission is “voluntarily placing yourself under the protection of divinely appointed authority” (Bill Gothard).

A. Submission is coming under the spiritual covering of those appointed over you from the heart (Eph. 6:6).

B. Submission involves obeying your authorities in spirit and in truth (Mt. 7:21-23; Luke 6:46).

But why do you call Me “Lord, Lord,” and not do the things which I say? Luke 6:46

- C. Submission involves responding to your authorities as you would to Christ Himself (Eph. 5:22; 6:5, 7).**
- D. Submission automatically involves a certain level of accountability and the concept of stewardship (Mt. 24:45-51; 25:14-30).**

V. How does Satan promote rebellion to authority?

Satan knows that our success as individuals and our success as local churches is based on effective leadership. Satan is against authority because he knows that without effective leadership the church will not be built and our lives will not reach their intended destination (Eph. 4:7-16). For this reason God puts the sin of rebellion on the same level as “witchcraft” (I Sam. 15:23). What does Satan do?

A. He fosters an independent spirit in us (Phil. 2:20-21).

He helps us come to the conclusion that we really do not need anyone else to make it in life.

B. He promotes attitudes that conflict with authority (Gal. 6:2).

He fans negative qualities in us that tend keep us resistant to our being lead.

1. Pride
2. Ambition
3. Self-righteousness
4. Anger
5. Self-will
6. Envy
7. Bitterness

C. He promotes misunderstandings and offenses between us and our authorities (Mark 6:2-3).

D. He tries to convince us that our authorities do not understand us and they do not have our best interest in mind.

E. He creates an atmosphere of suspicion relative to our authorities (II Pet. 2:10).

...and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries...

F. He convinces us that we are free from authorities that do not live up to our standards of righteousness (Jude 8-10).

Respect for those in authority has nothing to do with the character of the authorities themselves.

Yet these false teachers, who claim authority from their dreams, live immoral lives, defy authority, and scoff at the power of the glorious ones. But even Michael, one of the mightiest of the angels, did not dare accuse Satan of blasphemy, but simply said, "The Lord rebuke you." (This took place when Michael was arguing with Satan about Moses' body.) But these people mock and curse the things they do not understand. Like animals, they do whatever their instincts tell them, and they bring about their own destruction. –NLT

G. He plants seeds of disloyalty in our hearts that can lead to a casting off of our authorities.

H. He prompts us to speak to others of things that undermine the value of authority.

VI. What are the limits of authority?

All delegated authority has its limits. Ultimately we must obey God above all other delegated authorities (Acts 5:29). When any authority on earth asks us to violate the clear word of God, we will have to disobey that authority. However, we can still disobey with a submissive and respectful attitude toward that person.

“The only circumstance that disobedience to authority is justifiable by scripture is if it conflicts with the laws of God. Authority should be cooperated with except in those situations where laws depart from the basic moral and righteous principles of God’s Word.” –Dr. Dale A. Robbins

VII. How do I restore proper relationship to God’s delegated authorities in my life?

- A. Take personal responsibility for closing the gap between you and the authority figures in your life.
 - 1. Repent for wrong attitudes against authority.
 - 2. Pray for those in authority (I Tim. 2:1-2).
 - 3. Forgive those in authority

4. Open fresh lines of communication.
 5. Apologize for past attitudes.
 6. Ask God for creative solutions for old problems.
 7. Seek input from your authorities.
- B. Work through each of the authority relationships in your life beginning with your parents. Wrong relationships to parents can product negative fruit in all other relationships.

Lesson 15

Marriage and Family

Introduction

It's important to understand that marriage and the family are institutions that were ordained by God. God's eternal purpose is dependent upon marriages and families functioning according to His order and design. Because of this our relationships in marriage and the family are the most important relationships on earth outside of our personal relationship with God. A good biblical definition of the family is as follows:

The family is the God-ordained basic unit of society having parental headship and discipline which is established for the purpose of enjoying common life together through working, caring, sharing, serving and ministering to God and others.

- I. Why is it so important to place an emphasis on marriage and the family?**
 - A. Because the family is and always will be the basic building block of society.**
 - B. Because God places a high value on the family.**
 - C. Because as the family goes, so goes the church.**
 - D. Because the world is trying to redefine the family.**

The traditional concept that corresponds with the biblical concept of family is “the group comprising a husband and wife and their dependent children, constituting a fundamental unit in the organization of society.”

- E. Because cultural forces are undermining the success of the family.**
 - 1. The busyness of our lifestyles
 - 2. The focus on materialism
 - 3. The excessive divorce rate
 - 4. The proliferation of electronic entertainment
 - 5. The dual income culture
 - 6. The TV model of family
 - 7. The educational system
 - 8. The culture of comfort
 - 9. The overall selfishness of the individual
 - 10. The “rights” movements that empower children
 - 11. The debt society

12. The context of the last days (II Tim. 3:1-5).

You should also know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control; they will be cruel and have no interest in what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. You must stay away from people like that.

–NLT

II. Why is it important to see marriage as a covenant?

A God-pleasing marriage is the foundation for a successful family. A biblical marriage is based on a man and a woman entering into a covenant relationship with each other. The marriage covenant is patterned after the covenants that God has established with mankind.

A. Marriage is a Covenant (Mal. 2:14-16; Pro. 2:16-18; Gen. 2:23-25).

Here is another thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, weeping and groaning because he pays no attention to your offerings, and he doesn't accept them with pleasure. 14 You cry out, "Why has the LORD abandoned us?" I'll tell you why! Because the LORD witnessed the vows you and your wife made to each other on your wedding day when you were young. But you have been disloyal to her, though she remained your faithful companion, the wife of your marriage vows. 15 Didn't the LORD make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So guard yourself; remain loyal to the wife of your youth. 16 "For I hate divorce!" says the LORD, the God of Israel. "It is as cruel as putting on a victim's bloodstained coat," says the LORD Almighty. "So guard yourself; always remain loyal to your wife." Malachi 2:13-16, NLT

And here's a second offense: You fill the place of worship with your whining and sniveling because you don't get what you want from GOD. Do you know why? Simple. Because GOD was there as a witness when you spoke your marriage vows to your young bride, and now you've broken those vows, broken the faith-bond with your vowed companion, your covenant wife. GOD, not you, made marriage. His Spirit inhabits even the smallest details of marriage. And what does he want from marriage? Children of God, that's what. So guard the spirit of marriage within you. Don't cheat on your spouse. "I hate divorce," says the GOD of Israel. GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies says, "I hate the violent dismembering of the 'one flesh' of marriage." So watch yourselves. Don't let your guard down. Don't cheat. –Msg

1. A covenant is a formal, solemn and binding agreement or contract, usually under seal, between two parties.
2. The word “covenant” in the Hebrew actually comes from a word meaning “bond” or “fetter” (Ezek. 20:37).
3. It literally means to bind two people together—the two become one.

B. God Himself has entered into many covenants with man.

1. God entered into covenants with people like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and David.
2. All of God’s covenants have five common elements that parallel the marriage covenant.

God’s Covenants	Marriage Covenants	Description of Elements of Covenants
Promises	Vows	This is where commitments are made that form the basis of the covenant.
Bloodshed	Death to Self	A symbolic death must take place to ratify the covenant between parties.
Seal or Sign	The Ring	An enduring seal is used to reflect the enduring nature of the covenant.
Feast	Feasting	A time of rejoicing to celebrate the new relationship that is formed.
Sanctuary	The Home	A place of relationship where the promises of the covenant are fulfilled.

C. Marriage as a covenant is unconditional in nature.

1. As a covenant marriage involves a cleaving to one another in sickness and health, poverty and wealth, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, good times and bad times, agreements and disagreements.
2. As a covenant marriage means that people know that they must face problems, discuss them, seek God’s help in them, resolve them rather than run from them, because there is no other way out. They are committed to one another for life.

III. What is the purpose of marriage and family?

If we are going to bring God glory in our marriage and family, we must understand its original purpose. The family’s purpose is to:

A. To reflect the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28).

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

1. As such it is to express God's identity and likeness including His character, nature, personality, virtue, and sense of humor. God's purpose in marriage was that husband and wife together would bear the image of God.
2. *As such it is to reflect God's design for His creation to be priests (i.e. relationship, intimacy, intercession, prayer and worship) and kings (i.e. rulership, authority, dominion, righteousness and justice and protection).*

B. To extend the Kingdom of God (Gen. 1:26-28)

The family is to be an instrument of God's eternal purpose to extend His kingdom in the earth and overcome the works of darkness. This can only be done by a family that walks in God's light.

C. To raise up a godly lineage and offspring (Mal. 2:15; Ps. 127:5)

Didn't the LORD make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So guard yourself; remain loyal to the wife of your youth. Malachi 2:15, NLT

God hates divorce because it causes damage to children, which hinders their ability to be God's instruments to extend His Kingdom and purpose to subsequent generations.

D. To reflect the love relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:25-33)

Husband and wife should be a portrait of the relationship between Christ and the church. In order to do so this relationship is must characterized by total commitment, unswerving devotion, profound intimacy, faithful friendship, loyalty, servanthood, honor, the leadership of love and godly submission.

E. To demonstrate the Father-heart of God (Eph 3:14-15, 6:1-4).

A biblical family should be led by a father who loves, cares, provides and disciplines just as God, the Father would. Failure on the part of fathers is one of the biggest

causes of social problems in the world including crime, sexual promiscuity, gang violence and suicide.

F. To form the foundation for strong, free and prosperous nations (Gen. 18:18-19).

A nation is simply an extended family (family – clan – tribe – nation). Strong, free and prosperous families will translate into strong, free and prosperous nations.

G. To conform us to the image of Christ (Luke 9:23-24).

It is in family relationships that we learn to put others first, not let the sun go down on our anger, tell the truth, practice non-negotiable love, speak kind words and forgive “seventy times seven.” Marriage and parenting are key tools to fashion us into humble, loving, selfless, sacrificial people!

H. To experience companionship and enjoyment (Gen. 2:18).

Marriage was also created for our enjoyment and fulfillment. God created us as social and relational creatures. God intended for marriage to be a place of companionship where soul-mates delight in each other.

IV. How does God want to use our homes?

A. God wants every home to be a place where the principles of the Kingdom of God are lived out. In this way our homes will become:

1. A pattern of good works attracting the lost (Tit. 2:7-8).
2. A good testimony to those who are outside of the community of faith (II Cor. 8:21; I Tim. 3:7; Acts 22:12).
3. A place where people will come for answers (I Pet. 3:15-16).
4. A true manifestation of the wisdom of God (Col. 4:5; Eph. 3:10; Jam. 3:13).

B. God wants every home to be a place from which we can reach out to our neighborhood. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mt. 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31,33; Rom. 13:9-10; Jam. 2:8; Gal. 5:14).

We rightly relate to neighbors when we:

1. Take time to get to know them.
2. Help them with a project (i.e., canning, clean-up, etc.).

3. Assist in times of need.
 4. Invite them to dinner.
 5. Visit them when they are sick (and send a card).
 6. Remember them on special occasions.
 7. Talk to them when the occasion presents itself.
 8. Invite them along to special family or church functions.
 9. Be willing to help them with babysitting.
- C. God wants every home to be a place of reaching out to the poor and needy (Pro. 31:20).
1. This starts with the needy in the family circle itself (I Tim. 5:8).
 2. This extends to the other members of the Body of Christ (I Cor. 16:15).
 3. This reaches beyond to the stranger outside (Gal. 6:10; I Th. 5:15).

V. What are some practical ways in which we can get more actively involved in outreach from our homes?

There are many things that we can do as believers. The following are only a few suggestions. You can add to your own list.

- A. Housing needy singles, whether they be newly converted or in need of a local parental oversight.
- B. Using your home as a centre of hospitality, ministering to those who are in need of love and care.
- C. Reaching out to the older people in the Body of Christ and your neighborhood, serving them through acts of kindness.
- D. Establishing a healthy relationship with your neighbors.
- E. Using your home for church functions.
 1. Showers
 2. Small group meetings
 3. Prayer meetings

4. Bible studies

The home is the place where true Christianity is displayed. People may question its authenticity in the church but when they see it in your home, they will be convinced (I Pet. 2:9-17).

VI. What is God's solution for the fallen condition of the family?

- A. God is very interested in the restoration of the home (Jer.31:1; Mal. 4:4-6).
- B. God's solution for man's problem is Calvary, the place where Jesus died for the sins of all people.
 - 1. The household of Cornelius was restored through life in Jesus Christ (Acts 10:1-2; 44-48).
 - 2. The household of Lydia was restored through life in Jesus Christ (Acts 16:14-15).
 - 3. The household of the Philippian jailor was restored through life in Jesus Christ (Acts 16:25-34).
- C. Man is responsible to take full advantage of God's answer.
 - 1. Men and women must first come into right relationship with God.
 - a. This means repenting of their sins against God and against other family members.
 - b. This means receiving Christ as the Lord of their lives and their family life.
 - 2. Men and women must be willing to find out what God has to say about family life.
 - a. This means searching the Scriptures for the truth about their God-ordained roles in the family.
 - b. This means seeking the counsel of those who are aware of God's guidelines for the family.
 - 3. Men and women must trust God's word over the words of man.
 - 4. Men and women must put the Word of God into practice.
 - 5. Men and women must desire and actively solicit the help of God in the fulfilling of their God-ordained roles and responsibilities.

Lesson 16

Understanding the Church

I. What is the Church?

- A. The literal meaning of the word *ekklesia* is “the called out ones”.
- B. In secular Greek society *ekklesia* referred to an assembly of free citizens called out from their homes and/or places of business to give consideration to matters of public interest (Acts 19:32, 39, 41).
- C. In the New Testament: this word is used 114 times and 110 times it definitely refers to the church or “the called out ones” of Jesus Christ.
 - 1. Jesus himself introduces this usage when he refers to “His Church” (Mt. 16:18).

And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

- 2. The church of Jesus Christ consists of those people who have been “called out” from the world (I Pet. 2:9-10), who have separated themselves unto God and have gathered together unto the Lord Jesus Christ for worship and fellowship.

II. What are the two major uses of the word “church” in Scripture?

A. Jesus used the word “church” to refer to all believers of all ages in Christ.

- 1. This aspect of the Church is sometimes referred to as the invisible, the mystical or the universal church.
- 2. Jesus Himself used the word in this sense when he said, “Upon this rock I will build my church” (Mt. 16:18)
- 3. Jesus was not speaking here of a specific local congregation.
- 4. The universal church involves a mystical union of all believers of all ages into a spiritual body.
- 5. The universal church is referred to specifically approximately 14 times in the New Testament primarily in the Book of Ephesians—the Book of the Church.
- 6. It is important to understand the concept of the universal church so that:

- a. We can see our connection and mystical union with all believers of past ages who have run before us, realizing that they are counting on us to finish the race (Heb. 12:1-2).
- b. We can see that all believers in the world are really one in Christ. When one suffers, we all suffer and when one rejoices, we all rejoice (Acts 11:27-30; I Cor. 12:26).
- c. We can see that what God is doing is bigger than one local church, sect, denomination or people, but includes every nation, kindred, tribe and tongue in each and every generation (II Pet. 3:9; Rev. 5:9-10; 14:6-7).

B. Jesus used the word “church” to refer to a local congregation of believers (Mt. 18:15-20).

- 1. Out of 114 references to the church in the Bible, about 95 refer to the local church.
- 2. This aspect of the church is called the visible church or the local church.
- 3. It involves a specific group of people in given localities which are marked out by confession of faith, discipline of life, obedience in baptism, gathered to the person of Jesus Christ, having gifted ministries and keeping the memorial of the Lord. They are always spoken of as complete units within themselves, which may voluntarily cooperate and fellowship with other local churches.
- 4. God’s plan is for every believer to be physically added to a local church and become a functioning part of that body (Acts 2:41, 47).**

And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:47b

- 5. The local church is a specific body of believers in a given locality.
 - a. Acts 8:1 – “the church which was at Jerusalem”
 - b. Romans 16:5 – “the church that is in their home”
 - c. I Corinthians 16:1 – “the churches of Galatia”
 - d. I Corinthians 16:19 – “The churches of Asia”
 - e. The seven churches of Asia (Rev. 1-3)

III. What is the Church NOT?

Before we can understand and build a biblical concept of the Church, we must understand what the church is not. How you define the Church will determine where you focus your energies.

A. It is not a building for Christian worship.

1. The word “church” is never used in scripture to refer to a material building.
2. The building is only the place where the Church (i.e. the people of God) meets. It is the sheep shed.

B. It is not a sect or denomination (e.g. Lutheran, Baptist, etc.).

C. It is not Christian worship or a worship service.

While it is important for God’s church to gather for worship, it is equally important to understand that the church is more than a once-a-week meeting.

V. How is the Church described in the Bible?

A. The New Testament describes the Church as a Body (Eph. 4:16; I Cor. 12:18, 26-27).

But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased...And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. I Corinthians 12:18, 26-27

B. The New Testament describes the Church as the Family or Household of God (Eph. 2:19)

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God... Ephesians 2:19

C. The New Testament describes the Church as an Army (Eph. 6:10-18).

This army is a spiritual army engaged in spiritual warfare against a spiritual enemy—the devil.

D. The New Testament describes the Church as the Bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-33)

This Bride will one day be eternally united in marriage with the only begotten Son of God.

E. The New Testament describes the Church as a Temple or Building made up of

living stones. (Eph. 2:20-22; I Pet. 2:5).

...having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. Ephesians 2:20-22

...you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. I Peter 2:5

VI. What did Jesus teach about the Local Church?

Jesus tells us much about the local church in Matthew 18:15-20.

Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that "by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." 17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. 18 Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.

Some of the truths and implications that we can extract from Jesus' words include:

A. The local church is composed of brothers and sisters (vs. 15).

1. The local church is meant to be a family setting.
2. The local church is a place of close relationship.
3. The local church is to be a place of belonging.

B. The local church is not perfect (vs. 15).

1. Members of the local church will have conflict.
2. There will be difficulties to work through until Jesus comes.
3. If we are to succeed as the church we must be committed to conflict resolution and working through the process.
4. God has provided a means whereby those conflicts can be resolved.

C. The local church is a place of discipline (vs. 16-17).

1. It is not a loose-knit group having no responsibility or accountability to the other.
2. It is a place where we get involved in each other's life.
3. It is a place where sin is confronted and discipline is administered.

D. The local church is a defined body of believers (vs. 17).

1. It is a place where you are known to be a part.
2. It is a place from which you can be expelled.
3. You are either a part of a local church or you are not part of a local church.

E. The local church is a channel of God's authority (vs. 18).

1. The authority of God (heaven) is vested in the local church.
2. God supports the disciplining actions of the church.
3. To be disciplined by the church is to be disciplined by Christ.

F. The local church is to be a place of unity and agreement (vs. 19).

1. Its power is dependent upon it.
2. The presence of God confirms it.

G. The local church is to be a place of fellowship in faith and prayer (vs. 19).

1. There is a gathering together.
2. There is a corporate asking of God.
3. There is a corporate expectation for God to act.

H. The local church is a place where Christ promises to dwell (vs. 20).

1. It is the habitation of God by the Spirit.
2. There is a manifestation of God's presence that is unique to the gathering together of God's people.

I. The local church is a gathering identified with the name of Christ (vs. 20).

1. It carries the authority of His name.
2. It is to be His representative in that given locality.

J. Other implications

1. One person cannot make up a local church.
2. The local church is to be a place of order.
3. Until the church is completed, there is going to be a great need for love, patience and a lot of forgiveness (Mt. 18:21-22).

VII. What were the main characteristics of the New Testament Church?

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers... Acts 2:42

The first generation Christian church is a biblical pattern for today's churches. Acts 2:40-47 give us a summary of this pattern. It is to be a guide for our present day strategies and structure:

1. The Apostle's doctrine -- The Authoritative Teaching of the Word of God
2. Fellowship -- The Cultivation of Relationship in the Family of God
3. The Breaking of Bread -- The Communion of the Body of Christ
4. Prayers -- The Supernatural Influence of Prayer and Intercession
5. The Fear of the Lord -- The Awesome Respect of Almighty God
6. Wonders and signs -- The Miraculous works of the Holy Spirit
7. Together in One Accord -- The Unity of True Believers
8. All Things in common -- The Adventure of Liberal Giving
9. In the Temple -- The Dynamics of Corporate Gatherings
10. From House to House -- The Ministry in Small Groups
11. Simplicity of Heart -- The Joy of the Christ-like Lifestyle
12. Praising God -- The Spiritual Impact of Worship
13. Favor with People -- The Influence of Righteousness in a City
14. Added to the Church -- The Making of Disciples in the Local Church

VIII. What is the God's purpose and mission for His Church?

The ultimate intention of God is to establish His rule and authority in the hearts and lives of people and throughout His entire universe. God has used different instruments over the centuries of time to accomplish His plan and purpose. He used the patriarchs (i.e. Adam and Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Etc.), the nation of Israel, and even Gentile kings at times. He used Jesus as the instrument of His kingdom. The Church is the final or ultimate instrument of God in the earth and will continue to function as such right up to the return of the Lord (Luke 9:1-2; 10:19; Mt. 28:18-20).

The Church is God's instrument to foster the four main aspects of His Eternal Purpose.

- A. Relationship: To worship and glorify God (Gen. 3:8; Eph. 3:20-21; Mt. 5:13-16; I Pet. 2:9)
- B. Character: To be conformed to the image of Christ (Gen. 1:26; Rom. 8:28-29; II Cor. 3:18; Col. 2:7)
- C. Function: To do the works of Jesus (Gen. 1:26,28; Rom. 16:20; Mt. 10:7-8; Mark 3:14-15; I John 3:8; Acts 10:38)
- D. Reproduction: To make disciples of all nationalities (Gen. 1:28; Mt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; Eph. 4:12; Acts 20:28; Col. 1:28)
- E. The Church is God's instrument to extend the Kingdom message (Acts 1:8; Mt. 4:17; 24:14; I Cor. 15:24; Eph. 3:10-11).
 - 1. Witnessing in our Jerusalem: City/Community
 - 2. Witnessing in our Judea: Region/Nation
 - 3. Witnessing to our Samaria: Cross-Cultural
 - 4. Witnessing to the ends of the Earth: Global Missions

Lesson 17

Building Authentic Community

I. What is meant by “building authentic community”?

A. Building (Eph. 4:12; I Pet. 2:5)

Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

I Peter 2:4-5

The word “building” implies that we can be social architects. We can create culture. God has called us to build. Despite the superficial nature of our society it is possible for us to create something that reflects kingdom community.

B. Authentic (Acts 2:46-47; Rom. 12:9)

They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity--all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved. Acts 2:46-47, NLT

The word “authentic” implies that what we are after is genuine, sincere and the “real thing.” Today’s generation can see through fakeness. People can see when we do things with wrong motives. Today’s generation generally looks for authentic community first then they ask us questions about truth.

C. Community (I John 1:7)

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

The word “community” from a biblical perspective means “fellowship, participation, sharing, contribution and generosity.” Biblical community is an environment where we:

1. Love God completely.
2. Love ourselves correctly.
3. Love others compassionately.

II. Why do we need to build authentic community?

We need to focus on building authentic community for several reasons:

A. Because God Himself is relational and we are to be like Him.

“You are never more like God than when you are living in relationships with God’s people and walking in partnerships for the recreation and redemption of God’s world.” --Ray Bakke

B. Because Jesus desires authentic community among His followers (John 17:22b - 23).

And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

God’s priorities need to become our priorities. Jesus prayed, father I pray that they may be one.

“Community is the very essence of the church and the very lifestyle of the Kingdom. The church is community.” --Arthur Wallis

C. Because authentic community among Christ’s followers testifies of His authenticity (John 17:23).

D. Because authentic community is necessary for effective ministry (I Cor. 12:21; Eph. 4:16).

Under his direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. Ephesians 4:16, NLT

“Perhaps the greatest single weakness of the contemporary Christian Church is that millions of supposed members are not really involved at all and, what is worse, do not think it strange that they are not. As soon as we recognize Christ’s intention to make His Church a militant company we understand at once that the conventional arrangement cannot suffice. There is no real chance of victory in a campaign if ninety percent of the soldiers are untrained and uninvolved, but that is exactly where we stand now.” --Elton Trueblood

E. Because authentic community is the context for making disciples (Mt. 28:19-20, NLT).

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the

commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

John Wesley developed a simple plan for maturing and equipping the saints. Wesley said, “The Church changes the world not by making converts but by making disciples.”

F. Because the Church is God’s agent to minister to the lonely and hurting (Ps. 68:5-6).

A father to the fatherless... God sets the lonely in families.

“The opposite of community, alienation is the syndrome by which every individual feels isolated. No one feels as if he really belongs anywhere. No one knows where he fits in. In an alienated society, the individual withdraws more and more into his bubble of isolation. He does not know how to communicate with his neighbour. He has virtually no one with whom to share intimate dialogue on a meaningful level.” -- Keith Intrater

“The curse of our age is superficiality.” --Richard Foster

G. Because Christianity has a holistic theology.

If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also. I John 4:20-21

1. This means that our love for God translates into a love for all people who are made in the image of God (I John 4: 20-21).
2. This means that we recognize that our faithfulness in the natural and the material realms qualify us for true spiritual riches (Luke 16:10-13).

H. Because authentic community is the model given to us by the Early Church (Acts 2:42-47).

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. Acts 2:42-45

III. What are the symptoms of not being in authentic community?

A. Lack of authentic community results in isolation.

People who cannot make emotional attachments live in a state of perpetual hunger. They have a crying need that is not being met. People in this case generally feel sad and angry.

B. Lack of authentic community results in depression.

Depression is a condition marked by sadness, inactivity, difficulty with thinking and concentration, a significant increase or decrease in appetite, an increase in time spent sleeping, feelings of dejection and hopelessness and sometimes suicidal thoughts.

C. Lack of authentic community results in feelings of meaninglessness.

People confuse their feelings of meaninglessness with not having purpose; they desperately try to find meaning in some activity or ministry. These attempts only push them further into isolation. They are lacking the true meaning of life which is found in love-based relationships.

D. Lack of authentic community results in feelings of guilt.

Isolated people who fail to bond tend to think of themselves as being “bad” because of their failure in relationships. The more they allow themselves to think this way the more unlovable they can become.

E. Lack of authentic community results in addiction.

Isolated people can begin to turn to other things for comfort that give them a sense of meaning or comfort without relationship to others. Ultimately these things do not bring lasting satisfaction because they do not deal with the root problem.

Note: The above five points adapted from *Changes that Heal* by Cloud and Townsend.

IV. What is the solution to lack of authentic community?

If we are to get into a place of authentic community, we must do three things:

A. We must personally commit to building deep relationships.

“We mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor.”
--American Declaration of Independence

Can you commit yourself to get to know five families with whom you will develop authentic community?

B. We must embrace a biblical view of church life.

The church is meant to be a family not a crowd or a corporation. A family is a place of intimate relationship and fellowship that functions together as a living organism for the common good. All of the biblical metaphors of the church speak of the individual finding purpose and fulfillment in proper relationship to others. These metaphors include the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Lord, the Army of God and the Family of God (Eph. 2:19-22).

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

What is God's measure of a healthy church? Our focus should be spiritual family and biblical community which includes building healthy, covenantal, non-disposable, authentic, loving relationships. Loving relationships are the second most important thing in the Kingdom of God (Mt. 22:37-38).

“If the church does not make the transition from organized institution to organic tribe – a living community – we will lose the next generation and pay the price for it in complete societal breakdown and eventual anarchy.” --Robert Stearns

C. We must overcome the barriers to authentic community.

V. What are some barriers to authentic community?

A. Past experiences can negatively affect our current beliefs about relationships.

This might include negative experiences with authority figures or growing up in a dysfunctional home.

B. Our self-concept can be a barrier to building authentic community.

Having a sense of superiority or inferiority can affect relationship building. Most of these feelings can be traced to an unhealthy fear of man.

C. The stereotypes we have of certain groups can be a barrier to authentic community.

Do you have any prejudice towards specific people groups, age groups, professions or gender? Are there cultural barriers your relationships?

D. Fear can be a barrier to building authentic community.

There are many fears that can stand in our way to developing close relationships. Some of these include:

1. The fear of rejection
2. The fear of the unknown
3. The fear of being out of control
4. The fear of being found out

“To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wronged and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no-one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully around with hobbies and little luxuries. Avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, aimless, it will change. It will not be broken; instead it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.” --C.S. Lewis

E. Poor interpersonal skills can be a barrier to building authentic community.

F. Lack of trust can become a barrier in authentic community.

Are people untrustworthy until they prove themselves trustworthy or are they trustworthy until they prove themselves untrustworthy?

[Love] *bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*
I Corinthians 13:7

G. Lack of transparency is a barrier to authentic community (1 John 1:7).

H. Negative words we speak can form barriers in potential relationships.

The Bible describes the tongue as being like a rudder (James 3:3-5). In many ways it directs the course of our lives. Often when we have been hurt we say things over our lives, which become barriers in our relationships. These may be termed inner vows. Inner vows are often as a result of abuse and hurt.

The following are examples of such statements:

“I will never do business with a Christian again!”

“I will never let a church use me again!”

I. Our fundamental beliefs about ourselves, others and God may lead to barriers in authentic community.

Beliefs are important. As a man thinks in his heart so is he (Pro. 23:7). We often focus on decisions and not beliefs, yet our decisions and behaviour are determined largely by beliefs.

1. What are your beliefs about yourself?

- “I am bad.”
- “I am unlovable.”
- “Something about me scares people away.”
- “My sins are worse than other people’s sins.”
- “I don’t deserve love.”
- “My neediness will overwhelm anyone.”
- “My need for others is not valid.”
- “My feelings will overwhelm anyone.”

2. What are your beliefs about others?

- “No one is trustworthy.”
- “People will always leave me.”
- “People are mean and critical.”
- “People will disapprove of me.”
- “People will control me.”
- “People are faking their care.”

3. What are your beliefs about God?

- “He really doesn’t love me.”
- “God doesn’t care about the way I feel. He just wants me to be good.”
- “He wants just ‘good Christians.’”
- “He gets angry with me.”
- “He doesn’t hear me.”
- “He doesn’t answer prayer.”
- “He will control me and take away my freedom.”
- “He won’t forgive me for...”

Building authentic community will require a lot of patience on our part. The Bible tells us to be patient with those who are weaker (I Th. 5:14). True relational maturity is often seen in your ability to handle immaturity in others. Let’s take the risk and make ourselves vulnerable. There is much love around, do not hide from it.

Note: This lesson was written with significant contribution from Paul Nyamuda.

Lesson 18

Church Membership and Commitment

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. Ephesians 2:19-22

I. What is the meaning of the word “commitment”?

The word “commitment” itself does not occur in the King James Version of the Bible, but when we understand the meaning of this word, we find that it is a concept that occurs throughout the Bible and is the basis for the entering into and maintaining all covenants.

- A. To be committed to someone is to cleave to, to adhere to, to be attached to, to join oneself closely to or to stick to the side of another.
- B. In the Greek language, the concept of commitment implied a gluing together, a firm fastening and a giving of oneself steadfastly to another.

II. What ways do Christians demonstrate commitment to each other?

The Bible lists many responsibilities that Christians have one to another. Every believer must measure their local church relationships according to these guidelines.

A. There are many things Christians do toward one another because of this commitment.

1. They love one another (I Pet.1:22).

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart...

2. They comfort one another (I Th.5:11).

Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

3. They exhort one another (Heb. 10:24-25).

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

4. They build up one another (Rom. 14:19).

Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

5. They admonish one another (Col. 3:16).

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

6. They serve one another (Gal. 5:13).

For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

7. They forgive one another (Eph. 4:32).

And be you kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

8. They submit to one another (I Pet. 5:5).

Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

9. In addition, they pray for one another, bear one another's burdens, have compassion one to another and are kindly affectionate one to another.

B. There are many things Christians do not do to each other because of this commitment.

1. They do not condemn or criticize each other (Rom. 14:13).

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

2. They do not go to law with each other (I Cor. 6:1-8).

3. They do not speak evil of one another (Jam. 4:11).

Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.

4. They do not envy one another (Gal. 5:26).

Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

5. They do not hurt or do anything that would harm another (Gal. 5:14-15).

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

III. How is our commitment expressed in a local church?

God not only wants us to relate these truths to our relationship to the worldwide Body of Christ, but He wants us to demonstrate this same kind of commitment in the local church or body of believers. When a person is committed to a local assembly it means several things.

- A. It means that he is committing himself to a specific church family (Ps. 68:6).
- B. It means that he is willing to support the vision and direction of that family.
- C. It means that he is willing to come under the authority in that family (Heb.13:17).
- D. It means that he is willing to give his time and energy to that family.
- E. It means that he is committed to the gathering times of that family.
- F. It means that he is committed to the financial support of that family.
- G. It means that he is committed in a special way to the members of that family.
- H. It means that he is willing to bear the burdens of that family.

IV. How does one become a member of Christ's church?

There are two aspects to Church membership in the Book of Acts.

A. Spiritual membership.

You do not become a member by signing up, taking a pledge or subscribing to a

particular set of doctrines. In the Early Church, you had to be added to the Lord, which involved a spiritual experience of coming into right relationship with and under the lordship of Jesus Christ as personal Savior (Acts 5:14; 11:24). This spiritual membership is the foundations for all other experiences with God.

B. Practical membership

There must also be a visible and practical expression of Church membership as seen in the Book of Acts. This is seen in belonging to “the church local.” Believers that were added to the Lord were also added to the local church (Acts 2:41, 47).

So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:46-47

In the New Testament, all members of the universal church were also members of the local church. Any idea of enjoying salvation or being a Christian in isolation is foreign to the New Testament. Fellowship with Christ includes fellowship with His Body as it is expressed in the local congregation of believers (I John 1:3; I Cor. 1:9).

...that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. I John 1:3

V. Why do some people have problems with local church membership?

There are many reasons why some people have rejected the concept of church membership.

A. Some have a fear of being hurt.

Because they have been hurt in the past by a misuse or abuse of membership, they are now very cautious about such commitments.

B. Some do not want to be tied down.

Because they want the freedom to move and operate without accountability to human authority, they do not see church membership fitting into their plan for life.

C. Some do not believe it is biblical.

Because there are no direct commands concerning membership, they feel that God must be opposed to official membership.

VI. Is it scriptural to have some kind of church roll or record?

Yes!

The Old Testament and New Testament refer to books where the names of God's people were kept for records. It would be impossible to fully take care of God's sheep if no one knew where they were or if they really belonged to some local church.

A. Old Testament

1. The Israelites had their names in the Books of Genealogy of the Nation. They were numbered before the Lord (Numbers 1-2).
2. The Levites were also numbered before the Lord before they could minister in the priestly offices (Numbers 3).
3. Everyone numbered in Israel had to be redeemed with silver (Ex. 30:11-16).
4. The remnant from Babylon had to be registered in the book in order to minister in the priesthood (Ezra 2:62-63; Nehemiah 7).

B. New Testament

1. The Church of the Firstborn have their names written in heaven (Heb. 12:22-24).
2. The redeemed of all ages have their names written in the Book of Life (Phil. 4:3; Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:12-15; 21:27).

God keeps the records! God keeps the names and numbers of the saints in His roll! If God Himself does this, then there should be no problem if man does likewise! God knows who is in His book and who is not.

VII. What are some of the advantages of practical church membership?

- A. Fellowship (Col. 2:2). Deeper levels of fellowship and family relationship are able to be developed.
- B. Fulfillment (I Cor. 12:12-27). A greater sense of belonging and worth can develop among members.
- C. Fruitfulness (Eph. 4:16). We have a greater productivity and impact in the lives of other members.

- D. Accountability (Gal. 6:1-2). There is a greater sense of accountability and responsibility among members.
- E. Growth (I Th. 5:12). There is greater opportunity to receive consistent pastoral care and oversight.
- F. Power (Deut. 32:30). There is a greater release of power as believers bind themselves together for a common goal.
- G. Presence of God (Mt. 18:19-20). God promises a greater release of His presence in the corporate assembly.

VIII. What does Local Church Commitment mean in Practical Terms?

1. **Commitment** means that I will work through difficulties when they arise instead of running away from them.
2. **Commitment** means that I will blend my personal giftings and ministry goals with the vision of that local assembly.
3. **Commitment** means that I will give myself faithfully to the members of that church in fellowship and service.
4. **Commitment** means that I will invest my time, talents and financial resources to see the vision of my local church become a reality.
5. **Commitment** means that I will faithfully gather with my brothers and sisters at the corporate assembly times.
6. **Commitment** means that I will take the preached word seriously and make every effort to put into practice in my life.
7. **Commitment** means that I will only do those things that will edify and build up the saints to whom I am joined.
8. **Commitment** means that I will honor and respond to those who have oversight in my life as they speak into my life.
9. **Commitment** means that I will still support church leadership when policies do not keep to my opinions.
10. **Commitment** means that I will utilize personal resources to minister to the needs in the local church that God puts in front of me.

IX. What important questions should every believer be able to answer in regard to local church membership?

Anyone who is a Christian and claims to be part of Christ needs to face the following questions realistically.

- A. Who is over me in the Lord (Heb.13:17)?
- B. When I was added to the Lord, in what way was I added to the Church (Acts 2:41-42)?
- C. When I gather together with the disciples, with whom do I gather (Acts 20:7)?
- D. With whom am I allowing God to perfectly join me (I Cor. 1:10)?

Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Every true believer in Christ must consider the question of church membership. All of the dynamics of the Christian life must be worked out in the context of others of like faith. The local church is God's vehicle through which He would strengthen and equip His people.

Lesson 19

The Heart of a Servant

All ministry springs out of your heart. No matter what ministry to which you feel the Lord is calling you, every ministry should be motivated by a servant's heart.

I. What do we mean when we talk about the “heart” in ministry?

A. The literal word “heart” can refer to many different things.

1. The central organ of the vascular system

The key word here is “central.” The heart speaks of that which is central. It is that around which everything else revolves. What is central in your life? Are you still at the center?

2. A hollow structure which maintains the circulation of the blood

The key thought here is that of “maintaining circulation.” The heart is that part of the body that keeps things moving. What keeps you moving? What keeps you pressing forward? What is the mark of the high calling to which you are pressing? What is it that motivates you every morning when you get out of bed?

3. The seat of the affections and emotions

The key thought here has to do with personal excitement. What is it that really stirs your emotions? Are you stirred when you see people's lives changed for the better? Are you filled with emotion when you see prayers answered? What gets you excited more than anything else? All of these things tell us something about our heart.

4. One's innermost thoughts and feelings

The key word here is “innermost.” When we talk about the heart, we are not talking about what you portray on the outside; we are talking about who you really are on the inside. What are you when no one else is around? Are you really who you claim to be?

5. The vital and essential part

When someone says, “Let's get to the heart of the matter,” they mean let us get to the most important part. When it comes to ministry, the heart is the vital and essential part. You can get by without a lot of external things. You can even make it with limited gifting, but you will never succeed as a pastor without a true shepherd's heart.

B. There are common expressions that are used in relation to the heart.

Each one of these expressions can be applied to a person's ministry.

1. “After one’s own heart”

When something is said to be “after your heart” it means that it is perfectly suited to you. It means that it conforms to your ideas and tastes. We want a ministry that is after our own heart.

2. “From one’s heart”

When something is said to be done “from the heart” it means that it is done with all sincerity and no hypocrisy. We are not interested in putting on a ministry “show.” We are not interested in acting the part. We want a ministry that comes from the heart.

3. “To have at heart”

When you say that you have something “at heart” it means that you cherish it and are earnestly concerned for it. What are you earnestly concerned about? Whatever is at your heart will be the object of your ministry.

4. “To take to heart”

When you take something “to heart” it means that you take it very seriously. It is not something that you do in a casual way. Our ministry cannot be seen as a casual endeavor. It is a serious thing.

5. “With all one’s heart”

Pursuing our ministry cannot be a hobby or something that we do in a careless or lazy fashion. When we do something “with all of our heart” we do it intensely, thoroughly and completely.

C. There are many conditions of the heart that are described in the Bible.

The following chart gives a summary of these biblical heart conditions:

Biblical Conditions of the Heart	
Negative Side	Positive Side
Hard (Mark 6:52)	Tender (II Kings 22:19)
Obstinate (Deut. 2:30)	Willing (Ex. 35:29)
Proud (Pro. 16:5)	Humble (Ps. 69:32)
Hateful (Lev. 19:17)	Loving (Mark 12:30)
Double (Ps. 12:2)	Single (Jer. 32:39)
Hypocritical (Mt. 15:8)	Integrity (Ps. 78:72)
Foolish (Rom. 1:21)	Wise (Ex. 36:2)
Stony (Ezek. 11:19)	Soft (II Chr. 34:27)
Withered (Ps. 102:4)	Enlarged (Ps. 119:32)
Deceitful (Pro. 17:20)	Meek (Mt. 11:29)
Unbelieving (Mk. 16:14)	Believing (Acts 8:37)
Restless (Eccl. 2:23)	Free (II Chr. 29:31)

Uncircumcised (Acts 7:51)	Circumcised (Rom. 2:29)
Rebellious (Jer. 5:23)	Contrite / Broken (Ps. 34:18)
Wicked (Pro. 10:20)	Pure (Pro. 22:11)
Erring (Heb. 3:10)	Perfect (Ps. 101:2)
Adulterous (Ezek. 6:9)	Faithful (Neh. 9:8)

II. What are some of the ways that a person can be motivated for ministry?

When we talk about our heart, we are talking about our motives. A motive is something that answers the question, “Why did you do that?” It is the need or the desire that causes a person to act or the intent or reason behind an action. Motives are often based on a particular purpose of or a particular need in the person doing the action.

Our motives determine our attitudes, our responses, and our ability to take criticism and handle pressure. They govern our commitment level and intensity level regarding a specific activity.

We need to allow God to search our hearts (Ps. 139:23-24).

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

A. A person could be motivated by selfishness and personal ambition.

Personal ambition is characterized by several inward desires including:

1. To be seen of men (Mt. 6:1-5; 23:5)

Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. Matthew 6:1-2

When speaking of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus said, “But all their works they do to be seen by men” (Mt. 23:5). The Pharisees loved the chief seats. They loved titles. They wanted to make sure when they did a charitable deed that they had everyone’s attention.

2. To seek glory (Pro. 25:27; 27:2; John 7:18; Jer. 9:23-24)

It is not good to eat much honey; so to seek one’s own glory is not glory.
Proverbs 25:27

Just as it is not good to eat too much honey, it is not good for people to think about all the honors they deserve. –NLT

He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him. John 7:18, NIV

Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,” says the LORD. Jeremiah 9:23-24

3. To please or please or impress men (I Th. 2:4; Gal. 1:10)

Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. Galatians 1:10, NIV

4. To have power or authority over people (Mt. 20:25-26).

But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.”

B. A person could be motivated by the heart of a servant.

The heart of a servant can be summarized by seven qualities of spirit.

1. Selflessness (Luke 17:7-10)

And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, “Come at once and sit down to eat”? But will he not rather say to him, “Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink”? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, “We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.”

2. Humility (Phil. 2:5-8)

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

3. Love (I Pet. 1:22; Gal. 5:13-14)

For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Galatians 5:13-14

This love is to be demonstrated on three levels.

a. Love for God (John 21:15-17)

He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.” John 21:16

The best way for us to demonstrate our love for the Lord is to care for His children.

b. Love for People (I Th. 2:5-8; Phil. 1:7-8)

For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness--God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. I Thessalonians 2:5-8

c. Love for God’s House (I Chr. 29:3; John 2:17)

Moreover, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, my own special treasure of gold and silver... I Chronicles 29:3

Then his disciples remembered this prophecy from the Scriptures: “Passion for God’s house burns within me.” John 2:17, NLT

4. Willingness (Ex. 35:4-5, 10, 20-22, 29)

And all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses. Then everyone came whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and they brought the LORD’s offering for the work of the tabernacle of meeting, for all its service, and for the holy garments. Exodus 34:20-21

5. Responsiveness (Mt. 13:12)

For whoever has [a responsive heart], to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have [a responsive heart], even what he has will be taken away from him.

6. Faithfulness (I Cor. 4:1-2)

Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

Jesus gave three main tests of faithfulness (Luke 16:10-12).

He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, how will you commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, how will you give you what is your own?

- a. Faithfulness in that which is little (the least).
- b. Faithfulness in that which is natural (money).
- c. Faithfulness in that which is belongs to another (another person's vision).

7. Cheerfulness (Deut. 28:47-48; Acts 2:46; Rom. 12:8; II Cor. 9:7)

Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything; and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you. Deuteronomy 28:47-48

III. What are the servant slogans at City Life Church?

And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

Colossians 3:23-24

Work hard and cheerfully at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and the Master you are serving is Christ. –NLT

The following slogans are designed to create a culture of servanthood in City Life Church. Those who are partnering with this vision should seek to reflect the spirit that stands behind each of them.

	Say	That's No Problem
	Do	Whatever It Takes
	Think	Big Picture
	Know	People Matter
	Strive	For Excellence
	Take	Ownership
	Have	Integrity

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners shall be converted to You.*
Psalm 51:10-13

Lesson 20

Christian Stewardship

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. I Corinthians 6:19-20

I. What is a steward?

- A. The dictionary defines a steward as “a person entrusted with the management of estates and affairs not his own; an administrator.”
- B. The New Testament word translated “steward” means “the manager of a household or household affairs; a manager” (I Cor. 4:1-2; I Pet. 4:10).

Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. I Corinthians 4:1-2

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. I Peter 4:10

- C. A steward is an individual who has been delegated authority by an owner to oversee possessions, property and household affairs.

II. How is this concept of stewardship seen in the believer's relationship to God?

- A. **God is the owner of all things (Gen. 14:19; Job 41:11; Ps. 24:1; 50:10-12; 89:11; Hag. 2:8).**

The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.
Psalm 24:1

For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. “If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world is Mine, and all its fullness.” Psalm 50:10-12

As the owner of all things:

1. God is the giver or source (Jam. 1:17-18; Acts 17:25).

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His

own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. James 1:17-18

2. God is the One to Whom account is given (Rom. 14:12).

So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Romans 14:12

3. God is the rewarder or the One who pays the accounts (Heb. 11:6).

B. The believer is a steward (Mt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-26).

As a steward, the believer is:

1. The receiver (I Cor. 4:7).

For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? I Corinthians 4:7

2. Accountable and responsible to the owner (Rom. 14:12; Luke 16:2).
3. The one rewarded for faithfulness (Mt. 25:21, 23).

III. What are the different realms in which stewardship is to be recognized and practiced?

A. Stewardship involves, first of all and most importantly, a giving of one's life back to God (I Cor. 6:19-20; Rom. 12:1).

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Romans 12:1

B. Stewardship involves a wise and honorable use of one's time (Ps. 90:10-12; Pro. 24:30-34).

Seventy years are given to us! Some may even reach eighty. But even the best of these years are filled with pain and trouble; soon they disappear, and we are gone. Who can comprehend the power of your anger? Your wrath is as awesome as the fear you deserve. Teach us to make the most of our time, so that we may grow in wisdom.

Psalms 90:10-12

C. Stewardship involves a wise investment and cultivation of individual talents and abilities (Mt. 25:14-30).

D. Stewardship involves a proper understanding and use of one's possessions (Mt. 6:19-21; Col. 3:1-2).

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Colossians 3:1-4

E. Stewardship involves a careful and purposeful use of all financial resources (II Cor. 9:6-8).

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. II Corinthians 9:6-8

IV. What is a definition of Christian stewardship?

Stewardship is the practice of systematic and proportionate giving of time, abilities and material possessions based on the conviction that these are a trust from God to be used in His service for the benefit of His kingdom. It is a divine/human partnership, with God as the senior partner. It is a way of living; the recognition of God's ownership of one's person, powers and possessions and the faithful use of these for the advancement of Christ's kingdom in this world.

V. What truths did Jesus emphasize in His teaching on stewardship?

Jesus' main teaching on stewardship is found in two key parables in Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 16:1-13 (Read the Matthew passage as time permits).

These accounts bring out the following truths:

- A. If we do not use what God has given us, we will lose it.
- B. God expects us to use our talents to bring increase to His kingdom.
- C. God expects us to use great wisdom as we use our talents.

- D. We are responsible to become all that God has made it possible for us to become in Christ.
- E. Even though God does not appear to be giving direct oversight to what we are doing, there will be a day of reckoning or accountability.
- F. The industrious will be rewarded by the Lord.
- G. The wicked and slothful will be judged by the Lord.
- H. Faithfulness over natural, material things will qualify us for true spiritual riches.

VI. What did Jesus teach about money and the use of it?

Jesus spoke more about money and the use of it than any other single subject.

- A. Jesus indicated that your use of money is a direct reflection of the passion of your heart (Mt. 6:19-21).**

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- B. Jesus indicated that our wise use of money (natural riches) prepares us to handle spiritual things (Luke 16:10-13, NIV).**

Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

- C. Jesus challenged people to be sure that both their life and their money were under God's control (Luke 18:18-25).**

- D. Jesus taught by example that God is both concerned about how we give and what we give (Mark 12:41-44).**

Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than

all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.”

VII. What is “tithing” and how does it relate to stewardship?

A. The word “tithe” comes from a Hebrew word which means tenth.

Tithing refers to the practice of systematically giving ten percent of one’s income back to the Lord for His work.

B. Tithing was a practice that was commanded by God in the Old Testament (Lev. 27:30).

And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD’s. It is holy to the LORD.

C. Tithing was to serve as a reminder that all we have comes from and belongs to the Lord and we are responsible to Him for our use of it (Deut. 8:11, 17-18).

Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, lest--when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end--then you say in your heart, “My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.” And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. Deuteronomy 8:11-18

D. Tithing had special promises attached to it (Mal. 3:8-11).

“Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this,” Says the LORD of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,” Says the LORD of hosts...

God gave two promises to those who tithed.

1. He would open the windows of heaven and provide supernatural provision for them.
2. He would rebuke the devourer or those unexpected things that tend to eat away at our finances.

E. Tithing was only the beginning of giving to God (Deut. 12:6).

But you shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go. There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. Deuteronomy 12:5-6, NIV

F. Tithing was confirmed by Jesus in His teaching and practice (Mt. 23:23; Luke 11:42; 18:12; Heb. 7:1-21).

But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Luke 11:42

VIII. What is the relationship of New Testament giving to the concept of tithing?

A. New Testament giving functions at a much higher level.

Jesus fulfilled the law and elevated it to a higher and more spiritual level. When you fulfill Jesus' higher law of love, you automatically fulfill the Old Testament duty.

B. New Testament giving embraces the external principles behind tithing but adds an internal and spiritual element to it.

These requirements were not necessarily demanded in the Old Testament. In the New Testament we are to give—

- Generously (II Cor. 8:2; 9:6),
- Willingly (II Cor. 8:3,12),
- Proportionately (II Cor. 8:14-15; 9:6),
- Lovingly (I Cor. 13:3; II Cor. 8:24),
- Cheerfully (II Cor. 9:7),
- Thankfully (II Cor. 9:11-12),
- Sacrificially (Heb. 13:16; Mark 12:44),
- As unto the Lord (Mt. 25:40).

Lesson 21

Fulfilling Your Ministry

Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.

Colossians 4:17

I. **What does the Bible say about our involvement in ministry?**

A. **All believers are ministers.**

You might not be called to one of the leadership or five-fold ministries, but you are called to be a minister. In God's army there are no volunteers. He has drafted all of us into service. Even Jesus Himself came to serve. How much more should we serve?

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:45

This is what the Bible says relative to our ministry...

1. **We are created for ministry (Eph. 2:10).**

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

2. **We are saved for ministry (II Tim. 1:9).**

...who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began...

3. **We are called into ministry (I Pet. 2:9-10).**

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

4. **We are gifted for ministry (I Pet. 4:10-11).**

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

5. We are authorized for ministry (Mt. 28:18-20).

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

6. We are commanded to minister (John 13:13-17).

You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

7. We are to be prepared for our ministry (II Tim. 2:15).

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

8. We are needed for ministry (Rom. 12:4-5).

For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

9. We are accountable for ministry (II Cor. 5:9-10).

Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

10. We are rewarded for ministry (II Chr. 15:7; I Cor. 15:58).

But you, be strong and do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded! II Chronicles 15:7

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

I Corinthians 15:58

Being in ministry does not necessarily mean ‘working for the church’ but can refer to any work done to extend the Kingdom of God. There is no work that is more spiritual

than another. God places some people to work within a church context, some within a business or a school context or some in some other sphere or context. What matters the most is that we each fulfill the part God has called us to within His Kingdom.

B. Every ministry is important.

There are no insignificant or unimportant people or ministries in the body of Christ. Everyone's ministry is equally important.

But that isn't the way God has made us. He has made many parts for our bodies and has put each part just where he wants it. What a strange thing a body would be if it had only one part! So he has made many parts, but still there is only one body. The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you." And some of the parts that seem weakest and least important are really the most necessary. Yes, we are especially glad to have some parts that seem rather odd! I Corinthians 12:18-23, TLB

C. We are all dependent upon each other.

We have a culture that has overemphasized independence and individualism.

1. We are all interdependent in the Body of Christ.

None of us alone carries all of God's gifts and ministries! We need each other. What is lacking in us is to be supplied by others. That means relationship, cooperation and working together are vital for our success.

2. Each of the individual members in the Body of Christ helps to complete the whole ministry of Christ.

Church life is like a big jigsaw puzzle. We each have a piece of the whole and when we all come together and share our lives, the whole picture is seen.

II. What do we know about our ministry from taking a good look at ourselves?

A. Your ministry is often expression of your "SHAPE."

1. What God made you to *be* determines what He intended for you to *do*. Your ministry is determined by your makeup.
2. Your function flows from the way God formed you.

Every one of us has a unique shape, and if the role you play in life does not match your shape you will feel like a square peg in a round hole.

3. The anagram “SHAPE” stands for five elements that define who you are as a person.

Spiritual gifts
Heat (Passion)
Abilities
Personality
Experiences

B. Your ministry is linked to your spiritual gifts and passion.

The following are some examples of how gifts and passions can give insights into functions:

1. Scenario 1: Same Passion, Different Gift

	Karen	Vuyo	Justin
Same Passion	Children with difficult life situations	Children with difficult life situations	Children with difficult life situations
Different Spiritual Gifts	Administration	Giving	Teaching
Different Expressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing events to serve children. • Coordinating classes and training for parents. • Identifying people and resources to meet need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding a program and materials. • Adopting a child or family. • Support the training costs for volunteers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching parents and guardians. • Leading a class.

2. Scenario 2: Different Passion, Same Gift

	Karen	Vuyo	Justin
Different Passion	Elderly	Homeless	Discipleship
Same Gifts	Teaching	Teaching	Teaching

Resulting Expressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading Bible Study in retirement home. • Teaching elderly adult on relevant themes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading devotions in homeless shelters. • Holding seminars equipping for life skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading a Life Group. • Mentoring Individuals.
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C. Discovering your ministry requires some self-evaluation (Rom. 12:3).

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

We think of ourselves more highly than we ought to when we consider ministry outside of our gifting, our measure of faith and our grace levels. We are to use sober evaluation in regard to our calling.

1. This involves some self evaluation:
 - a. What am I qualified to do?
 - b. What talents and abilities do I possess?
 - c. Do I have the needed aptitudes?
 - d. What do I enjoy doing?
 - e. In what areas is it most natural for me to serve?
 - f. Do I get any fulfillment out of doing this?

2. The list of ministries in the Body in Christ is endless. In addition, almost anything that can be done can be turned into a ministry when it is done to reach out to others and serve them.
 - Sewing Blankets
 - Baking
 - Auto Mechanics
 - Building Skills
 - Fishing

III. How is the church intended to work?

A. The pastors and elders are to focus on what they are supposed to do.

1. Praying for Direction. Pastors are to give themselves to prayer and the Word.

... but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word.
Acts 6:4

2. Equipping the Saints. Pastors are to equip, build up and train the saints for ministry.

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ... Ephesians 4:11-12

3. Preaching and Teaching. Pastors are to preach, teach and feed the church.

... but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Acts 6:4

4. Protecting and Guarding the Flock. Pastors are to watch over and care for the people.

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. Hebrews 13:17

5. Exhorting and Admonishing. Pastors are to confront and admonish people in relation to their growth in the Lord.

...convince, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching... II Timothy 4:2

...a bishop must... hold fast the faithful word... that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict... Titus 1:9

6. Comforting and Strengthening. Pastors are to minister to people at their points of need with the view to bringing them to maturity.

Warn those who are unruly. Comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak... Thessalonians 5:14

B. The church partners focus on what they are to do.

1. Believe. Partners demonstrate faithfulness to the Lord.

Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. I Corinthians 16:13

Jesus said to him, “ ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment.” Matthew 22:37-39

2. Love. Partners demonstrate love for one another.

Above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins. I Peter 4:8

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. John 3:14

3. Respect. Partners demonstrate proper esteem for church leaders.

And we urge you brethren, to recognize those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake... Be at peace among yourselves. Brethren, pray for us.

I Thessalonians 5:12-13, 25

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. Hebrews 13:17

4. Attend. Partners demonstrate faithful attendance at corporate gatherings

So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. Luke 4:16

Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths, reasoned with them from the Scriptures. Acts 17:1-3

Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. Acts 20:7

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:24-25

5. Tithe. Partners are faithful in tithes and financial giving to support their local church.

So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. II Corinthians 9:7

6. Have Compassion. Partners deal compassionately with differences between other members of the body.

Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the

Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Romans 12:10-13

One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike... Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. Romans 14:5, 7

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way. Romans 14:13

We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. Romans 15:12

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ, forgave you. Ephesians 4:32

7. Unite. Partners work to maintain the spirit of unity in the church.

Now I plead with you, brethren, but the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

I Corinthians 1:10

...endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace... till we all come to the unity of the faith. Ephesians 4:3, 13

8. Serve. Partners get involved in ministry and helping to shoulder the load.

...for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ... from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Ephesians 4:12, 16

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." I Peter 4:10

If we would fulfill the simplest of the Bible's commands, we would have great lives, great families and great churches.

Lesson 22

The Gifts of the Spirit

I. What is meant by the “Gifts of the Spirit”?

The focus of this lesson is the gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in I Corinthians 12:7-11.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

There are many gifts that are part of the experience of the believer. All of God’s gifts are free, unearned and unmerited by man, but graciously given by God. The “gifts of the Spirit” outlined in I Corinthians 12 are to be distinguished from other gifts of God in the following ways:

- A. These gifts are distinctly attributed to the Holy Spirit as the source (I Cor. 12:4, 7-11).
- B. These gifts are a manifestation or “shining forth” of the Spirit who dwells within the believer (I Cor. 12:7).
- C. These gifts are supernatural in character, not simply an extension or refinement of natural abilities or powers.
- D. These gifts are distributed at the direction of the Holy Spirit to meet specific needs at specific times (I Cor. 12:11).
- E. The “gifts of the Spirit”, therefore, are supernatural endowments given to the believer at the direction of the Holy Spirit to meet particular needs at particular times.

II. What are the nine Gifts of the Spirit?

The Gifts of the Spirit can be divided into three categories.

A. Gifts of Revelation – God communicating His mind to the Church.

1. The word of wisdom is the God-given ability to perceive supernatural wisdom from God when it is needed (Mt 22:15-22).

Then the Pharisees met together to think of a way to trap Jesus into saying something for which they could accuse him. They decided to send some of their disciples, along with the supporters of Herod, to ask him this question: "Teacher, we know how honest you are. You teach about the way of God regardless of the consequences. You are impartial and don't play favorites. Now tell us what you think about this: Is it right to pay taxes to the Roman government or not?" But Jesus knew their evil motives. "You hypocrites!" he said. "Whom are you trying to fool with your trick questions? Here, show me the Roman coin used for the tax." When they handed him the coin, he asked, "Whose picture and title are stamped on it?" "Caesar's," they replied. "Well, then," he said, "give to Caesar what belongs to him. But everything that belongs to God must be given to God." His reply amazed them, and they went away. NLT

2. The word of knowledge is the God-given ability to receive from God, by revelation, facts and information which are humanly impossible to know (John 4:17-19).

The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet."

Verses 28-29, The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"

3. The discerning of spirits is the God-given ability to recognize what spirit is behind different manifestations or activities. The gift also includes the God-given ability to challenge or cope with spirits (Acts 16:16-18).

Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.

B. Gifts of Inspiration – God speaking to the Church.

1. The gift of tongues is a God-given ability which enables a believer to speak in a language which he does not know (Acts 2:1-17).

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance... Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?"

And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?"
Acts 2:4, 7-8

2. The interpretation of tongues is the God-given ability to bring forth in a known tongue a message which is given in an unknown tongue (Dan. 5:25-28).
3. Prophecy is the ability to speak forth a message from God which is received from the Holy Spirit as it is brought forth (Acts 11:28; 21:10-11).

And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Acts 11:27-28

C. Gifts of Demonstration – God doing or acting in the Church.

1. The gift of faith is a God-given ability to believe God for the impossible (Acts 3:11, 13-16).

So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."

Mark 11:22-24

2. The gift of healing is the God-given ability to impart healing for the physical body at certain, specific times (Acts 28:8-10).

And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him. So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed.

3. The gift of miracles is a God-given ability to perform the impossible (Acts 20:9-12; 13:8-12).

Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. Acts 19:11-12

III. How do these gifts operate?

When it comes to the operation of the gifts of the Spirit, the Spirit of God and the believer work together as co-laborers.

A. There is the Spirit's part relative to the gifts.

1. The Spirit takes the initiative as the giver (I Cor. 12:11, 18, 28).
2. The Spirit will always do His part.

B. There is man's part relative to the gifts.

1. We should be totally yielded to the Lord (Rom. 6:1-2, 13).

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. Romans 6:13

2. We should desire to be used in this realm (I Cor. 14:1; 12:31).

Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.
I Corinthians 14:1

3. We should learn all we can about the gifts (I Cor. 12:1; Hos. 4:6).

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant...
I Corinthians 12:1

4. We should pray to be used in the gifts (I Cor. 14:13; Mt. 7:11).

Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.
I Corinthians 14:13

5. We should maintain faith and dispel unbelief (Rom. 12:6; Mark 6:5-6).

Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching. Mark 6:5-6

6. We should not neglect, but stir up the gifts (I Tim. 4:14; II Tim. 1:6).

Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. II Timothy 1:6

IV. What guidelines should govern the operation of the Gifts of the Spirit?

God gives many principles that anyone wanting to operate in the gifts should follow, realizing the human vessel is responsible for the manner in which the gifts are exercised.

A. The gift must be used for the purpose of edifying or building up the Body of Christ (I Cor. 14:3-5, 12, 17-26).

Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel. I Corinthians 14:12

1. Will this strengthen the Body of Christ?
2. Will this bring comfort?

B. The gifts must be operated decently and in order (I Cor. 14:27, 29, 33, 40).

Let all things be done decently and in order. I Corinthians 14:40

1. Is this message biblical?
2. Is this the best timing to function in this gift?
3. Does my manner of presentation add or detract from the message?

C. The gifts of the Spirit are to be balanced by the fruit of the Spirit.

The gifts of the Spirit bring to us the ability of God. The fruit of the Spirit brings the character of God. We must have both the ability and the character of God in balance to bring life.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. I Corinthians 13:1-3

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

D. A summary guideline would be as follows:

When operating the gifts of the Spirit, obey the moving of the Spirit which operates according to the Word of God on the basis of love and edification.

V. What are some misconceptions about the Gifts of the Spirit?

- A. Some feel that the gifts of the Spirit are an indication of God's approval on a life or a church assembly. However, the gifts of God are not earned or deserved; God gives

gifts to meet the needs of His people and they can be misused and abused by man (Mt. 7:21-23).

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

- B. Some feel that the gifts of the Spirit are an indication of spiritual maturity. However, the gifts are not to be seen as something that is only available to the “super spiritual”, but these signs should follow those who believe (Mark 16:17-20).

And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.

The gifts of the Spirit are part of the equipment given to the Church by the Spirit so that the Church might be a supernatural influence in the world today. Believers should not be afraid of these realms but should look to the Lord each day for the supernatural enablement of the Spirit to face the individual and unique challenges that are a part of our everyday life and experiences.

Lesson 23

Worship

Introduction: John 4:20-26

Jesus sharing with the Samaritan woman at the well spoke of worship.

“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When He comes, He will tell us all things.” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He.”

I. What does it mean to worship in Spirit and in Truth?

A. Worship “in Spirit” can mean several things.

1. It can mean that worship is to be spiritual in nature.

That is, it is not about the externals of worship such as buildings, stain glass windows, altars and external forms. It is not about a specific holy place (the temple). It is a sincere action of the heart toward God and, therefore, it can occur anywhere.

All that is needed for spiritual worship to take place is the heart and the voice. Everything else is merely an enhancement of the heart and the voice.

You can have instruments playing and people can be singing, but if the heart and the voice are not engaged, it is not spiritual worship.

2. It can mean that worship is to be done “in the Holy Spirit.”

That is, our worship should come from a human spirit that is infused with the Holy Spirit. This is worship that is inspired by the Holy Spirit within and may at times consist of “singing in the Spirit” which Paul tells us is singing in “tongues” (I Cor. 14:15).

What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.

B. Worship “in truth” can also mean several things.

1. Worship “in truth” is worship that is without falsehood.

It is sincere worship offered without hypocrisy. It is not something that is done for show. It is not just an outward form containing words of constant repetition. When you study the worship of David he was blatantly honest with God in his worship.

2. Worship “in truth” is worship that is “according to truth,” that is, according to the Word of God which is truth (John 17:17).

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

II. Does God care about the actual form our worship takes?

Yes! God had a prescribed form of worship in both the Old and the New Testaments.

A. He had a prescribed way in the Old Testament—the proper order (Leviticus).

King David discovered that God cared about the way they worshipped not merely the spirit with which they worshipped (I Chr. 15:13).

For because you did not do it the first time, the LORD our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order. I Chronicles 15:13

For because you bore it not [as God directed] at the first, the Lord our God broke forth upon us--because we did not seek Him in the way He ordained.

--Amplified Bible

B. God has a prescribed form in the New Testament as well.

If we want the full blessing of God we must do God’s things God’s way. It is not a matter of worshipping God in any way that we want. True worship, which is a reflection of true submission to God, must be done in the way that God desires it to be given to Him.

III. What is the New Testament order of worship?

A. New Testament worship is according to the Davidic order.

1. David was the architect of worship in the Bible.

2. David’s order of worship is reflected in the Psalms.
3. David seems to have jumped out of his dispensation of law into our dispensation of grace when he erected the Tabernacle of David on Mount Zion (Heb. 12:18-22).

“ For you have not come to[Mount Sinai]...but you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God...”

B. The worship of David was completely opposite from the Old Testament order established by God under Moses on Mount Sinai.

Tabernacle of Moses	Tabernacle of David
No Singing	Singer with Singing
No Music	Instruments and Music
No Recording	Recording (Psalms)
No Thanksgiving	Sacrifice of Thanksgiving
No Clapping	Clapping to the Lord
No Shouting	Shouts of Joy
No Dancing	Dancing before the Lord
No Lifting Hands	Lifting of Hands
No Access to Ark	All Levites before the Ark
Animals Sacrificed	No Animals Sacrificed
Natural Sacrifices	Spiritual Sacrifices

It should be noted in the Temple of Solomon both forms of worship were combined (See: I Chronicles 15-16).

C. The Early Church used the Psalms of David as a hymnbook because it was descriptive of their order or manner of worship (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ... Ephesians 5:18-20

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Colossians 3:16-17

D. The New Testament describes three levels of singing.

1. Psalms

The Psalms of the Old Testament were the song book of the Early Church. Why? Because they reflected the New Testament order of worship. You cannot sing about clapping without clapping. You cannot sing about dancing without dancing. You cannot sing about lifting your hands without lifting your hands.

2. Hymns

These were most likely composed songs that were designed to instruct in the truths of God.

3. Spiritual Songs

These were most likely songs that came straight from the heart and were spontaneous or prophetic in nature. Some of them may have been adopted as congregational songs, but they were birthed from a spontaneous expression of love to the Lord.

IV. What characterizes worship after the Davidic order?

A. The Davidic order involves the exuberant, full-bodied worship reflected in the Psalms.

Most of the Psalms were composed in relation to worship in the Tabernacle of David. Many were spontaneous expressions from the heart of the singer (this is why they needed recorders).

The Davidic order is characterized by the following:

1. Praising God with our voice or mouth (Ps. 42:4). This includes:

- SPEAKING (Ps. 51:15; 63:5; 66:8; 71:8; 109:30; 145:21)
- SINGING (Ps. 7:17; 9:1-2; 33:3; 40:3; 100:4; 135:3)
- SHOUTING (Ps. 5:11; 32:11; 35:27; 95:1-2; 132:9, 16)

2. Praising God with our hands. This includes:

- LIFTING (Ps. 28:2; 63:3-4; 88:89; 134:1-2; 141:2; 143:6)
- CLAPPING (Ps. 47:1; 98:8)
- PLAYING INSTRUMENTS (Ps. 33:2; 43:4; 92:3; 97:4-6; 150)

3. Praising God with our bodily postures. This includes:

- STANDING (Ps. 24:3; 33:8; 134:1; 135:1-2)
- KNEELING OR BOWING (Neh. 8:6; Ps. 95:6-7)
- DANCING (Ps. 149:3; 150:4; II Sam. 6:14)

B. The Davidic order involves the singing of a new song to the Lord.

1. David continually referred to singing a new song (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; Ps. 96:1; Ps. 98:1; Ps. 144:9).

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful. Praise the LORD with the harp; make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy. For the word of the LORD is right, and all His work is done in truth. Psalm 33:1-4

He has put a new song in my mouth-- praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD. Psalm 40:3

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, bless His name; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples. For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.

Psalm 96:1-4

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory. Psalm 98:1

2. Isaiah encouraged the singing of a new song (Is. 42:10).

Sing to the LORD a new song, and His praise from the ends of the earth...

Isaiah 42:10

New songs that are sung from the heart reflect new and up-to-date experiences with God.

3. Worship in heaven involves singing a new song (Rev. 5:9; 14:3).

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. 3 They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. Revelation 14:1-3

The “new song” referred to in this passage is a song that only the redeemed can sing.

4. **A new song is a fresh, unknown song that is sung personally out of one's heart to the Lord to extol Him for His greatness, His attributes and His redemptive work in our lives.**
5. **The reasons for singing a new song can be summarized in the following passages:**
 - Psalm 33 – Because of His upright Word, His faithful works, His steadfast love, His marvelous creation, His absolute sovereignty, His grace manifest in choosing us.
 - Psalm 96 – Because of God's name, His salvation, His glory, His greatness, His majesty, His honor, His strength, His beauty and His righteous judgment.
 - Psalm 98 – Because of God's marvelous accomplishments, His supremacy, His revelation, His love and faithfulness, His impartial judgment.
 - Psalm 144 – Because God defends and delivers from enemies, He provides victory over oppressors; He desires our personal prosperity and blessing.
 - Revelation 5 – Because of Christ's universal redemption, His creation of the church and His servants.

This kind of worship creates faith in our own hearts and lives.

V. What might hinder us from worshipping according to the New Testament order?

One of the greatest hindrances to worshipping God according to the New Testament order is our traditional concepts of reverence and worship. Jesus indicated that we by our traditions can make the Word of God of none effect (Mt. 15:1-6). What do we do when our traditions say one thing but the Word of God says another?

- A. If our tradition says that silent worship is reverent and pleasing to God...but the Word of God says sing, shout, dance and clap your hands, what do we do?

Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. For the LORD is the great God, and the great King above all gods.

Psalm 95:1-3

Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth; break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises. Sing to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of a psalm, with trumpets and the sound of a horn; shout joyfully before the LORD, the King. Let the

sea roar, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell in it; let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together before the LORD... Psalm 98:4-8

- B. If our tradition says that we must be very serious in the house of God and be careful not to get too excited...but the Word of God says to rejoice and make a joyful noise to the Lord, what do we do?

Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands! Serve the LORD with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Psalm 100:1-2

I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.
Psalm 9:2

Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you upright in heart! Psalm 32:11

What do you do when the Word of God says one thing but your religious tradition says another? The answer is, “You change.” You conform your life and experience to the Word of God. The truth is that “reverence” is “obedience.” We revere and honor God when we worship Him way that he desires to be worshipped. He indeed is looking for those who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with understanding. Psalm 47:6-7

Lesson 24

Living as a Disciple

I. What does a true disciple of Christ look like?

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. Matthew 28:18-20

A. A disciple is not what is sometimes promoted as such.

A disciple is not...

1. A person who once prayed the sinner's prayer or made a decision for Christ.
2. Someone who claims to have been a Christian for a long time.
3. Someone who attends church services and programs.
4. Any good and moral person.
5. Someone who knows the Bible very well.
6. Someone in "full-time" ministry.
7. A person with a very supernatural ministry.

All of these things may be good but they do not necessarily equate to discipleship.

B. A disciple is learner, a student and an apprentice.

1. The word for disciple means "one who sits under teaching."

Many revolutionary leaders have had disciples and have changed their spheres of influence in a negative.

An extremist leader of a violent revolutionary group in North America said they were cutting down their numbers by 2/3 until they had an utterly dedicated group of trained disciples who could bring about a revolution.

2. Discipleship involves learning. It is associated with a Latin word [*disciplina*] which means "to learn."

This is why when we want to know what someone is learning at an academic institution we can ask them what their "discipline" is.

3. True discipleship is more than learning in that it always leads to a changed lifestyle that corresponds to the teaching that has been received (Jam. 1:22).

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

And remember, it is a message to obey, not just to listen to. If you don't obey, you are only fooling yourself. –NLT

C. A disciple is someone who continues to grow beyond their conversion experience.

Every disciple is a Christian but not every Christian is a disciple. A disciple is not just a convert who may be primarily concerned about going to heaven when they die. A disciple is someone who wants to order his or her life in such a way as to help establish God's heavenly kingdom on earth.

The early church channeled its energy towards making disciples. Discipleship was a process that applied to everyone in the believing community. Paul made the process of discipleship a main focus of his labor.

Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily. Colossians 1:28-29

My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you.
Galatians 4:19

D. A disciple is someone who has a desire to be like their master (Jesus).

The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. Luke 6:40, KJV

E. A disciple is someone who is passionate about achieving their destiny.

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Philippians 3:12-15

F. A disciple is someone who is willing to enter into close relationship with other people.

Disciples are made through personal relationships with other and letting other into our lives. We cannot separate the call to discipleship from the call to community.

G. A disciple is someone who is open to accountability and even correction.

1. Jesus often corrected or rebuked His disciples for their own growth and development (Mt. 8:26; Mark 8:33; Luke 9:55).
2. A wise person is someone who can receive correction from others (Pro. 9:8; 10:17; 12:1; Ps. 141:5).

People who accept correction are on the pathway to life, but those who ignore it will lead others astray. Proverbs 10:17

Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid. Proverbs 12:1

H. A disciple is someone who makes other disciples.

Making disciples is helping a person know, follow and become like Christ through an open, loving relationship.

1. Disciple-making is characterized by the following:
 - Prayer
 - Care
 - Teaching
 - Encouragement
 - Accountability
 - Correction
2. Disciple-making focuses on cultivating the following:
 - Character
 - Understanding
 - Ministry
3. Disciple-making utilizes practical method of example and modeling.

*The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things--that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be **a pattern** of good works; in doctrine showing integrity,*

reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. Titus 2:3-8

Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. Philippians 3:17

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:9

Many people focus on just one aspect of discipleship and think they are discipling someone, but true or broad-based discipleship is characterized by all of the above.

II. What is the cost of discipleship in the life of the disciple?

For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it--lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish." Luke 14:28-30

A. Being a true disciple involves having a personal cross experience (Luke 14:27).

And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

B. Being a true disciple involves a denial of self (Mark 8:34-38).

When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

C. Being a true disciple involves losing your soul-life (Mark 8:35).

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.

D. Being a true disciple involves a surrender of all of life's possessions (Luke 18:22-23). There can be no first but Jesus.

So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and

come, follow Me.” But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.

E. Being a true disciple involves a total love for God (Luke 14:26).

If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.

How deep is your love for the Lord? Is it really your highest relationship (Mt. 10:37)?

F. Being a true disciple involves a continual pressing on toward the mark (Luke 9:62).

But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

As costly as this all seems, nothing is ever really a sacrifice, because what God asks us to give up for Him is not worthy to be compared to what He gives us back in return (Luke 18:28-30; Rom. 8:18; II Cor. 4:16-18).

Then Peter said, “See, we have left all and followed You.” So He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.” Luke 18:28-30

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Romans 8:18

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

II Corinthians 4:16-18

III. Practically speaking, how do we find the time to disciple?

A. Get involved in a Small Group.

1. As a participant.
2. As a leader.

B. Structure your life in a way that includes others.

This does not mean more meetings, it means inviting others to join you in the things that you already do as an individual, as a couple and as a family.

C. Make better use of the time that is available to you.

This means taking advantage of times that are often spent alone and in “idle” including such things as lunches, walks, squash, golf, fishing, going to gym, gardening, laundry, driving around, going on holiday, shopping, mums group, and the like.

D. Make use of existing materials and resources that are available to you.

E. Maximize your time by thinking purposefully in relation to your contacts with other people.

IV. What is the result of Christian Discipleship?

A. True discipleship has an effect on generations to follow.

And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. II Timothy 2:2

1. Paul instructed Timothy to commit what he had received from him to faithful men who would in turn be able to do the same for others. The word “commit” means giving over something to someone for protection.
2. There are four generations of discipleship represented in this verse.
3. God is a multi-generational God. He is described in the Scriptures as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
4. God has called us to bear fruit for generations.

This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. John 15:8

Dr. James Kennedy the founder of Evangelism Explosion states the following:

If you were an outstandingly gifted evangelist with international reputation, and if, under God you could win 1000 persons for Christ every night of every year, how long would it take you to win the whole world for Christ? Answer (ignoring the population explosion): over 10 000 years.

But if you are a true disciple for Christ, and if you are able under God to win just one person to Christ each year, and if you could train that person to win one other person for Christ each year, how long would it take to win the whole world for Christ?

Answer: just 32 years!

B. True discipleship can be applied to and have an effect on multiple spheres in society.

1. Individuals
2. Families
3. Organizations
4. Communities
5. Cities
6. Nations