

Wayne Rickerson

# **SPIRITUAL BOOT CAMP**

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THE DISCIPLE'S JOURNEY

STAGE 1: THE INVITATION *"Come and you will see"* John 1:39

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# SPIRITUAL BOOT CAMP



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*Acts 4:32, 34*

*All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. There were no needy persons among them...*

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# INTRODUCTION TO SPIRITUAL BOOT CAMP

Welcome to *Spiritual Boot Camp*: You are about to start your first steps on a journey with Jesus that will last a lifetime. It is my hope that you enjoy each step of the way. There is nothing more exciting than to learn to walk as Jesus did. It is also a sign that we really know and love God. The Apostle John says,

1 John 2:5-6

*<sup>5</sup>But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: <sup>6</sup>Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.*

This Basic Training course is designed to help new believers like you take their first steps in the Christian life. I want you to learn to “walk as Jesus did” so that you can experience the full joy of an intimate relationship with your heavenly Father. During the next nine weeks you will learn important principles and disciplines that will help give you a solid foundation for your Christian walk. These beginning steps will give you the sure foundation you will need to reach the goal of The Disciple’s Journey-- maturity in Christ. Your road to maturity includes the following three essentials of all spiritual infants:

## THE ROAD TO MATURITY

### 1. THE ESSENTIAL OF FOOD

An essential step you will need to take on the road to maturity is the intake of food. After a baby is born, one of the first orders of business is making sure the infant is properly fed. The newborn must eat the proper food to survive. When you came into this world someone took responsibility for feeding you. It is just as essential for newly born believers to be fed.

#### **First you are fed**

First you must be fed as a newborn Christian in much the same way you were first fed as a newborn baby. When you were brought home from the hospital your mother didn’t just explain to you where you could find a bottle of milk, she fed you. We know it would be unthinkable for someone to expect an infant to be responsible for feeding himself. Likewise, in the infant stage of your Christian life you need to be fed by mature believers. This course was created to be part of that initial feeding process.

The steps you learn during the next nine weeks will not only feed you but also give you a hunger for the Word of God as you develop an intimate relationship your heavenly Father. You will learn basic truths, actions and disciplines that will help you think and walk as Jesus did. Your only responsibility as a new born believer is to take advantage of every opportunity to eat of the food that is offered to you. The Apostle Paul said,

1 Peter 2:2

*<sup>2</sup>Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.*

This course is called Spiritual Boot Camp because it is essential to be trained in the fundamentals of the faith for your Christian journey. For this training to be effective it is important to have a mature Christian help you take those first critical steps in following Jesus. As you take off the “old self” and put on the “new self” there are often past issues to deal with and new attitudes and skills to learn. Therefore I hope

you will go through this course in a group or one on one with a **New Believer Mentor** as your guide. If there is no mentor available you can certainly study this course on your own and benefit greatly.

### **Next you feed yourself**

As you are fed the Word of God and grow up into a mature believer you will learn to feed yourself. In this course you will start that process of feeding yourself. As you set aside a half hour a day, five days a week to prepare for group session, you will learn to memorize, meditate, study and apply the Word of God to your life. You will learn how to have effective appointments with God that will enable you to continue growing toward spiritual maturity.

### **Then you feed others**

As you learn to follow Jesus and mature in the faith it is important to start feeding others. One of the primary goals of the *Disciple's Journey* is to become reproducers. As we become Christlike we are to begin to feed others and help them become Christlike.

## **2. THE ESSENTIAL OF CARE**

Your road to maturity will also include infant care. You may be grown up physically but as a newborn Christian you need to receive the special care that can only happen in the family of God. People who know how important nurture and care is for a newborn forget that new Christians, no matter what their chronological age, need that same care and nurture.

### **First you are cared for**

As a new Christian you will learn what love is by the way you are loved and cared for by others in the family of God. The Body of Christ is designed for just such a purpose. Hopefully, people will reach out to you but even if they do not, take responsibility for connecting with mature Christians where you can be cared for. Small groups of various kinds can give you a place where you can develop close relationships and receive the care you need to grow towards maturity. The writer of the book of *Hebrews* stresses how much we need one another if we are to walk steadily on our course.

#### Hebrews 10:23-25

*<sup>23</sup>Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup>And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. <sup>25</sup>Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

### **Then you care for others**

When others in the body of Christ love and care for you, you learn how to love and care for others. Just as a child learns to love in his or her own family, you learn to love in the family of God. It is never too early to start allowing the love from God and others to flow through you to others in the family. In this course you will also learn to care for others in the Family of God.

## **3. THE ESSENTIAL OF TRAINING**

One of the primary tasks of leaders in the Church is to train or equip believers to become mature in Christ and serve others. There are several key areas in which you will need to be trained. This course will start training you in the following areas:

## How to feed yourself

Perhaps the most important training you will need is in how to feed yourself with the Word of God. In this course you will be constantly trained in how to walk in the Word of God. You will learn:

- ✓ How to have regular appointments with God
- ✓ How to memorize and meditate on Scripture
- ✓ How to study the Bible using observation, interpretation and application
- ✓ How to stay connected to Jesus through the Word and prayer

## How to dress yourself

I can actually remember as a child standing on a chair as my mother dressed me. Then, of course, at some point she taught me to dress myself although my wife questions how well I was trained. When you are born into the family of God you take off the old self and put on the new self. You have a whole new wardrobe you must learn to wear. There are old clothes you will need to take off and new clothes to put on. The Apostle Paul explains this process:

### Ephesians 4:22-24

*<sup>22</sup>You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup>to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup>and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

- **Take off old thoughts and actions**

This course will train you in how to take off those old thoughts and actions. The old ways of thinking and acting can be stubborn because they are firmly entrenched in your old way of life. You will learn how God enables you to get rid of the old clothes.

- **Put on new thoughts and actions**

You will learn how to replace old ways of thinking and acting with new beliefs and new behaviors. You will see how God, by His divine power, enables you to not only take off your old thoughts and actions, but to supernaturally put on the new self.

## How to protect yourself

When you were very young someone protected you or you would not be taking this course today. Babies and small children do not know how to protect themselves. Left on his own a child will often head straight for trouble. For example a two year old will head straight for a swimming pool, lean over to touch the water and fall in head first. Many small children have drowned in this way.

- **First you are protected**

As a baby Christian you also need to be protected. Satan would like nothing better than to disrupt your faith early on. The Bible says that Satan has schemes designed to deceive God's children and lead them away from the truth. Therefore, as a newborn child of God you need to stay in the safe arms of your spiritual mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters. You can cooperate by faithfully attending your *Spiritual Boot Camp* group and regular participation in other groups and services of your church.

- **Then you protect yourself**

Your training should include how to protect yourself from Satan's schemes. In this course you will learn all about how you are tempted and how to resist those temptations by putting on the full armor of God. Paul says:

Ephesians 6:10-11

<sup>10</sup>Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup>Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

### **How to glorify God in all you do**

The ultimate goal of all training is to prepare you to accomplish your purpose in life which is glorifying God in all that you are and all that you do. The Bible makes it clear that we are created for God's glory.

1 Peter 2:9

<sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

We glorify God primarily in three ways:

- **With our character**

Our character is comprised of all that we think, say, and do. The example of what our character is to look like is the life of Jesus (*Ephesians 4:13*). We are to be filled with the "...fruit of righteousness..." that comes from Jesus so we will glorify God. This righteousness is the sum total of our character. We are to be:

Philippians 1:11

<sup>11</sup>...filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ-to the glory and praise of God.

- **With our service**

As a result of our character we will glorify God in our service to Him. When God shapes our character He shapes us to serve Him. Paul said:

Romans 15:17

<sup>17</sup>Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God.

- **With our lips**

Psalms 34:1 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup>I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.

## **4. ACCOUNTABILITY**

A final area of training for maturity is accountability. Children are accountable to their parents for their conduct. Responsible parents establish boundaries for their children and hold them accountable for staying within those boundaries. This helps children grow up into mature, responsible adults who will obey God and honor the boundaries of others.

In your Christian life accountability will help you turn "good intentions into godly disciplines". We all do better when we are accountable to someone for our thoughts and actions. Accountability is not control. We choose to be accountable for living an exemplary Christian life. During this course your New Believer Mentor will be your accountability partner. He or she will pray for you, encourage you, and hold you

accountable for the commitments you make to complete all assignments. The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that this encouragement is vital to staying on course.

Hebrews 3:13

<sup>13</sup>But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

## TRAINING IN GODLINESS

*Spiritual Boot Camp* is just what it says it is. It is a boot camp which means that there is a focus on teaching the basics. It is to prepare you to be a "world class servant/disciple." By this I mean this boot camp is designed to teach you basic principles and skills of the Christian life that will give you a firm foundation and enable you to keep growing spiritually for the rest of your life. The goal is to help you become a fully devoted follower of Jesus who reflects His character and helps accomplish His mission. This will allow you to accomplish your purpose in life which is glorifying God in all you do and say. This is what the Apostle Paul is referring to when He says we are to train ourselves to be godly.

1 Timothy 4:7-8

<sup>7</sup>Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, **train yourself to be godly.** <sup>8</sup>For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. **(Bold added)**

Paul encourages us to think about how much more benefit there is in training for godliness than there is for physical training. Training in godliness is really training which has value for all things. The Apostle Paul consistently compares how a believer is to grow spiritually mature to how an athlete trains to become a world class athlete. He tells the believers in Corinth:

Corinthians 9:24-25

<sup>24</sup>Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. <sup>25</sup>**Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training.** They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. **(Bold added)**

Paul refers here to the Isthmian games that occurred only every other year. They were second only to the Olympics. Athletes would go into strict training to prepare for these games. Paul reminds the believers in Corinth that the same principle applies to spiritual growth. We are to go into "...strict training..." (1 Cor. 9:25). If we are to reach the spiritual goals that God has laid out for us we must prepare at least as diligently as athletes who are competing for a crown that will not last. *Spiritual Boot Camp* will be your first step in strict training.

We accept the importance of learning the basics in most every area of life, but often ignore it when it comes to spiritual growth. We certainly acknowledge the importance of basics when it comes to the sports world. We see the focus on fundamentals and training in every sport.

John Wooden, legendary basketball coach of the UCLA Bruins, is one of the best examples of the essential nature of training in the basics. He was noted for his focus on the fundamentals of basketball and of life in general. One of the basic principles in his *Pyramid of Success* is skill. His definition of skill shows his

commitment to basic fundamentals. Wooden defines skill as *“A knowledge of and the ability to properly execute the fundamentals. Be prepared. Cover every detail.”* (John Wooden, *My Personal Best*, McGraw Hill, 2004, pp 89)

I believe most sports experts would agree that John Wooden’s focus on the basics was a major factor in making him the most successful college basketball coach in history. Like John Wooden, almost all great coaches and world-class athletes are sticklers “wearing out” a few basics of their sport. They know that there are a handful of basic skills that are essential to master. Everything else that happens in a sport depends on those basic skills.

### **The Importance of Preparation**

Peyton Manning, the only player in NFL history to pass for 4,000 plus yards in six consecutive seasons, focuses on the basics. This future Hall of Fame quarterback who plays for the Indianapolis Colts is famous for his meticulous preparation for games. When questioned by reporters whether he was still doing the basic things that made him great he answered, *“I try to wear out the basics.”* Manning meets with his quarterback coach and offensive coordinator during the off-season at 7:15 a.m. He then devotes a workout to one specific area. This pays off on game day. Manning reports,

*“You do that work in April, May and June, then you get to third and five in November with a defensive lineman in your face, it’s like reset drill. You have to trust that mechanics and fundamentals will be there, and count on experience.”* (LA Times, 9/11/05; Ken Murray, Baltimore Sun, pp 12)

### **Four Principles of Training**

There are four basic principles of training that world class athletes and coaches believe in. Following these same principles will train you for godliness.

#### **1. Commitment**

World class athletes make a commitment to strict training. They make a decision to do the hard work because they believe the goal is worth the effort. Make a commitment to set aside at least 30 minutes a day, five days a week for this study. You will never “find” time to complete your assignments. You must **make time**.

#### **2. Fundamentals**

World class athletes make a commitment to learn the fundamentals and practice them. Make a commitment to learn the fundamentals.

#### **3. Repetition**

Repetition is the key to making the fundamentals become a permanent part of how you think and act. Make a commitment to not only memorize the key Scriptures and principles but to review them for the rest of your life.

#### **4. Discipline**

Discipline is doing what is important whether you feel like it or not. It is sticking to your commitment no matter what obstacles may be in your way. Discipline is consistently doing what you have said you will do.

## PREPARE TO LAUNCH

The goal of this course is to help you learn basic Biblical principles and practice your first important steps in the Christian life. To help accomplish this there are a variety of assignments that will help you prepare for group discussions or one-on-one sessions with a New Believer Mentor. Some of you may take this course on your own. Whatever your situation it is important to finish all of the writing and memory assignments each week.

This will not only help you prepare for group time, but help you establish the disciplines necessary for ongoing spiritual growth. Decide right now that you will have a daily appointment with God. Keep that time sacred, dedicated to God.

### MEMORY PROJECTS

- **Scripture memory**

This may be the most important part of this course. Memorizing Scripture will renew your mind and transform your actions. I suggest that you spend time each day of the week memorizing and reviewing your verse or verses. If you want help on how to memorize I suggest you look ahead at day two of week four where you will find helpful suggestions on how to memorize Scripture.

- **Other memory projects**

Each week there is another memory project for you to learn. These projects will help you learn the basics of the faith and help you continue walking as Jesus walked long after this course is over.

### WRITING PROJECTS

Throughout this course you will find writing projects to help you respond to and apply the Word of God to your life in practical ways. Please be sure to complete all of these assignments.

- **Reflect and respond**

There are several 'Reflect and Respond' sections in most sessions. These sections will not only help you prepare for group discussion but also enable you to personalize and apply Scripture to your life as you learn to listen to the Holy Spirit.

- **Study and apply the Word**

In most daily lessons there is a 'Study and Apply the Word' exercise. Here you will be asked to study a passage of Scripture. You will have the opportunity to answer questions and apply the passage to your life.

### REVIEW, REVIEW, REVIEW

- **Weekly Memory and Review**

At the conclusion of each day's study you there is a section designed to help you memorize your assignments for the week. Make sure you spend time each day on this section. This is a perfect time to also review memory assignments from previous weeks. Memorization is hard work and can become tedious. However, if you will faithfully do this review you will find that by the end of this course you will have memorized more than you ever thought possible in nine weeks. Consistent repetition and review is

the only way to retain important material. The testimony of people who have taken this course is that the daily review and repetition was worth the effort. At the completion of the course they had a firm command of the material.

- **Memory and review index cards**

At the first of each week you will be asked to write the memory assignments for that week on 3X5 index cards. I would suggest that you buy a pack of fifty spiral bound cards. This will prevent losing them and will also be convenient to take with you to review on a trip or while waiting for an appointment. Write the memory verse or verses on one side and the other memory assignment on the other side.

## TEARS AND CHEERS

At the end of each week's study there is a "Tears and Cheers" section to give group members the opportunity to share what is going on in their lives and encourage one another.

- **Tears**

"Tears" represents the burdens, disappointments and other issues you are facing. This will enable you to work through issues with the support of the group and receive encouragement and prayer.

- **Cheers**

"Cheers" is the blessings, joys and spiritual progress for which you are thankful. Verbalizing these blessing strengthen you and encourages others.

## CONTINUING THE DISCIPLE'S JOURNEY

*Spiritual Boot Camp* is just the first stage of *The Disciple's Journey*. There are five stages in *The Disciple's Journey*. Jesus first invited the disciples to "come... and see". (John 1:39) Jesus first brought these men to faith and introduced them to the basics. It is my hope that you will want to move on from the "Invitation Stage" to the "Calling Stage". Jesus called a select group of followers who had proved faithful in the "Invitation Stage" to join Him in stage two.

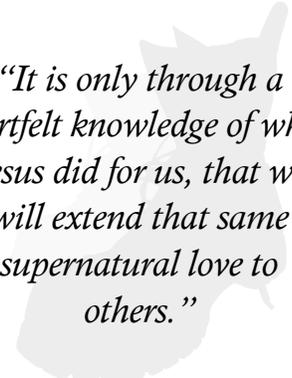
Mark 1:17-18

<sup>17</sup>"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." <sup>18</sup>At once they left their nets and followed him.

To be "called" and participate in this next stage you must have faithfully completed this course. This means attending all nine sessions faithfully and completing all assignments.

# WEEK 1

## AMAZING GRACE!



*“It is only through a heartfelt knowledge of what Jesus did for us, that we will extend that same supernatural love to others.”*

### INTRODUCTION

This week we will start at the very heart of your new life in Christ. It is all about grace. In simple terms, grace is the heavenly Father’s gift of His Son for your life. When you received Jesus you received God’s grace, meaning you were forgiven of your sins through the blood of Jesus and as a result were adopted into God’s family. It is this incredible, undeserved grace of God that motivates us to live for Him. Your life in Christ is a life offered to God because of what He has done for you. Out of our gratitude for God’s love and forgiveness we learn to have a deep love for God and others. This week you will learn in depth what grace involves.

### WEEK 1 STUDY

DAY 1: **G**ift of God

DAY 2: **R**eceived Through Faith

DAY 3: **A**dopted by The Father

DAY 4: **C**anceled Sins Through Jesus

DAY 5: **E**mpowered by Grace

### WEEK 1 ASSIGNMENTS:

- Memorize the GRACE acronym above and explain it to a friend.
- Memorize and Meditate on *Ephesians 2:8-9*.

*Ephesians 2:8-9*

*<sup>8</sup>For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-  
<sup>9</sup>not by works, so that no one can boast.*

- Prepare your memory/review index card. Write your memory verse for the week on one side and the GRACE acronym on the others side.

# DAY 1: GIFT OF GOD

## THE IMPORTANCE OF STEPPING IN GRACE

Understanding what happened to you when you were saved is very important for your continued growth as a child of God. The word the Bible uses to describe the transformation that occurred in you when you received Jesus is grace. Simply put, grace is the gift of Jesus. It is the love of God in action as He offered His Son on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins. Grace is the undeserved favor that God offers to mankind. That is what we will call saving grace. We will discuss this saving grace the first four days of the week. There is another kind of grace that we will call empowering grace. This is the kind of grace that gives you the divine power to live effectively for God. We will study empowering grace on the final day of this week's study.

### Grace motivates us

Grace is simply amazing! The word grace has a rich and diverse meaning. It motivates every step of our lives. Grace is not just a doctrine to be understood and tucked away. It is a life changing power that allows us to walk as Jesus walked (1 John 5:2-6). As we will see, grace causes us to live in a way that is holy and pleasing to God. The Apostle Paul says:

#### 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

*<sup>14</sup>For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.*

*<sup>15</sup>And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

Once we understand the full extent of grace we are motivated to live beyond ourselves in the supernatural not the natural. It is only through a heartfelt knowledge of what Jesus did for us, that we will extend that same supernatural love to others.

### Why we are to remember grace

Throughout the Bible we are told to remember grace. Why is this so important? It is important because if we don't remember God's grace and the love He extends to us, we will be unlikely to extend that grace to others. The writer of Hebrews makes this clear;

#### Hebrews 12:14-15

*<sup>14</sup>Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*

*<sup>15</sup>See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.*

How are we to live in peace with all men and be holy? How are we to forgive so that no bitter root grows up? This can only happen if we do not miss the grace of God. If we forget the undeserved favor of God in our lives and give others what they deserve we will not be able to live in peace with all men and eliminate bitter roots. We love and forgive because we remember how much we have been loved and forgiven.



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

In your own words, write down a definition of grace.

## THE ACRONYM OF GRACE

To help you remember the principles of God's amazing grace, we will be using an acronym. Each letter of the acronym will introduce a key phrase for you to memorize and remember for the rest of your life.

### **Gift Of God**

**R**eceived Through Faith

**A**dopted By The Father

**C**anceled Sins Through Jesus

**E**mpowered By Grace

Each day during this week we will study one of these important principles. Today we will see the four characteristics of grace as a **gift**.

### **The Gift of Grace is Indescribable**

Many of us were taught that there is "no free lunch". We learn to be suspicious of anything that is offered for free. We realize that if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is! Well, grace sounds too good to be true, but it is true. The God who created the universe has offered us His very best gift—absolutely free. The Apostle Paul calls this the indescribable gift, because its value is greater than our minds can comprehend. Paul says, "*Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!*" (2 Corinthians 9:15)

How can we accurately describe the Lord of all creation, coming to earth in the form of a man and dying a terrible death to purchase for us eternal life? Here we are, strutting about earth like we own it, calling ourselves self made men and women, and yet God still wants a relationship with us. Even though we are prideful and selfish to the core, God draws us to Himself by His Holy Spirit and offers us an indescribable gift.



### **REFLECT AND RESPOND**

Describe in your own words as best you can the indescribable gift you received from the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **The Gift of Grace is Unmerited**

Through His **grace** He gives us this favor that we do not deserve. Here is how Paul describes this unearned and unmerited gift.

#### Romans 5:6-8

*<sup>6</sup>You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup>Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*



### STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD

Look up *Romans 5:6-8* in your own Bible and underline what you believe are the key words and phrases. What is there in this passage that tells you that grace is unearned and unmerited?

God offered us grace when we were powerless do anything about our own lives. We were ungodly and undeserving and yet God demonstrated His love for us by having His Son die for us in spite of our unworthiness.

I have presented the gospel to many people who balked at this very point. They could not get past the belief that they were not good enough to receive this free gift. They wanted more time so they could become a better person—more deserving of the gift. Of course they missed the whole point of grace. Grace is undeserved. We will never be good enough to receive the gift. Because of the fall of man we inherited sin natures. We all sin. The Scripture says, “*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...*” (*Romans 3:23*). Grace was offered to us when we were powerless to help ourselves. Jesus Christ died for the ungodly—to the utterly undeserving.



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

How did you first react when you heard that grace was an absolutely free gift? Did you struggle with feeling you were undeserving or needed to be good enough?

### The Gift of Grace is Costly

While the gift of grace is free it is not cheap! The greatest gift ever conceived has the highest price tag anyone could ever imagine. There is nothing to compare the price to. If you have seen the movie, *The Passion of Christ*, you have a vivid indication of the price that was paid for our sins. The physical suffering of God’s Son was just part of the cost. The emotional and spiritual cost was immense. Being separated from His heavenly Father for that moment on the cross, and the incredible weight of bearing the burden for all the sins of mankind, is something we will never completely understand this side of heaven. What we can know for sure, however, is the greatest gift was purchased at the greatest price. One of the most beloved Scriptures in the Bible speaks of the Fathers great love and the costly gift of grace.

#### *John 3:16*

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Read *John 3:16* over several times thinking about the various words and phrases. Write a thank you note to God for His indescribable gift.

## The Gift of Grace is Free

I want us to end this session by again considering what it means when the Bible says grace is a free gift. I also want us to understand what it doesn't mean. Scripture says,

Romans 6:23

*<sup>23</sup>For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Grace is not just about getting what we do deserve - death and getting what we don't deserve - eternal life. While the gift is free totally apart from any good works we might attempt, it is not **cheap**. If we take grace for granted or treat it lightly, we have missed the whole point of grace. The Apostle Paul warns:

Romans 6:1-4

*<sup>1</sup>What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup>By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? <sup>3</sup>Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>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.*

We cheapen grace when we use the undeserved, unconditional love of God as a license to do whatever we want. Are we to take sin lightly just because we know that through God's grace we will be forgiven? If we truly understand grace such an attitude would be unthinkable! Through grace we have entered into a relationship with Jesus where we have died to ourselves and are alive in Him. To obey and glorify Him now is our greatest desire. Because of what He has done for us, we want to do everything in our power for Him. We know that we are not our own for we were "...bought at a price..." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) Since we were bought at a price we will want to live for Him who purchased our salvation. Loving, trusting, obeying and serving God will be our greatest desire.



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Make a commitment to God that you will never cheapen grace by your attitude or actions. Write a short statement of commitment in the space below.



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### WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows.

- Memorize and meditate on *Ephesians 2:8-9*. Write it in the space below.

- Memorize and write the acronym **GRACE**

**G**

**R**

**A**

**C**

**E**

# DAY 2: RECEIVED BY FAITH

**G**ift Of God

**R**eceived Through Faith

**A**dopted By The Father

**C**anceled Sins Through Jesus

**E**mpowered By Grace

Today we will look at the second part of our acronym of grace. While grace is a gift, it must be received by faith before the person possesses it. This is only common sense. If a person offered you a gift of \$100.00 and held it out to you, would it be yours? Of course the answer is “no”. It is only a potential gift until you reach out and take it. A gift is not truly owned until the person to whom it is offered receives it. It always takes some action on the part of the recipient to activate the gift. I want us to review what happened when you accepted the gift of Jesus.

## RECEIVING THE GIFT

When you came to understand that God was offering you forgiveness for your sins and the gift of eternal life, it took an act on your part to receive it. You responded to the offer with an R.S.V.P. You said “yes” to the invitation to receive Jesus into your life. The Apostle John says,

*John 1:12*

*<sup>12</sup>Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God*



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Write a brief story of how you responded with an R.S.V.P to Jesus. What was the event or events leading up to receiving Jesus? How did you respond?

### You believed

To receive the gift of grace is to believe in the name of Jesus. That belief is not just an intellectual assent to facts about Jesus. It is a faith that causes a person to put their trust totally in Jesus alone for their salvation. When you received Jesus it was a result of believing in your heart that Jesus was God’s Son and that He died and rose again, purchasing your salvation through His blood. It was trusting in God alone for your salvation. Paul says,

*Ephesians 2:8-9*

*<sup>8</sup>For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup>not by works, so that no one can boast.*



## REFLECT AND RESPOND

What were the obstacles you faced before you put your trust in Jesus? What helped you overcome these obstacles?

### You confessed

When you received the gift of eternal life you also confessed that Jesus is Lord. A confession is an agreement with God that what He has said is true. Paul says,

#### Romans 10:9-10

*<sup>9</sup>That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup>For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*



## STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD

Look up *Romans 10:9-10* in your own Bible. Underline what you believe are the key words and phrases. According to these verses what are you agreeing with?

- What happens when we believe in our heart? Where does the mouth and confession fit in?

The confession in *Romans 10:9-10* refers to a public declaration when a person publically puts his trust in Jesus and gives Him permission to rule over his life. This was probably one of the earliest confessions of faith used when believers were baptized. When you confessed that Jesus was Lord you trusted in your heart that Jesus was real and that He would save you.

### You repented

You also repented when you received the gift of grace. When you put your trust in God and confessed Him, you also agreed with Him that you had been going the wrong direction by trusting in yourself. Because this is a state of rebellion we sin, missing the mark of God's Word and will daily. **Repentance is a change of mind and will, that is a result of our sorrow for our sins and results in a transformation of our life.** We turn away from our old way of thinking and acting and turn toward God with a renewed mind and transformed behavior. The direction is immediate but the renewing of the mind and transformation of actions is progressive as we become spiritually mature.



## REFLECT AND RESPOND

What direction was your life going before you received Jesus? What has changed in your thoughts and actions since you changed direction and started following Jesus?

## You were baptized

Baptism is not just an afterthought to consider some time in the future. When people received Jesus in the New Testament they were immediately baptized. After Peter preached the first sermon on the Day of Pentecost he gave the following invitation for people to receive Jesus:

Acts 2:38

*<sup>38</sup>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.*

Baptism is an act of obedience and a beautiful illustration of grace. It is a picture of how we are saved through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul paints that picture for us by saying,

Romans 6:3-4

*<sup>3</sup>Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?  
<sup>4</sup>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.*

Being immersed in the water identifies us with the death of Jesus. We die to our old way of life and when we come out of the water we are raised to walk in a new way of life. Our baptism is a public expression of the grace of God in our lives.



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Tell about what you experienced when you were baptized. How has that act of obedience impacted your life?



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## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows.

- Memorize and meditate on *Ephesians 2:8-9*. Write it in the space below.

- Memorize and write the acronym **GRACE**

G  
R  
A  
C  
E

# DAY 3: ADOPTED BY THE FATHER

**G**ift Of God

**R**eceived Through Faith

**A** dopted **By The Father**

**C**anceled Sins Through Jesus

**E**mpowered By Grace

When you received the gift of Jesus a marvelous event occurred. You were at that very moment adopted into the family of God. You became a much loved son or daughter of your heavenly Father. On the day of your adoption you came into an inheritance that is beyond your imagination. The Bible speaks of this inheritance, but our minds are incapable of discerning the full extent of God's grace. The Apostle Paul wanted the Christians in Ephesus to know about their adoption and the riches of their inheritance. He explained:

*Ephesians 1:3-5*

*<sup>3</sup>Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup>For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. <sup>5</sup>In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will*

## YOUR ADOPTION

First let's look at some of the details about your adoption. There are three things we need to remember about the day our Father visited the orphanage of our lost condition and took us into His family.

### 1. God chose you

One of the great mysteries of the Bible is how God chose us before the creation of the world to be his adopted children. The Scripture says, "He chose us before the creation of the world...adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 1:4-5) As incredible as it may sound, God had a plan for you before the creation of the world. He knew the very day you would respond to His invitation to receive His Son. The day of your adoption was marked on His calendar. He has always known and loved you. The Psalmist says,

*Psalm 139:15-16*

*<sup>15</sup>My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, <sup>16</sup>your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.*

Your heavenly Father waited eagerly for the day you would be reunited with Him. He did not choose you out of duty or some obligation made under duress, but ...*in accordance with his pleasure and will* (Ephesians 3:5). Your heavenly Father **wanted** to adopt you and was pleased beyond your ability to comprehend on the day you accepted His Son. There was rejoicing across all of heaven on that day. (Luke 15:7)

Please let this great news regarding your adoption travel from your head to your heart. You are of incredible worth and value to your heavenly Father. Therefore, how you view your worth should always

be through God's eyes and not the eyes of man. It is how God sees you that counts! You will never have to go outside of God's love for validation of your worth. God's opinion of you is more than enough. Perhaps the greatest mistake we make is to look outside of God's provisions for our value and significance. The search will never end because we will always come up empty. God wants to fill us with his unfailing love.



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

How do you feel about being chosen by God by for His pleasure and will? Have you learned to base your worth and value on God alone? Tell about your journey in this area.

## 2. God has sealed your adoption

The Apostle Paul explains to the Christians in Ephesus that their adoption papers have been marked with a seal. Paul says,

### *Ephesians 1:13-14*

*<sup>13</sup>And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup>who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.*



### STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD

Look up *Ephesians 1:13-14* in your own Bible and underline the words and phrases you think are most important. Then answer the following questions:

- What is the seal that is promised?
- What does this seal guarantee?
- Who is God's possession?

On the day you were adopted you were given the gift of the Holy Spirit (*Acts 2:38*). The Holy Spirit represents the presence of Jesus in your life. You received a seal on your adoption papers guaranteeing that you are and always will be a part of God's family. From that day forward you were assured of eternal life. You do not have to keep wondering if you are being good enough to "keep your salvation." You can be sure that you will never be good enough! That is the very point of grace and your security through adoption. God has done for you what you cannot do for yourself. Jesus Christ was "good enough" (perfect) for you. Because of Him you are "...*Holy and blameless in his sight*" (*Ephesians 1:4*).



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Are you secure in your salvation? Is it difficult for you to believe that God has placed a seal on your adoption papers that will last for eternity? Explain.

### 3. God is your Abba, Father

Your adoption has given you unlimited **access** to your heavenly Father. He is with you at all times and therefore you can have contact with Him at all times. Your heavenly Father says, *Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you...* (Hebrews 13:5) Because God has given you His Spirit you not only have access, but **intimacy** with your heavenly Father. The Apostle Paul tells us,

Romans 8:15-16

*<sup>15</sup>For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*

The Holy Spirit who is your seal and guarantees your inheritance also guarantees that you can have intimacy with your heavenly Father. The sovereign God who created and sustains the world is not just a powerful and awesome God in a distant universe awaiting your arrival in heaven. He is that but also a close, intimate Father who desires a close, loving father/child relationship with you now. That is why He gives you the privilege of calling Him Abba, Father. *"We have received the Spirit of sonship,"* or adoption, which gives us permission to cry out *"Abba, Father"* (Romans 8:15). Because your relationship with God is secure, loving and intimate, you can approach the Father with great affection and total trust.

The word *Abba*, is an Aramaic word for father that expresses deep personal affection. The word Father, comes from the Greek word "Pater." The Holy Spirit in our hearts gives us the capacity to approach God in the spirit of both names. We can call out *Abba, Father*, knowing that our heavenly Father will hear us and is delighted to be with us.

It may take time for you to develop true intimacy with your heavenly Father. There are often some obstacles that have to be removed before your image of God will allow you this level of closeness. If you were raised with distant, abusive, rigid, harsh or emotionally unavailable parents you may project these characteristics onto God. You will need to learn that your heavenly Father is not like your earthly parents or other significant adults that you could not trust. As you study the Scriptures and learn more about God and His perfect attributes, you will be able to trust Him more and deepen your intimacy with Him



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Take a moment to think about your image of God. What is He like in your mind's eye? Write some of these characteristics in the space below. Where do those images of God come from? Do you feel close to God, like a loving Father? Do you believe that you can trust Him? Is this an area in which you will need to grow?

## YOUR INHERITANCE

### 1. You have a new identity

When you were adopted you received a new identity. You are now God's child, a son of the King and the heir to His inheritance. Your new identity as a child of God provides you with a new **source of significance**. You will not have to look for approval from others, accomplishments, or accumulation of wealth to feel significant. You are now significant because you belong to God and are involved in His work. Your purpose in life is now to glorify Him in all you do. You are significant because you are a child of the King, involved in building his kingdom. When you focus on accomplishing His purposes for your life you will always be successful.

### 2. You have a new family

You were adopted into a new family with a whole bunch of mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters in Christ. You now have a place where you belong, are loved and can receive support and encouragement. This means, of course, that you must stay attached and accountable to the family as you will learn in week five.

### 3. You have unlimited resources

In your new family you have access to a great storehouse of riches. You now have "...every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). You will never have to go outside of God's provisions to provide for yourself. He wants you to trust Him for your basic needs and allow His resources to **flow from Him, through you** to others. God will always care for you and give you enough that you will also be able to care for others. Remember that He is your Abba, Father who chose you and delights in you. He gives you permission to come to Him and ask for what you need. His resources are there for you to receive. Jesus says,

#### Matthew 7:7-11

<sup>7</sup>"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

<sup>8</sup>For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

<sup>9</sup>"Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup>Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? <sup>11</sup>If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

The key to what Jesus says here is "...how much more...!" If we, as imperfect earthly parents would not even think about neglecting our children's basic needs, **how much more** will a perfect heavenly Father who allows us to call Him Abba, Father give good gifts to those who ask Him?



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

What strikes you about your inheritance? Are you living as a child of the King, making good use of His resources?



## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows.

- Memorize and meditate on *Ephesians 2:8, 9*. Write it in the space below.

- Memorize and write the acronym **GRACE**

**G**

**R**

**A**

**C**

**E**

# DAY 4: CANCELED SINS THROUGH JESUS

**G**ift Of God

**R**eceived Through Faith

**A**dopted By The Father

**C**anceled Sins Through Jesus

**E**mpowered By Grace

## THE ACCUMULATION OF SINS

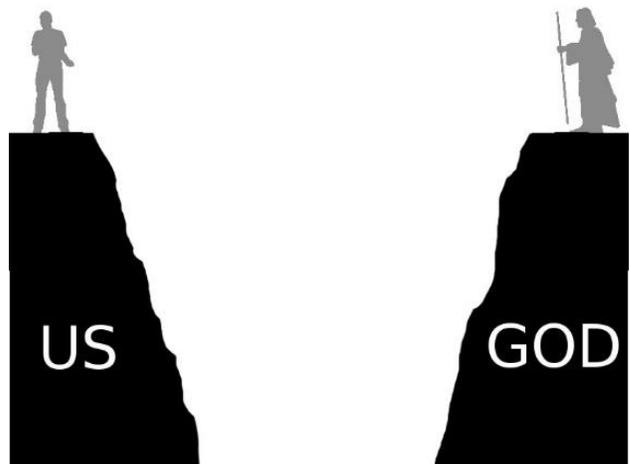
Today I want us to explore how our sins have been canceled, once and for all through grace and how we stand holy and righteous before God. I will use a modification of the bridge illustration to explain this essential part of grace. The Navigators created the bridge illustration many years ago to help give non-believers a clear picture of how their sins were canceled by Jesus on the cross. Some of you may have received Jesus after having the illustration of the bridge presented to you.

### 1. We all have sinned-sin separates us from God

We ended up in the orphanage in the first place because of our own sin. While sin entered the world through Adam and Eve, each of us has made our own choices to sin. There is a point where every person decides to go his own way. The prophet Isaiah said, “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way;” *Isaiah 53:6a*. We **all** have rebelled and gone astray. That is the inevitable destiny of man since sin entered the world. Paul says,

Romans 5:12

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned



As you can see from the illustration, our sin separated us from God. Just as surely as the sin of Adam and Eve separated them from God, our sin of going our own way separated us from God. The prophet Isaiah says,

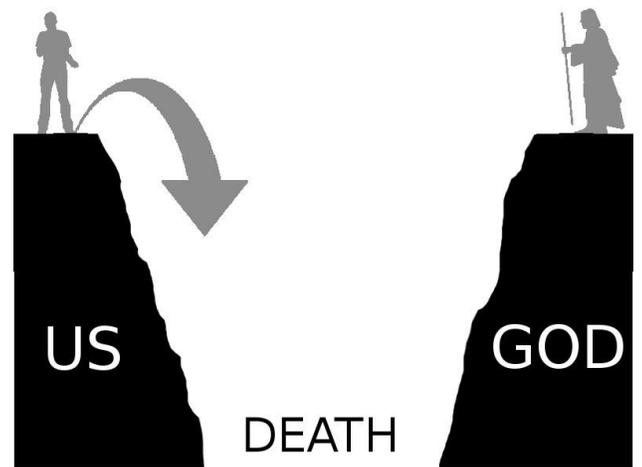
Isaiah 59:2

<sup>2</sup>But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

## 2. Our attempts to earn God's forgiveness fall short

Imagine this scene. The Day of Judgment has come. You are standing in a long line to see if your name is written in the Lamb's book of life. Mother Teresa is standing in front of you and you hear a voice say to her, "Mother Teresa, I'm sorry. You should have done more!" Wouldn't that shake your foundations and send a tremor down the line? The most righteous person we can think of is not immune to falling short of God's standards! We would be in deep trouble!

This illustration of the bridge shows our attempts to earn God's forgiveness and become reconciled with God. We do such things as being a good neighbor, praying, going to church, giving to charities and generally trying to be a good person. All of these attempts fall short as you can see from the arrows. Not even Mother Teresa would be able to make it on her good works. All her good works would fall short.



- **God does not grade on the curve**

It takes a perfect score of 100% to get into heaven. That is why we can never make it on our own. James tells us,

James 2:10

<sup>10</sup>For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

We will never be good enough because only totally righteous people will get to heaven. God's standard is perfection and He will not tolerate anything unclean in heaven. (*Matthew 5:48*) God is righteous and will not tolerate unrighteousness. The prophet Habakkuk said,

Habakkuk 1:13

<sup>13</sup>Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong...

- **Our best is not good enough**

While we may think we are a pretty good person compared to others our attempts to please God will always fall short. As Isaiah said,

Isaiah 64:6

<sup>6</sup>All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags...

Consider this story as we conclude discussing how our best efforts will always come up short. Imagine a crowd of people standing at the edge of a chasm that is 1,000 feet deep. The other side of the chasm is 100 feet away. Behind this crowd is impending doom. They must get to the other side or die. Let's say that there is a world-class athlete who can broad jump 28 feet. There also is an elderly person who will barely be able to make it to the edge. There is even a person in a wheelchair. What do these people have in

common? **None of them are going to be able to make it to the other side on their own.** The best efforts of the best will fall short. They all need a bridge or they will die.



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Before you were saved did you have any of these misconceptions about attempts to earn God's favor? Explain. How have those thoughts changed since receiving Jesus?

## ALL ABOUT THE CANCELATION OF SINS

### 3. God builds a bridge of grace for us

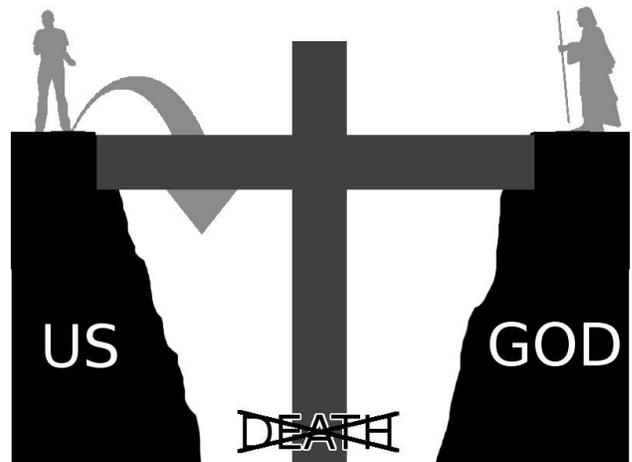
Fortunately for us there is a bridge of grace. What we could not do for ourselves God has done for us. He provided Jesus as a bridge over which we could cross to have our sins canceled and receive eternal life. The Scripture says,

Romans 6:23

*<sup>23</sup>For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

1 Peter 3:18

*<sup>18</sup>For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God...*

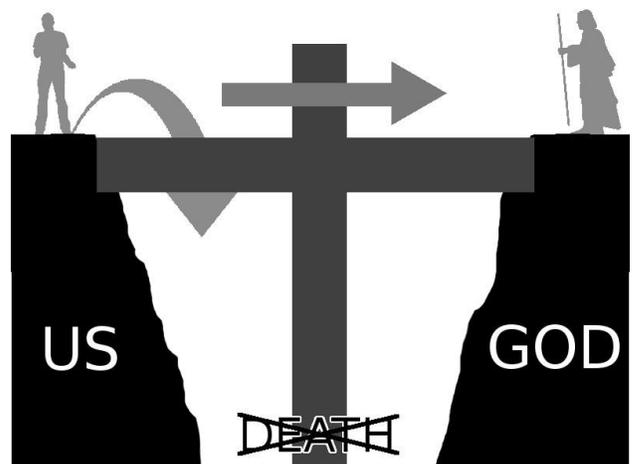


### 4. God invites us to cross the bridge

We all have a personal invitation from God to cross over the bridge on the cross of Jesus. That invitation is to have a personal relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Apostle Peter had the honor of giving the first invitation for people to receive Christ after He had ascended to heaven. On the Day of Pentecost He said:

Acts 2:38

*<sup>38</sup>"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.*



On that day the Church was born and three thousand people responded to the invitation and crossed the bridge of grace. All those who received Jesus were born into His family and received forgiveness for their sins. They were saved by His grace through the blood of Jesus.

When you crossed the bridge by receiving Jesus, all of your sins—past, present and future—were canceled on the cross. When Jesus died on the cross He paid the price for your sins. He totally canceled the debt. God remembers your sins no more (*Isaiah 43:25*). Peter reminds believers of this important fact:

1 Peter 2:24

*<sup>24</sup>He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

- **God sees us as righteous**

Once you crossed the bridge, Jesus saw you as totally holy and righteous. How can this be? Read and respond to the passage that follows to discover how this happens.



### STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD

2 Corinthians 5:21

*<sup>21</sup>God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

First look up 2 *Corinthians 5:21* in your own Bible and underline the words and phrases you think are most important. Then answer the following questions:

- What happened to our sins?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What was the result of Jesus becoming sin for us?

Jesus became sin for us. Now when God looks at us He sees Jesus. Because of the cross, Jesus stands between us and God, canceling our sins and making us righteous in God's sight.

- **We are justified**

When your sins were canceled you were justified. This is an important term to remember because it describes what happens when you put your trust in Jesus and receive the gift of God's grace. This is a judicial term where meaning God declares you not guilty. He cancels the debt incurred by your sins and credits you with **His righteousness**. Paul says,

Romans 3:22-24

*<sup>22</sup>This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, <sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

As you have seen, now as God looks at you He sees you through the righteous filter of His Son. Because you have been justified He sees His son's righteousness, not your unrighteousness. That is what it means to be justified by faith.



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

In your own words explain the term "justification".



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### WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows.

- Memorize and meditate on *Ephesians 2:8-9*. Write it in the space below.

- Memorize and write the acronym **GRACE**

G  
R  
A  
C  
E

# DAY 5: EMPOWERED BY GRACE

**G**ift Of God

**R**eceived Through Faith

**A**dopted By The Father

**C**anceled Sins Through Jesus

**E**mpowered By Grace

Today we look at the final characteristic of grace. God's grace not only saves us, it empowers us to live the Christian life and accomplish His purposes. Here is how divine empowerment happens.

## YOU RECEIVE DIVINE ENABLEMENT

When you are empowered by grace you receive divine enablement. By this I mean that God empowers you to do things that are His will. Through this divine enablement of grace you are able to do things that would otherwise be impossible for you do. Read the following Scripture and complete the "reflect and respond" section that follows:

### 2 Peter 1:3-4

*<sup>3</sup>His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. <sup>4</sup>Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*



### STUDY THE WORD

Read 2 Peter 1:3-4 several times in your own Bible and underline every promise of divine enablement you can find. What new insight did you receive?

## YOU RECEIVE ALL THE POWER YOU WILL EVER NEED

I'm sure you noticed that you are promised everything you need to live a life of godliness. When you know God and His Word you are able to claim his great promises (v.4). These promises enable you to participate in His divine nature. To participate in His divine nature means that God's spirit dwells within you providing you with the power to overcome the corruption of the world. You are encouraged to be aware of this great enabling grace that can help you live a godly life. To participate in God's divine nature you will need to be filled with His Spirit. To participate you must be in a position to receive the power that is promised. You will learn more about being filled with the Holy Spirit in the weeks to come.

## GOD'S EMPOWERING GRACE IS SUFFICIENT

There will be times when you feel weak and overwhelmed trying to live a godly life and serve your God. You will get tired and discouraged because of the obstacles you face and your own weaknesses. Even the Apostle

Paul felt that he needed more than God was supplying for Him. Paul prayed three times that he would be healed from an ailment which he felt was limiting his effectiveness for the Lord. Listen to God's answer:

2 Corinthians 12:9

*<sup>9</sup>But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*

There is a promise for all believers here. God will give you His grace or divine enablement which is totally sufficient for facing any temptation or test you might encounter. In fact it is when you feel the weakest that God's empowering grace will rest on you most powerfully.



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Do you really believe that God's enabling grace is sufficient to empower you to face all the difficulties you will face? Explain.

- Write a brief summary of how you will participate in God's divine nature so you will be empowered to live an effective Christian life.

## CHRIST CAME TO LIVE IN YOU AND YOU IN CHRIST

When you received Christ there was a dramatic change that occurred immediately. Christ came to live in you and you in Christ.

### Christ in you

When you received Christ, you received the Holy Spirit who is Christ's representative in your life. The Holy Spirit within you is God's divine nature enabling you to escape the corruption of this world. Paul explains how Christ is in us.

Galatians 2:20

*<sup>20</sup>I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

### ❖ Christ in you means that you have His power to develop His character

2 Peter 1:3

*<sup>3</sup>His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness...*

### You in Christ

Not only is Christ in you but you also are in Christ. When you are in Christ it means that you are secure for all eternity. You received the seal of the Holy Spirit on the day of your adoption. Paul gives us further insight in what it means to be in Christ.

Colossians 3:1-3

<sup>1</sup>Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. <sup>3</sup>For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Since you have been crucified with Christ and He lives in you, you also live with Christ in God. Your life is now *hidden with Christ in God (v.3)*. This means that when God looks at you He sees His Son. You are holy and blameless in His sight because He sees you through the filter of His Son. You are **secure** because your old life is hidden, your sins covered by the blood of Jesus.

❖ **You in Christ means that you are secure; holy and righteous in God's sight**

Ephesians 1:4

<sup>4</sup>For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.



**REFLECT AND RESPOND**

In your own words tell about what it means to you to be in Christ and Christ in you. What is the difference? How will these two changes affect how you live?

**THE FULL CYCLE OF GRACE**

Saving grace and enabling grace go together. You were given God's unmerited favor at the moment of your adoption. You were also given His enabling grace as He imparted to you His divine nature so that you could live a godly life. That enabling grace is to be used for others. God's grace is to **flow through us** so that others can know Him and be strengthened as we have been strengthened. In his letter to the Christians in Rome, Paul said,

Romans 12:6

<sup>6</sup>We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.

The empowering grace of God supplies us with gifts that we are to use for the building up of others in the family of God. Peter tells us,

1 Peter 4:10

<sup>10</sup>Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

The grace of God, therefore, is intended to go full cycle. God expects you to be a conduit for His grace. He wants you to extend that grace to others, and bring glory to Himself. Paul prayed that the believers in Thessalonica would complete this cycle.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

<sup>11</sup>With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith.

<sup>12</sup>We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.



**REFLECT AND RESPOND**

Think of a few ways that God’s empowering grace can flow through you to others. In what ways can you complete the cycle?



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**WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW**

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- Memorize and write the acronym **GRACE**

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**CREATE A 3X5 REVIEW CARD**

Your final assignment for the week is to create a 3x5 review card. On side one write the memory verse or verses for the week. On side two write the acronyms **GRACE**. For the rest of the course review the card at least once a week.



**TEARS AND CHEERS**

At the beginning of each week’s group time you will be given an opportunity to share what is going on in your life. This is voluntary and you will never be pressured to share if you choose not to. Your group leader will give you the opportunity to share the following:

- **Tears**  
“Tears” represents the burdens, disappointments and other issues you are facing. This will enable you to work through issues with the support of the group and receive encouragement and prayer
- **Cheers**  
“Cheers” is the blessing, joys and spiritual progress for which you are thankful. Verbalizing these blessing strengthen you and encourage others.

# WEEK 2

## HOW THE BIBLE WAS WRITTEN

*“No other historical book has the “audacity” to predict future historical events. The Bible, with boldness and one hundred percent accuracy, has predicted scores of events and details.”*

### INTRODUCTION

Although most of the world does not recognize it, God’s Word is the one and only source of authority, period! The sovereign God of the universe has spoken through the Bible. It is His authoritative communication to all His creation. There is no other true source of authority. This week you will learn five reasons you can trust the authority of God’s Word. I will use the acronym DUMPS to help you remember these five reasons you can trust the Bible to be the Word of God.

### WEEK 2 STUDY

DAY 1: **D**ivinity

DAY 2: **U**nity

DAY 3: **M**anuscripts

DAY 4: **P**rophecy

DAY 5: **S**urvival

### WEEK 2 ASSIGNMENTS:

- Memorize and meditate on *2 Peter 1:20-21*

*2 Peter 1:20-21*

*<sup>20</sup>Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. <sup>21</sup>For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

- Memorize the acronym DUMPS.

**D**ivinity

**U**nity

**M**anuscripts

**P**rophecy

**S**urvival

- Review all previous memory work from your index cards.

- Prepare your memory/review index card. Write your memory verse for the week on one side and the DUMPS acronym on the other side.

## DAY 1: THE DIVINITY OF THE BIBLE

Why should we believe that the Bible is the literal words of God? Why should we trust what the Bible says as our one and only source of truth and authority? Can we depend on the Bible to never fail us as a source of wisdom and guide to a fulfilled life? This week we will answer these important questions by looking at **Divinity**, the first of five reasons why the Bible should be the sole and absolute source of authority in our lives. The Bible claims to be written by God Himself. You will be amazed at the preponderance of evidence that supports this claim. In a culture that increasingly embraces all religions and all truth as equal, we need to not only rely on the Bible as God's truth and our only source of authority, but also be able to defend it to others. We need to be able to "give answers" for the hope that we have.

### 1 Peter 3:15

*<sup>15</sup>But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,*

## FOUR SOURCES OF AUTHORITY

All people live their lives and make decisions based on some source of authority. Whether they are aware of it or not, people use some source of authority as a reference point to distinguish between right and wrong. Moral choices are not made in a vacuum. In today's culture of tolerance there is tremendous pressure to accept one source of authority as equal to all others. According to many there is not just one truth that serves as a source of authority, but many equally reliable sources. There are four basic sources of authority people use to make moral choices. To help you remember these sources of authority I will use the acronym TIES. The first three sources of authority we will look at are inadequate. The final source is the only true and adequate source of authority.

### 1. Tradition

Some people use tradition as their primary source of authority. Some religions use tradition as their source of authority. A tradition is a human pattern of thought or action that is handed down through the generations. Usually people put great importance on a belief or practice and through the generations it becomes increasingly important until it finally becomes a source of authority that no one dares challenge. While traditions have their place in a culture and faiths, they should never serve as a source of authority. The Apostle Paul warned against such traditions.

### Colossians 2:8

*<sup>8</sup>See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.*

What Paul addresses here is a heresy. Some were teaching that for a person to be saved they must combine faith in Christ with man-made regulations. These were such traditions as circumcision, observance of religious festivals, and the abstinence from certain foods. These traditions were not wrong, but elevating them to a place of authority was wrong. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and teachers of the law for placing

external traditions above the authority of Scripture (*Matthew 15:1-20*). Tradition is always an inadequate source of authority.

## 2. Intellect

Many people use their own intellect or reason as their source of authority. In this case people determine their own truth based upon what they think is right and wrong. How many times have you heard someone say things like, "A good God would never allow that to happen" or "I think religion is a crutch" or "I believe there are many paths to God."? All of these conclusions are based solely on the authority of one's own intellect. The problem with this source of authority is that right and wrong becomes the subjective judgment of each person based on what he/she thinks. To me this is a very scary thought because my reasoning is often faulty and self-serving. And so is yours! We need only to look at history and see that the tendency of mankind is to make poor choices. That is why the Apostle Paul said,

### 1 Corinthians 1:25

*<sup>25</sup>For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.*

Compared with God's wisdom, the wisdom of man and the principles of this world always come up short. Man's reasoning is often faulty. We are warned by Paul not to get caught up with the reasoning of the world and its manmade principles. He says,

### Colossians 2:20

*<sup>20</sup>Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules:*

## 3. Emotions-Experience

There are some people who look to what they have experienced or what they feel as their primary source of authority. Emotions become the basis for choosing right or wrong. It is how they feel about a choice that determines what they will do. Of course that opens up Pandora's Box with some scary consequences in its contents. Feelings and experiences can be very deceiving, and make a very poor and sometimes dangerous source of authority. What feels good can often be morally wrong.

Since the beginning of time people have used personal experiences as the foundation for their spiritual beliefs. Major religions have been based solely on someone's experience and subsequent teachings. For example, Islam is based on the experience of Mohammed. He claims that the angel Gabriel spoke to him in a cave on Mount Hira. The Prophet Mohammed was then given the Koran that was originally engraved in Arabic on tablets of stone. This "eternal" book is located in the seventh heaven. This experience of one person and his writings are the authority upon which Muslims base their moral choices and their eternal destiny. Mormonism is based primarily on the experience of one person, Joseph Smith, who also had a visitation by an angel whom he said gave him tablets of gold from which the Book of Mormon was translated.

The Apostle Paul warns the Christians in Corinth about following anyone who uses their own experiences as a basis for authority. Read what Paul says and then answer the questions that follow.



## STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD

### Colossians 2:18-19

<sup>18</sup>Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. <sup>19</sup>He has lost connection with the Head...

- According to this passage what is the danger of being influenced by someone who uses personal experience as his or her primary source of authority?
  
- What are some of the behaviors of those who rely on a personal experience as their source of authority?

Paul is not saying that we should never talk about our experiences with God. What Paul is warning about is using those experiences as a source of authority. It is dangerous to follow those who rely on feelings and personal experiences. A person can easily be led astray by focusing on experiences rather than the authority of God and His revealed Word. Cults are usually formed by someone who says they have had an experience with God. Experiences can be very subjective. A person who focuses only on experiences and feelings can easily lose connection with the only true source of authority, Jesus Christ.

#### 4. Scripture

The fourth and only adequate source of authority is Scripture. The only objective basis for making moral choices is God Himself and what He says in the Bible. There is only one source of truth. I want us to look at the claims the Bible makes about being the Word of God and the only source of truth and authority. God claimed it!

The Bible claims to have come from God Himself. Without reservation or apology the Bible claims to be the Word of God. Over three thousand times the Bible uses phrases such as “*Thus says the Lord*”, or “*Listen to what God says*”. The Bible claims to be a record of what God has said and done. Following are just two of the thousands of claims. Just prior to the day of Pentecost Peter said,

#### Acts 1:16

<sup>16</sup>...Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which **the Holy Spirit spoke long ago** through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus- **(Bold Added)**

When His parents took Jesus to Egypt, Matthew says that Jesus stayed there,

#### Matthew 2:15

<sup>15</sup> ... until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled **what the Lord had said** through the prophet: “*Out of Egypt I called my son.*” **(Bold Added)**

The Bible claims that it is the Word of God, but how was it written? The questions are, “How did God do this? How did it end up that we have the very words of God in print? How can we know that these words are accurate? Are these really God’s words and not someone else putting words into His mouth?” The answer is twofold:

- **God breathed it!**

First we need to know that it was through divine inspiration that God “breathed” or revealed His thoughts to man. The Scripture says,

2 Timothy 3:16

*<sup>16</sup>All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,*

The Greek word for inspiration is *theupnevatus* which means “God breathed.” We might say that God breathed His words to be written down in the Bible. The following Scripture gives us a glimpse of how God “breathed” the Bible to be written.

2 Peter 1:20-21

*<sup>20</sup>Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. <sup>21</sup>For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

“Carried along” is a nautical term, describing a ship that loses its sail and rudder. The current determines the ship’s direction as it is “carried along”. The meaning is clear. The Holy Spirit “carried along” or divinely directed men to write what God revealed.

- **Men wrote it**

It was God’s breath that dictated what the authors He chose would write. It was the Spirit that directed their writing. God, however, did not treat the authors as robots. He allowed each person to write in his own style, but God always controlled the content. What was written in the Bible is exactly what God wanted it to say. (See *John 14:16; 16:12-15*)

## WHICH OF THE “TIES” WOULD YOU STAKE YOUR LIFE ON?

The question each person must answer is, “What will be my source of authority? What am I willing to stake my life on?” Most people simply float through life without really thinking about what constitutes their source of authority. Let’s take a moment to review the acronym **TIES** and the options that people have.

### **T**radition

Living life and making moral choices based on the authority of **man-made patterns** of thoughts and actions.

### **I**ntellect

Living life and making moral choices based on **personal reason** and what a person **thinks** is right and wrong.

### **E**xperience-emotions

Living life and making moral choices based on **experiences** and what a person **feels** is right or wrong.

## Scripture

Living life and making moral choices based on the **Bible**, a book of **absolutes** that claims to **speak for God** and is given to man by the sovereign Lord of the universe.

The choice seems clear. If the Bible can be proved reliable, why would a person trust any other source of authority? As you will see in days two through five, the evidence for the reliability of the Bible is overwhelming. You do not have to go on blind faith.

### AUTHORITY AND OBEDIENCE

If the sovereign creator of the universe has given us His Word to guide our lives it only makes sense that we should obey what He says. Since an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving God knows what is best for us we should be eager to obey Him. Our tendency, however, is to want to be our own authority—to not obey God fully. We are willing to obey God as long as it does not conflict with our selfish desires. Most of us want to pick and choose the areas in which we will allow God to be the authority in our lives.

God wants us to trust Him and His Word enough to obey Him in all things. His Word is perfect and thus a perfect guide for our life. If we are willing to obey God we will experience great joy and peace in our lives. We will be fulfilled and content. Jesus said to His disciples,

*John 15:9-11*

*<sup>9</sup>“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you **obey my commands**, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.*

*<sup>11</sup>I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that **your joy may be complete**” (bold added).*



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Write one paragraph explaining the four sources of authority and why you believe that the Bible is the only adequate source of authority. Think of how you would explain the concept to an unbeliever.

Write one paragraph explaining what the Bible has to say about being the Word of God and how it was written.



## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *2 Peter 1:20-21*. Write it in the space below.

- Memorize the acronym DUMPS.

D\_\_\_\_\_

U\_\_\_\_\_

M\_\_\_\_\_

P\_\_\_\_\_

S\_\_\_\_\_

## DAY 2: UNITY

Today we will look at the second reason why the Bible is the only source of authority we will ever need—the incredible unity of the Bible. By the end of today’s study I’m sure you will agree that only a miracle could account for a book written by 40 authors over 1500 years on three continents with a single theme and no contradictions.

### AN “IMPOSSIBLE” WRITING PROJECT

When the Jews wanted to stone Jesus for claiming He was the Son of God, Jesus referred them to the Old Testament and said, “...*the Scripture cannot be broken*” (John 10:35). Jesus was reminding the Jews about the total reliability and unity of the Old Testament. It tells one comprehensive and cohesive story. As we will see, this writing project was impossible for man to do on his own. It was truly a Divine project by the hand of the Almighty. Here are some of the things that made the writing of the Bible humanly impossible.

#### **A fifteen hundred year project**

What was said hundreds of years before was in complete agreement with what Jesus was saying on that day to the skeptical Jews. The Author of the Bible guaranteed total unity. Even though the Bible was written over a period of 1500 years there is not even one contradiction!

#### **The contribution of forty different authors**

Not only was the Bible written over a period of 1500 years, there were forty different authors who had a hand in writing it. These authors came from very diverse backgrounds. There was Moses, adopted son of royalty who wrote the first five books of the Bible, called the Law. There was David, a shepherd who became a king and wrote the book of Psalms. There was Amos who was a sheep breeder and fruit caretaker. Daniel and Nehemiah had high positions in foreign governments. Peter and John were fishermen, while Matthew was a tax collector and Luke was a medical doctor. Who would ever think to choose such a diverse group of people to write a book together?

#### **Many different kinds of books**

Even a casual reader of the Bible will notice the extremely diverse kinds of writings. The Bible contains history, poetry, proverbs, preaching, prophecy, biography and letters.

#### **Many different countries and continents**

The Bible was composed in thirteen countries and on three continents.

### “IMPOSSIBLE” UNITY

Think about it for a minute. Consider the impossibility of a writing project that spans more fifteen hundred years, written in thirteen countries by forty different authors with the goal of having a common theme with no contradictions. The story line must be carried through from beginning to end with complete unity. Would you take on such a project? Who would be crazy enough to be the editor of that kind of volume? Oh, and by the way, there are to be **no mistakes**.

### **You try it!**

Would you attempt to coordinate such a project? Let's make the editor's job a little simpler and see if you would be willing to take on the task. Let's say you were given the opportunity to go to your hometown to edit a book on a topic to be assigned. You are given the freedom to find forty different authors to contribute to this book. You ask these authors to write about a controversial subject without collaborating with the others. At the conclusion of the project they must be willing to stake their lives on the accuracy and unity of the book.

Would you accept the project? If so, what do you think would be the outcome? How much agreement would you have between the forty authors? You might get agreement on a few points but overall you would have great diversity. You would have as least as many different ideas as you had authors. Contradictions would abound. Because of the author's different backgrounds, experiences, values, and thought patterns, you would find greatly varying points of view on the subject.

### **SUPERNATURAL UNITY**

Now think back to the humanly impossible task of writing the Bible. How could forty different authors who lived in different eras, with different languages and cultures, **not** reflect the distinctiveness of their cultures? How were they able to maintain an essential unity of thought and principles throughout the hundreds of years? The only answer is that they were inspired by God. God "breathed" unity of principles and thought into their minds and souls. God supernaturally gave them the ability to record exactly what He wanted in the Bible. From Genesis to Revelation the theme never changes. The theme of God's love for man can be read from cover to cover. There are 1500 years of supernatural consistency.

#### **Unity despite diversity**

As we have seen, the Bible has total unity born of incredible diversity. For example, Moses, the author of the first five books of the Bible, while he was a Hebrew by birth, was raised by an Egyptian mother in an Egyptian culture. He was raised in Pharaoh's court and learned all the wisdom of the Egyptians. The book of Acts says,

Acts 7:22

*<sup>22</sup>Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.*

You would assume that with this background Moses would write from an Egyptian point of view. You would think that at least some of his writing would reflect an upbringing that was heavily influenced by a culture that did not believe in the true God. In looking at the first five books of the Bible which tell the story of creation, the fall, the Patriarchs and the Law with all its regulations you will find no trace of Egyptian beliefs about God.

Every law is directly from God. This phenomenon was not only true of Moses but every other author no matter what his country, culture or language. All authors of the Bible faithfully reflected the same core values and beliefs in spite of their differences.

#### **Unity of theme**

There is a common theme that runs from the first book of the Bible to the final chapter. No author ever contradicts or departs from this theme. The theme is that God is love. The Apostle John says,

1 John 4:8, 16

*<sup>8</sup>Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.... <sup>16</sup>And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.*

The Bible is really a love story. It is the story of God creating mankind to be loved by Himself so that men would love God and others. God created humans to be His own beloved children. He lovingly placed Adam and Eve in a beautiful garden so they could enjoy it and care for it. They had complete intimacy with their heavenly Father.

The story took a tragic turn when man rejected God's loving provisions and decided he could do better on His own. Adam and Eve sinned and their sin separated them from God. Mankind now suffers the consequences for their rebellion. The rest of the story is all about God, in love, providing a way for man to be reconciled to Himself. It is about God pursuing man and offering him forgiveness for his sins. The epic event in this common theme of love is the heavenly Father sacrificing His Son on the cross to pay the price for our sins and to purchase salvation for us. Through grace we have a restored relationship with God. The final "chapter" in

God's love story is found in the book of Revelation. Here we see God joyfully receiving all of His children into heaven to live with Him forever. Every word in the Bible is a part of this theme of love.

### **Unity without errors**

The final fact that makes the unity of the Bible so incomprehensible is that it contains no errors. A perfect, holy God, created not just a reliable book for man but a perfect book. God inspired the authors of the Bible to write without mistakes. Think about it. Sixty-six books, forty authors, fifteen hundred years, three continents, thirteen countries and no errors. The Psalmist assures us that,

Psalms 19:7

*<sup>7</sup>The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.*

For the Bible to be the final authority in our lives it must be without error. For a God who created the universe in six days, this was not a difficult task. God's divine power flows through everything He touches. God is holy and perfect and therefore everything He does is holy and perfect. Therefore the Bible is **inerrant**, which means it is without errors. The original writing contains no mistakes or errors whatsoever. There have been some minor errors in transmission of the Bible from copy to copy over the years, but even these are relatively few. The Bible has withstood unparalleled scrutiny and attacks. It has proven to be completely accurate in every way.

The Bible itself speaks of its own inerrancy. Jesus made it clear that He believed every word was perfect and therefore could be trusted.

Matthew 5:17-18

*<sup>17</sup>"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. <sup>18</sup> I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.*

The Greek word for “smallest letter” was iota which we use sometimes to say, “It doesn’t make one iota of difference.” The inference Jesus is making here is that every stroke of the pen, even to the smallest letter, is exactly as God wants it. His Word is perfect and will not “disappear” until everything in God’s eternal plan is accomplished.



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Write a one-paragraph summary about the unity of the Bible. Write it as if you were explaining the unity to an unbelieving friend.

In the following space write how the unity of the Bible affects you personally. How does this supernatural unity enable you to have complete trust in God’s Word?



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### WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

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- Memorize and meditate on *2 Peter 1:20-21*. Write it in the space below.
  
- Memorize the acronym DUMPS.

D\_\_\_\_\_

U\_\_\_\_\_

M\_\_\_\_\_

P\_\_\_\_\_

S\_\_\_\_\_

# DAY 3: MANUSCRIPTS

Today we will turn our attention to some of the more technical issues of how the Bible was written. We will look at the third reason we can trust the Bible as our only source of authority. You will learn some astounding facts about the reliability of the original writing and manuscripts. I want to look at some very legitimate questions people might have about the Bible. People ask, "How do we know that what we have today is the authentic Word that the Holy Spirit inspired men to write? How many manuscripts are there and how have they been preserved? How can we be certain that they are accurate?" First let's look at the languages in which the Bible was written.

## THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGES OF THE BIBLE

### Hebrew

The language that the Old Testament was written in was Hebrew. It was the language of the Jewish or Hebrew people. God chose this language because it would communicate exactly what He wanted to reveal about Himself. The language is very precise and visual and can communicate in a very personal, intimate way.

### Greek

The New Testament was written in Greek. God chose this language because it was spoken in most of the world at the time Jesus arrived on the scene. It was an ideal language for the communication of the gospel. Greek was a very intellectual language and therefore was effective in expressing the logic and reasonableness of the Christian faith.

## THE WRITING AND COPYING OF THE MANUSCRIPTS

### The writing of manuscripts

Ancient copies of the Bible or portions of the Bible were originally written on materials vastly different from what we write and print on today.

- **Clay** – Probably the most ancient writing material was clay. It was soft enough to write on with a sharp instrument, yet hard enough to be preserved.
- **Stone** – Talk about something that is hard to write on! Letters had to be chiseled onto stone tablets. Moses recorded the law on tablets of stone. (*Exodus 24:12*)
- **Papyrus** – Papyrus is a plant of the Nile valley. The pith of the plant can be cut into strips and pressed into writing material. These materials can be made into scrolls.
- **Leather/parchment** – Leather products from the skins of animals became popular to write on.
- **Paper** – During the second century A. D. the Chinese invented paper.

### Copying of manuscripts

The manuscripts of the Old Testament that exist today were hand copied by Jewish scribes who were thoroughly trained for this task. Remember that the Old Testament was written between approximately 1446 and 400 B.C. A special group of Jewish scribes called "Masoretes" were entrusted with this important task. They followed strict procedures and were meticulous as they made copies of the Hebrew Bible from about A.D. 500 to 900. This version of the Old Testament was called the **Masoretic** text.

## THE NUMBER OF MANUSCRIPTS

Compared to other ancient documents of significance, the Bible has by far the most documents to verify its authenticity. Of important secular documents, only seven copies of Plato's *Tetralogies*, ten copies of Caesar's *Gallic Wars*, and 643 copies of Homer's *Iliad* exist. But there are over 5,000 ancient manuscripts of the New Testament! There are also over 10,000 ancient manuscripts or parts of manuscripts of the Old Testament. The more manuscripts there are the easier it is to verify how accurately they have been copied and confirm what the original documents said.

Josh McDowell says the following about the great number of New Testament documents compared to other ancient writings:

*"There are more than 5,686 known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Add over 10,000 Latin Vulgate and at least 9,300 other early versions, and we have close to, if not more than, 25,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament in existence today. No other document of antiquity even begins to approach such numbers... In comparison, Homers' Iliad is second, with only 643 manuscripts that still survive. The first complete preserved text of Homer dates from the thirteenth century".*

## THE AGE OF MANUSCRIPTS

Another matter affecting the authenticity of manuscripts is their age. Important questions are, "How soon after the original was written were copies made? How many of these copies exist?" Let's compare the earliest existing copies of New Testament documents with ancient secular documents:

<u>Document</u>	<u>Date Written</u>	<u>Earliest Existing Document</u>
<i>Caesar's Gallic Wars</i>	60 B.C.	A.D. 900
<i>Plato's Tetralogies</i>	400 B.C.	A.D. 1300
<i>Homer's Iliad</i>	900 B.C.	400 B.C.
<i>New Testament</i>	A.D. 40-100	A.D. 125

The earliest existing manuscript of Gallic Wars was written 900 years after the original. The earliest copy of Tetralogies is 1300 years after the original and Iliad's earliest existing document was copied 500 years after the original. By contrast the earliest copies of the New Testament were written only 25-85 years after the originals. Again, after close scrutiny, the Bible stands head and shoulders above other ancient manuscripts in number of manuscripts and recent copies.

## THE ACCURACY OF MANUSCRIPTS

We can also trust the accuracy of Biblical manuscripts. God made sure that there would be ample evidence that the Bible came from Him by making sure that the manuscripts would be accurate. With the Bible we do not have to fill in the gaps as we do with other manuscripts of antiquity. For example William Shakespeare's plays, which were written only 400 years ago and after the printing press, cannot even begin to compare to the Bible. There are large missing sections of Shakespeare's work and scholars are left to complete his thoughts. Not so with the Bible. There are no gaps to fill in.

## The Dead Sea Scrolls

Perhaps you have read about the Dead Sea Scrolls. These scrolls were found in 1947 in some caves in an area close to the Dead Sea. A Jewish community that existed between 145 B.C. and A.D. 68 inhabited these caves. They stored some of the ancient scrolls in sealed jars, which kept them relatively intact.

At the time of their discovery, the Dead Sea Scrolls were 1,000 years older than the previous earliest Old Testament manuscripts. When compared to a manuscript of *Isaiah 63* that was written and copied 1,000 years later, only **one** word, “light” in verse 11 was different. This minor variation did not affect the meaning. Such accuracy would be humanly impossible. A thousand years of copying and still almost one hundred percent accurate! The accuracy of the Bible is a miracle of God.

## CONCLUSION

God has left us with overwhelming documentation that our Bible is indeed His exact words. He has left us with manuscripts that have stood the test of scrutiny. The manuscripts have been attacked by skeptics and studied by Christian scholars. Through it all our Lord has demonstrated beyond any doubt that the Book He has entrusted us with is truly His Word.



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Write a brief summary of what has impressed you about the preservation of the Bible. What would you want to share with an unsaved friend who had questions about the reliability of the Bible?



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## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week’s assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week’s memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *2 Peter 1:20-21*. Write it in the space below.
  
- Memorize the acronym DUMPS.

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## DAY 4: PROPHECY

Prophecy is the fourth reason we can be completely sure that the Bible is the ultimate and only source of authority in life. The Bible accurately foretells the details of events hundreds and even thousands of years before they occur.

### A BOOK LIKE NONE OTHER!

No other historical book has the “audacity” to predict future historical events. The Bible, with boldness and one hundred percent accuracy, has predicted scores of events and details. The Old Testament contains 2,000 prophecies, which are very specific.

Norman Geisler and William Nix say in their book, *A General Introduction to the Bible*:

*“No unconditional prophecy of the Bible about events to the present day has gone unfulfilled...Other books claim divine inspiration, such as the Koran, the Book of Mormon, and parts of the [Hindu] Veda. But none of those books contains predictive prophecy. As a result, fulfilled prophecy is a strong indication of the unique, divine authority of the Bible.”*

### EXAMPLES OF FULFILLED PROPHECY

The Bible has scores of prophecies, which have already been fulfilled. We will look at just a few of them.

#### **The restoration of Jerusalem**

The prophet Isaiah foretold the restoration of Jerusalem before it was ever destroyed. We know this because the first verse of the book of Isaiah documents that he is writing during the time of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, all Kings of Judah who reigned between 767 to 686 B.C., a time span of 81 years.

#### Isaiah 1:1

*<sup>1</sup>The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.*

One of Isaiah’s many prophecies was about an event that would take place 100 years after he died in approximately 681 B.C. In Isaiah chapter 44, God reveals to Isaiah that He would use a conquering King to restore Jerusalem, even though the great city was still standing. Here is the prophecy.

#### Isaiah 44:24, 26, 28

*<sup>24</sup>“This is what the LORD says--your Redeemer... <sup>26</sup>who carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the predictions of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, ‘It shall be inhabited,’ of the towns of Judah, ‘They shall be built,’ and of their ruins, ‘I will restore them,’ ... <sup>28</sup>who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, “Let it be rebuilt,” and of the temple, “Let its foundations be laid.””*

Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians -100 years after Isaiah’s day. The reconstruction of the temple was not started until 539 B.C. when Cyrus who is mentioned in Isaiah’s prophecy, conquered Babylon. It was Cyrus, king of Persia, who God used to allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem so they could

rebuild the city and the temple. There is no way that Isaiah could have known any of the details and events that would happen more than 100 years in the future unless God revealed them to him. Listen to this astounding fulfillment of prophecy:

Ezra 1:2

<sup>2</sup>"This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah'."

### **The city of Babylon**

Babylon was the greatest city of the ancient world. The Bible predicted that God would destroy it. The city would become desolate and uninhabitable. The prophet Jeremiah says,

Jeremiah 50:13

<sup>13</sup>Because of the LORD's anger she will not be inhabited but will be completely desolate. All who pass Babylon will be horrified and scoff because of all her wounds.

Today ancient Babylon is a heap of ruins in the middle of the desert!

### **The Jewish people**

Deuteronomy 28 foretells how the Jewish people would be removed from their land if they did not obey God. God says, "... You will be uprooted from the land you are entering to possess." (Deuteronomy 28:63) They would be scattered in many different lands. God says, "I will scatter you among the nations..." (Leviticus 26:33). This happened when they were exiled in Assyria and Babylon. The Bible also predicted that they would one day return to their homeland. The book of Ezekiel says,

Ezekiel 36:24

<sup>24</sup>"For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land.

This seemingly impossible event happened in 1948. The Jews who had no place to call home were given Israel once again as their homeland. They returned to their homeland from all over the earth. As you know there is once again a nation of Israel, something that most people prior to 1948 would never have thought would happen.

### **Prophecies fulfilled by Christ**

There are many prophecies that were fulfilled by Christ. I am going to give you a lengthy list for further reading. You will find the prophecy followed by the reference to the fulfillment. I would like you to read through these prophecies and references and choose one to look up. Write down what you discover in the Study and Apply the Word section at the end of the list of references.

- Born in Bethlehem (*Micah 5:2/Luke 2:4-7*)
- Born of the tribe of Judah (*Genesis 49:10/Luke 3:23,33*)
- Born of a virgin (*Isaiah 7:14/Matthew 1:23*)
- He would be a prophet (*Deuteronomy 18:18/Matthew 21:11*)
- He would be a priest (*Psalms 110:4/ Hebrews 3:1; 5:4,6*)
- He would have a special anointing of the Holy Spirit (*Isaiah 11:2/Matthew 3:16,17*)



## CONCLUSION

The prophetic ability demonstrated by God is one more piece of compelling evidence of the reliability of the Bible, and that God Himself is the author. *Isaiah 45:21* affirms,

*<sup>21</sup>Declare what is to be, present it--let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me.*



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Write a brief summary of what has impressed you about the prophecies of the Bible. How could you use this information with an unsaved friend?



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### WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *2 Peter 1:20-21*. Write it in the space below.

- Memorize the acronym DUMPS.

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# DAY 5: SURVIVAL

The Bible has not only survived over the years it has **thrived!** It is by far the world's best-selling book. We know that since the invention of the printing press in 1445 more than 6 billion Bibles have been sold. The Bible has been translated into more than 2,000 languages. Of all the books published more than three hundred years ago only 60 are in print today. But sales of the Bible are over \$400,000,000 just in the US. Jesus was able to predict with certainty, *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. Matthew 24:35*

## THE BIBLE HAS SURVIVED CRITICISM

The survival of the Bible is the fifth and final piece of evidence that we will look at this week. There has never been a book in the history of man that has caused so much positive and negative emotion. Many men and women love the Bible, while many others hate it. Many have fought to preserve it while many others have sought to destroy it. No book in history has been persecuted like the Bible. Thomas Paine predicted during the Revolutionary War period that the Bible would be out of print in his lifetime. He said, *"Five years from now there will not be a Bible in America. I have gone through the Bible with an axe and cut down all its trees."* (Thomas Paine 1737-1809 *Age of Reason*)

For two thousand years every possible effort has been made to undermine the authority of the Bible. The Bible has been attacked by emperors, kings and scholars. It has endured the hatred of intellectual, political, philosophical, scientific, and physical forces. It has survived every attack. Men come and go but the Word of God survives forever. As the Bible proclaims,

*Isaiah 40:6-8*

*<sup>6</sup>A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?" <sup>7</sup>All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. <sup>8</sup>The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. <sup>9</sup>The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever."*

### Following are some of the criticisms the Bible has survived:

- **Criticism about errors and contradictions**

A common criticism about the Bible is that it contradicts itself. People who attack the Bible point to what they consider numerous contradictions and errors. In spite of all these attacks over the ages the questions have been answered and the Bible has proved credible in every way.

- **Criticism about archeology**

Most professional archeologists now acknowledge that the Bible is historically correct. The evidence is overwhelming in supporting the accuracy of the Bible when it comes to the historical events and the details of ancient cultures and locations. For example, for many years archeologists denied the existence of a large Hittite Empire mentioned in the Bible. An archeological dig in 1906 uncovered the very empire they had denied existed.

- **Criticism about science**

The Bible has been severely criticized by the scientific community. However, while the Bible is not a book on science, it proves to be accurate in all its information about the universe. As an example, the ancient

world had many mythological scenarios about how the earth was supported in the universe. The Greeks described the earth as being held up by the god Atlas. The Hindu religion taught that the earth was supported on the backs of eight huge elephants. Yet the Bible tells a different, scientifically accurate story. The book of Job says that God hung the earth "...on nothing." (Job 26:7) Of course this was thousands of years before Isaac Newton discovered the law of gravity and proved that the earth really was suspended "on nothing."

- **Contradictions**

The Bible has been attacked for having hundreds if not thousands of contradictions. In all cases where the Bible has been accused of contradicting itself, careful study has given reasonable answers to these accusations.

## **THE BIBLE HAS SURVIVED INTACT: THE HISTORY OF THE BIBLE**

As we have seen, the Bible has survived the centuries intact. Considering all the obstacles the Bible has encountered, this can only be a miracle from God. For example, the Roman emperor Diocletian in A.D. 303 ordered that all Bibles be burned. Obviously he missed a few!

We will now look at a brief history of the Bible, which will show how it has survived. There are three major contributions to the Bible's survival.

### **Transmission**

- **The beginning of the Old Testament**

We have already seen how the Bible has come to us through the centuries, copied by scribes on ancient materials. We have seen how these manuscripts have not only been faithfully copied but also preserved in great quantities for scholars to study today. Originally written in ancient Hebrew, the first five books to be written were called the "Pentateuch": Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These books of Moses, written on a scroll made of animal skin, which measured over 150 feet long, were called the "Torah".

- **The completion of the Old Testament**

By approximately 500 BC, the 39 books that make up the Old Testament were completed. They were preserved on scrolls in the Hebrew language.. There were 400 years between the last Old Testament writings and the birth of Jesus. During this time referred to as "the years of silence" some historical books known as the "Apocrypha" were written. These are still part of the Catholic Bible. I will mention why these books are not part of the Protestant Bible when we discuss the formation of the "Canon."

- **The completion of the New Testament**

By the first century BC all of the original Greek manuscripts which make up the 27 books of the New Testament were written.

### **Translation**

I want to show how translation impacted the survival of the Bible during a period of over two thousand years. This will take us through a short course on Church History. Following are some of the major translations:

- **The Septuagint**

The Septuagint was the first book to be translated from Hebrew into another language. The Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek in 200 BC because Greek was the universal language of the time. This would have been the Bible that Jesus read.

- **The Vulgate**

In 382 AD Jerome translated the entire Bible into Latin. This occurred because the church had become the highest authority in the world and was headquartered in Rome. Latin had replaced Greek as the common language. At this time in history the only recognized church was the Catholic Church of Rome. Emperor Constantine had decreed that the Catholic Church would be the state religion and the first Pope was chosen.

The Church refused to allow the Bible to be available in any language other than Latin. If anyone was caught with non-Latin Scripture they were executed! The reason for this was that the priests were the only ones who could understand Latin. This gave the church ultimate power. The common man could not understand or question the Scriptures. With the church in complete control, it ruled with tyranny and deceit. The thousand-year period from 400 AD to 1,400 AD was known as the “Dark” or “Middle Ages”, a truly dark time for Christians and the church.

- **John Wycliffe**

In the late 1300’s, John Wycliffe, a member of the Culdees, a secret society of the true Christian faith, was chosen to lead the world out of the Dark Ages. Wycliffe has been called the “Morning Star of the Reformation”. The Protestant Reformation, whose most notable leader was Martin Luther, was primarily about getting the Scriptures back into the hands of the common man. John Wycliffe translated and produced the first handwritten English language manuscripts out of the Latin Vulgate.

Wycliffe died of natural causes but many of his followers, called Lollards, were persecuted and some even killed, because of possessing and teaching from Wycliffe’s Bible.

- **Martin Luther**

Martin Luther launched the Reformation on Halloween in 1517 by nailing his 95 Theses of Contention to the Wittenberg Church door. Martin wanted the corrupt church to be exposed and the message of salvation in Christ alone, by Scripture alone, through faith alone be taught again. Martin Luther translated the Bible into German while in prison in 1522.

- **William Tyndale**

William Tyndale was the Captain of the Army of Reformers. He finished his English Bible in 1530 and thousands of copies were burned by the king of England. William Tyndale was burned at the stake in 1536 for his commitment to translate the Bible from the original languages into the language of the common man.

- **The Geneva Bible**

The Geneva Bible came from a team of individuals who gathered in Geneva, Switzerland. This team included Myles Coverdale, John Foxe, John Calvin and John Knox. Under the authority of the Church of Geneva, this group completed what came to be called The Geneva Bible. This was the first Bible with numbered verses for easier reading and marginal notes for study. This Bible, produced in 1560 was also called the “Puritan Bible” and came to America with the pilgrims.

- **King James Bible**

The English Bible became so well accepted that the Catholic church finally gave up all hopes of suppressing the spread of Scriptures in the language of the common man. When James I became King of England, he appointed a group of 47 English Bible scholars to produce an “authorized version” of the Bible. This was completed in 1611 AD and became known as the “King James Version.”

- **American Standard Bible**

(ASV) This was the first major English revision of the King James Bible, published in 1901.

- **New American Standard Version**

(NASB) Published in 1971 as a modern and accurate word for word English translation of the Bible.

- **New International Version**

(NIV) Published in 1973 as an accurate phrase for phrase English translation of the Bible.

- **(NKJV) New King James Version**

Published as a modern version of the original King James Version.

- **Modern versions**

There have been several modern versions of the Bible. These are not really translations but paraphrases to help people understand the Bible. *The Living Bible* written by Ken Taylor was the first and most popular of these modern versions. Since it was completed in 1971 over 40 million copies have been sold.

- ❖ **The Gutenberg printing press**

When Johannes Gutenberg designed and built the first Western printing press in 1445 it changed publishing forever. Up to that time it took ten months to make a single copy of the Bible. The first book Gutenberg published was a Bible. With the coming of the printing press, the Bible would eventually become accessible to the common man throughout the world.

## THE CANONIZATION OF THE BIBLE

The 66 books that we have in our Bible went through a process that is called “canonization” The word cannon comes from the root word reed which was used as a measuring stick in ancient time. The word describes the process by which the early church fathers “chose” the books that would be included in the Bible. The early church began to face the threat of heresy, and false books were being circulated. Church leaders, led by the Holy Spirit, met in several councils to decide which books were divinely inspired by God. Norman Geisler gives five guidelines they used to select the books in the New Testament: (Final recognition of the Old Testament books came at the Synod of Jamia).

- Does it speak with God’s authority?
- Is it written by a man of God speaking to us as a prophet of God?
- Does it have the authentic stamp of God?
- Does it impact us with the power of God?
- Was it accepted by the people of God?

Final recognition of the 27 books of the New Testament came at the Council at Carthage in 397 AD. However the Council really only recognized that these 27 books had already been in use by the church and believed to be the inspired Word of God. As J.I. Packer says,

*“The church no more gave us the New Testament cannon than Sir Isaac Newton gave us the force of gravity. God gave us gravity by His work of creation, and similarly He gave the New Testament cannon, by inspiring the individual books that made it up.”*

### **A word about the Apocrypha**

There are some Bibles that contain additional books called the Apocrypha. These books, while having historical value, were not recognized as inspired by the early church. At the Council of Trent in 1546 the Roman Catholic Church declared some of these books to be canonical. This seems to have been a reaction to the perceived threat of Martin Luther and the Reformation.

### **THE BIBLE’S IMPACT ON MAN**

The Bible has survived and thrived as the Word of God through the centuries because of its impact on man. Millions of people meet each week throughout the world to study the Bible. Throughout the centuries people have risked their lives to study or own a Bible. Millions have been smuggled into hostile countries at great danger. Could the same be said about books written by Charles Dickens, Stephen King or James Michener? Millions of people all over the world claim that the Bible has changed their lives. There is no other book like it for its impact on man.



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### **WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW**

Memorize and review this week’s assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week’s memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on 2 *Peter* 1:20-21. Write it in the space below.

- Memorize the acronym DUMPS.

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## TEARS AND CHEERS

At the beginning of each week's group time you will be given an opportunity to share what is going on in your life. This is voluntary and you will never be pressured to share if you choose not to. Your group leader will give you the opportunity to share the following:

- **Tears**

"Tears" represents the burdens, disappointments and other issues you are facing. This will enable you to work through issues with the support of the group and receive encouragement and prayer

- **Cheers**

"Cheers" is the blessing, joys and spiritual progress for which you are thankful. Verbalizing these blessing strengthen you and encourage others.

# WEEK 3

## THE 12 ERAS OF THE BIBLE

*“[The Bible] has one main theme that starts in Genesis and ends in Revelation. ...how the sovereign God of the universe loves mankind and has provided a way to be reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ.”*

### INTRODUCTION

The second way to have a firm grasp on the Word of God is to have a thorough understanding of the twelve eras that comprise the Two Covenants of the Bible that God made with His people. This week as you take a fast trip through the entire Bible you will learn the twelve major eras of the Old and New Covenants of the Bible. When you know how the Bible unfolds through these eras it is much easier to read, study and understand the Bible.

### WEEK 3 STUDY

#### THE OLD COVENANT

DAY 1: The Eras of Creation, Patriarchs, Exodus

DAY 2: The Eras of the Conquest, Judges, Kings

DAY 3: The Eras of Exile, Return, Silence

#### THE NEW COVENANT

DAY 4: The Eras of the Gospels, Church, Missions

DAY 5: Bible Timeline

### WEEK 3 ASSIGNMENTS:

- Memorize and meditate on *Hebrews 1:1-2*

#### Hebrews 1:1-2

*<sup>1</sup>In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.*

- Memorize the twelve eras of the Bible. Complete a Time Line of the twelve eras.
- Review all previous memory projects from your index cards
- Prepare your memory/review index card. Write your memory verse on one side and the 12 eras of the Bible on the other.

# DAY 1: THE ERAS OF CREATION, PATRIARCHS AND EXODUS

## THE OLD COVENANT

The Bible is divided into two sections. In most Bibles they are called the Old Testament and the New Testament. The word testament comes from the Hebrew word for covenant or agreement. The Old Testament is an agreement between God and His chosen people, the Israelites. The 39 books of the Old Testament contain the historical record of the agreement between God and His people up to 432 B.C. This was an agreement that was to last until Jesus came to earth, ushering in a new agreement. This new agreement or covenant is recorded in the 27 books of the New Testament. The New Testament contains the 100-year history of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and of His followers.

God chose the Hebrew people to be His “Chosen Nation” through whom He would reveal Himself and provide redemption for the entire world. God’s Old Covenant with the Hebrews provides a temporary sacrifice for sins. Each year the High Priest would offer an animal sacrifice for the sins of the people. When Jesus came with the New Covenant, He paid for our sins, once and for all, with His own blood. Through His death Jesus became for us both High Priest and sacrificial lamb. The writer of Hebrews in comparing the Old and New Covenants says,

Hebrews 9:14

*<sup>14</sup>How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*

## BOOKS OF THE OLD COVENANT

The books of the Old Covenant can be divided into four sections as follows:

### The Books of Moses

Genesis      Leviticus      Deuteronomy      Exodus      Numbers

### The Books of Military Leaders, Judges and Kings

Joshua      1 & 2 Samuel      Ezra      Judges      1 & 2 Kings      Nehemiah  
Ruth      1 & 2 Chronicles      Esther

### The Books of Wisdom and Poetry

Job      Proverbs      Song of Solomon      Psalms      Ecclesiastes

### The Books of Prophets

*Major Prophets*

Isaiah      Jeremiah      Lamentations      Ezekiel      Daniel

### *Minor Prophets*

Hosea	Jonah	Zephaniah	Joel	Amos	Obadiah
Micah	Nahum	Habakkuk	Haggai	Zechariah	Malachi

- The Books of Moses and the Books of Military Leaders, Judges and Kings comprise the first 17 books of the Bible and give an historical timeline of the Israelites.
- The next five books contain the poetry of Israel
- The final seventeen books record the prophecy of Israel.

## **THE NINE ERAS OF THE OLD COVENANT**

To understand the Bible clearly it is helpful to understand the eras of the Old and New Covenants. God progressively revealed Himself to man through these eras as recorded in the various books written in that time period. As we have seen, the Bible, while made up of 66 books, has one main theme that starts in Genesis and ends in Revelation. That theme is how the sovereign God of the universe loves mankind and has provided a way to be reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ. We are able to follow this theme when we understand the nine eras of the Old Covenant, and the three eras of the New Covenant. The nine eras of the Old Covenant are:

1. The Era of Creation
2. The Era of Patriarchs
3. The Era of Exodus
4. The Era of Conquest
5. The Era of Judges
6. The Era of Kings
7. The Era of Exile
8. The Era of Return
9. The Era of Silence

### **ERA 1: CREATION**

*(Genesis 1-11)*

The first three eras of the Bible are found in the books of Moses. These first five books of the Bible are referred to as the Pentateuch. In the Jewish Scriptures these books are called the Torah. The first era recorded in the Bible is the era of creation. We find the story of creation in Genesis chapters one through eleven.

#### **The story line**

God created the universe and Adam and Eve in His image for fellowship with Himself. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and therefore became separated from God.

#### **The scenes**

Think of each era as an important section about a movie of the history of God in the world. We will call this epic movie "The Story of God". Each era will have several important scenes. In the era of creation there are four important scenes that are played out.

### **Scene 1: Creation** (*Genesis 1, 2*)

The first and most spectacular event recorded in the Bible is the creation of the universe and man. The drama begins with God creating the heaven and the earth in six days. The first verse in Genesis says, “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*” (*Genesis 1:1*). Genesis gives the details of what God did each day.

**Day #1:** God created light

**Day #2:** God created the sky and water

**Day #3:** God created land

**Day #4:** God created the sun and moon

**Day #5:** God created the creatures of the sea and air

**Day #6:** God created the animals and man

The last act of God’s creation was to make man in His image. God gave man a soul to separate him from all other living things He created. The Scripture says,

*Genesis 1:27*

*<sup>27</sup>So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

God’s loving imprint was on man as He placed him in the beautiful Garden of Eden where all of his needs would be met. In the garden where Adam and Eve lived, everything was perfect. And most importantly they enjoyed a personal, intimate relationship with the creator of the universe.

### **Scene 2: The Fall** (*Genesis 3*)

God gave only one prohibition to Adam and Eve. They were not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They gave in to the temptation and rebelled against God. Because of Adam’s and Eve’s sin they became separated from God, banished from the garden. Because of their fall, sin entered the world and all of mankind would sin and become separated from God. However, from the beginning of time God had implemented a plan that would restore man’s relationship with Him through the sacrifice of Jesus.

### **Scene 3: The Flood** (*Genesis 6-10*)

The third event in the era of creation was the flood. Several hundred years had gone by and many people now populated the earth. Man had become more and more sinful until God had had enough. God could find only eight people who were righteous: Noah and his wife and their sons and their wives. God’s judgment came in the form of a flood that covered the entire earth. Noah’s family and two of each kind of animal were saved in a huge boat called the Ark.

### **Scene 4: The Tower** (*Genesis 11*)

After the flood man was given a fresh start and told to spread out and populate the entire earth. In direct disobedience man stayed in one place and in an act of arrogance and rebellion decided to build a tower that would reach to heaven so he could make a name for himself. To correct the situation God caused people to begin to speak many different languages. Thus we have the beginning of the nations as language groups started to separate into different locations.

## ERA 2: THE PATRIARCHS

(Genesis 12-50)

Chapters twelve through fifty of Genesis tell the story of the second era of the Bible. The main character is Abraham whom God chooses to be the “father” of the nation of Israel. It is through Abraham and his offspring that the provisional or Old Covenant was made.

### The storyline

God chooses Abraham to be the “father” of the Hebrew people and makes a covenant to bless him and reveal Himself to the whole world through Abraham’s extended family.

### The scenes

#### Scene 1: Abraham: “Father” of the Hebrew nation (Genesis 12-20)

God’s plan for spreading the plan of redemption throughout the world comes through the covenant He makes with Abraham who at the time is living in the land of Ur. (close to present-day Iraq) God tells Abraham to pack up all his belonging and move 500 miles to Canaan (present day Israel). God’s covenant with this first great Patriarch is that all the nations of the world will be blessed through him and his descendants. The book of Genesis says,

##### Genesis 12:1-3

*<sup>1</sup>The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. <sup>2</sup>“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”*

#### Scene 2: Isaac: The son of promise (Genesis 21-26)

Abraham and his wife Sarah had their faith tested when Abraham was pushing 100 years of age, Sarah was about 90 and there was still no offspring. Even though, as the Scripture says, Abraham was “nearly dead”, he still had faith that God would keep His promise. Isaac, the son of promise was finally born. Then, in a third great demonstration of faith, Abraham was willing to trust God for the life of his only son when asked by God to sacrifice him as a burnt offering. (Genesis 22:2) At the very last moment God intervened, providing a substitute for Isaac and providing us with one of the greatest examples of faith in the entire Bible. (Genesis 22:6-15)

#### Scene 3: Jacob: “Father” of the Nation of Israel (Genesis 27-36)

Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. The covenant made with Abraham continues through his descendants to Jacob. Jacob has twelve sons whose descendants would eventually become the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel.

#### Scene 4: Joseph: “Ruler” over Egypt (Genesis 37-50)

The story of Joseph is an example of how God makes good what is meant for evil. Jacobs’s sons turn against their younger brother Joseph and decide to sell him as a slave. Joseph ends up in Egypt where he is bought by Potiphar, one of Pharaoh’s officials. The Scripture says that “The Lord was with Joseph” and he was put in charge of the household (Genesis 39:2). Joseph ends up in prison after being falsely accused, but after interpreting Pharaoh’s dreams he eventually becomes Pharaoh’s right hand man. As chief

administrator he is put in charge of all of Egypt. Eventually Joseph forgives his brothers and brings his family to live in Egypt. Joseph dies and his people are to be enslaved for the next 400 years.

### **ERA 3: THE EXODUS**

*(Exodus and Deuteronomy)*

We will now fast forward to approximately 1800 B.C. Four hundred years have passed and the Israelite population has grown to about two million. Egyptian officials are becoming concerned about the numbers and power of the people. The official response is to increase the Israelite's work load and to repress them. God, however, is still in charge. His sovereign purposes, plans and covenant are still intact. The timing is perfect for God's people to make their exodus from Egypt and move on to the Promised Land.

#### **The story line**

God chooses Moses to lead the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, give them the law, and prepare them for possessing the Promised Land.

#### **The scenes**

##### **Scene 1: The great escape** *(Exodus 1-18)*

The opening scene of "the great escape" or The Exodus as it is commonly referred to, finds God speaking to Moses from a burning bush. God tells Moses that He has chosen him to lead the people out of slavery to the Promised Land. A reluctant Moses finally obeys God and through a series of miracles, which includes ten plagues, watches God deliver the Israelites from Pharaoh's mighty hand. With the Egyptians in pursuit of the Israelites, God parts the sea so His people can make their escape. He then makes the waters flow back over the attacking army and it is destroyed.

##### **Scene 2: The Ten Commandments** *(Exodus 19-40)*

With their new freedom as an emerging nation, the people needed an authoritative word from God to guide them. God gave this to Moses on Mt. Sinai in the form of the Ten Commandments, etched in stone by the finger of God. Moses is also given the law that is to govern the Israelites in their conduct and provide them a relationship with God. God makes it clear that if they obey Him they will be blessed, but if they disobey they will suffer the consequences.

##### **Scene 3: The people rebel** *(Numbers 10-14)*

God was faithful and provided for the Israelites in every way, but they still were ungrateful and doubted God. Their weak faith resulted in outright rebellion at Kadesh Barnea, a southern entrance to the Promised Land. Twelve spies were sent out to scout the land that was inhabited by the Canaanites. The spies returned with a mixed report. They all agreed that the land was beautiful, "flowing with milk and honey." They disagreed, however, on whether or not they could defeat the inhabitants and possess the land God had promised them. Ten spies reported that the people were too formidable to conquer even though God had promised victory. Two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb disagreed. They said,

*Numbers 14:9*

*"Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them."*



# DAY 2: THE ERAS OF CONQUEST, JUDGES AND KINGS

As our great epic movie continues we move into the very dramatic events of God's people possessing the Promised Land. Approximately 700 years have elapsed from the time of Abraham to the death of Moses. Now, at around 1400 B.C. the era of Conquest begins. The next 5 eras will include 1,000 years of history and conclude Old Testament history in approximately 425 B.C. The following 13 books tell the story of the sometimes wonderful and often tragic times of God's people: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther.

## ERA 4: THE CONQUEST

*(Joshua)*

Because of his disobedience, Moses was not permitted to enter the Promised Land. Instead God chose Joshua to lead the conquest of Canaan. Joshua was a courageous and godly man who was unwavering in his commitment to trust and obey God in all things. God promised Joshua, "I will give you every place where you set your foot as I promised Moses" (*Joshua 1:3*). God also gave Joshua the secret to success. He says,

### *Joshua 1:7-9*

*<sup>7</sup>Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. <sup>8</sup>Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. <sup>9</sup>Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."*

Joshua had always taken God at His Word. He was a courageous and godly and obedient man who expected no less of the people he led. Joshua's success as a leader was because he listened to God. We will witness this commitment as we see three wonderful scenes unfold.

### **The story line**

God chooses Joshua to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land where they are conquerors and establish the twelve tribes of the Kingdom of Judah.

### **The scenes**

#### **Scene 1: Crossing Jordan** (*Joshua 1-5*)

God immediately shows His faithfulness to the Israelites. God once again performs a miracle and parts water so that His people can enter the Promised Land on dry land. God's people cross over the Jordan River carrying the Ark of the Covenant and build a monument to this first great miracle in their new land.

#### **Scene 2: The fall of Jericho** (*Joshua 6*)

One of the most spectacular battles of the Bible happens next. The city of Jericho is the heavily fortified eastern entrance to the Promised Land and must be conquered. God instructs Joshua to march around the city once a day for seven days. On the seventh day the people are to march around the city seven times, shout and sound the trumpets. God promises that if they obey the walls will fall down. They do as God commands, the walls fall down and the city is captured.

### **Scene 3: Canaan conquered and the Kingdom of Judah established** (*Joshua 7-2*)

It takes Joshua about seven years to conquer the Promised Land. City by city, king by king, the Israelite army cuts from south to north defeating all who occupy the land. Each of the twelve tribes is given a section of land to occupy.

## **ERA 5: THE JUDGES**

(*Judges and Ruth*)

The Israelites promised Joshua that they would serve and obey God, but their resolve did not last long. The next generation had no commitment to God. The book of Judges says,

*Judges 2:10*

*<sup>10</sup>After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel.*

Because the people did not follow God, the nation of Israel became very corrupt. The book of Judges records that, "*In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.*" (*Judges 21:25*) As a result, for the next 400 years God rules a rebellious people with a series of judges who attempt to keep the people in line.

### **The story line**

Because of Israel's rebellion God chooses to rule His people through a series of judges for 400 years. Samuel is the last judge and crowns the first king of Israel.

### **The scenes**

#### **Scene 1: Here come the judges** (*Judge, Ruth, 1 Samuel*)

Judges during this era of the Bible were not like our judges who make legal decisions. They were political and military leaders who had absolute authority over all the affairs of the nation of Israel. The four major judges were:

**Deborah** - who was the only woman judge.

**Gideon** - who defeated an army of thousands with only three hundred men.

**Samson** - of longhair fame and great strength who was seduced by Delilah and lost his power.

**Samuel** - the last judge who made the transition between the era of the Judges and the era of the Kings.

#### **Scene 2: The cycle of rebellion and repentance** (*Judges*)

God sent a series of judges or "deliverers" to confront the people with their sin and lead them back to God. This happened time and time again and became a very predictable cycle. This cycle of rebellion and repentance included the following series of actions:

- The people sin and depart from God.
- God disciplines His people in love.
- The people cry out and God calls them to repent.
- The people repent and return to God.
- The people sin and depart from God.

If this cycle seems familiar it is because we fall into same trap. We all tend to make commitments and then wander from God, enticed by sin. God then must discipline us in love so we will return to Him. We cry out to God in our pain and He hears us. We repent and return to Him.

### **Scene 3: Samuel, the last judge** (1 & 2 Samuel)

First and Second Samuel are books of the Bible that are named after Samuel, the last judge of Israel. God called Samuel when he was a very small child to eventually be a judge. Samuel became both a judge and a prophet as he provided the transition between the judges and the kings by anointing David as the first king of Israel.

## **ERA 6: THE KINGS**

(1 Samuel-Chronicles)

After 400 hundred years of being ruled by judges and continual battles with surrounding countries, Israel wanted a king. They thought that a king would solve all of their problems. Of course their problem was not that they needed a king, but that they refused to obey and serve “The King of Kings.” God made this clear to Samuel when the people demanded that he crown a king.

### 1 Samuel 8:7

*7And the LORD told him: “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.”*

The Israelites insisted on having a king like their neighbors. God gave them what they thought they wanted. They would pay the consequences of their unwise demand with 400 years of turbulence during the era of the kings. When a righteous king ruled, the nation tended to enjoy good times. When an unrighteous king ruled, the nation suffered. Unfortunately for the nation of Israel they had mostly unrighteous kings.

### **The story line**

Israel was ruled for 400 years by a few righteous kings such as David, but mostly unrighteous kings causing the nation to become divided and eventually sent into exile.

### **The scenes**

#### **Scene 1: The United Kingdom** (1 & 2 Samuel)

God gave Israel the king they asked for but not one that was His choice. The twelve tribes united under Saul the first King of Israel. When Saul turned against God, Samuel anointed a king who was God’s choice. David, the shepherd boy with a heart for God, was a righteous king. Israel prospered under his reign. Although he was weak and sinful at times, David loved God with all his heart and wrote most of the book of Psalms. Solomon, David’s son ascended to the throne when his father died.

#### **Scene 2: The Divided Kingdom** (1 Kings)

Although Solomon was blessed by God with great wisdom, he drifted from the Lord and became tainted by other nations. Because he took foreign wives and allowed pagan worship in Jerusalem, the Nation of Israel had civil war and was divided. The Scripture says,

Kings 11: 16

<sup>16</sup>So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done.

Because of Solomon's failure to serve God alone, the nation was divided into two separate kingdoms: Israel in the north with ten tribes and Judah in the south with two tribes. The northern tribes retained the name of "Israel" and the southern tribes were called "Judah".

**Scene 3: The Northern Kingdom** (2 Kings)

When the civil war erupted Jeroboam became king of the northern kingdom of Israel. He was a very unrighteous king and was succeeded by eighteen other kings who were also ungodly. Because of the unrighteousness of these kings and the disobedience of the people, the northern kingdom was taken into captivity by Assyria and never restored.

**Scene 4: The Southern Kingdom** (2 Kings)

The first king of the southern kingdom was Rehoboam, Solomon's son. Rehoboam was a somewhat better king than Jeroboam and therefore the nation of Judah did a little better. Of the twenty kings that ruled for 400 hundred years, eight were righteous. The southern kingdom suffered the same fate as the northern kingdom in the end. Babylon, who conquered Assyria, then conquered Judah. Many of the leaders and elite of Judah were taken captive to Babylon.



**WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW**

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Hebrews 1:1-2*. Write it in the space below.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Memorize and review the first three eras.
  - The Era of C\_\_\_\_\_
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  - The Era of C\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of J\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of K\_\_\_\_\_

# DAY 3: THE ERAS OF EXILE, RETURN AND SILENCE

## ERA 7: EXILE

*(Ezekiel-Daniel)*

As we saw in day two of this week's study, the establishment of a monarchy only made things worse for God's chosen people. A succession of unrighteous kings in both the northern and southern kingdoms created an atmosphere of ungodliness and rebellion on the part of the people. The cycle of sin, discipline and repentance was repeated until God said, "enough" and sent His people into exile.

### **The story line**

Because of their disobedience, Israel is the first to be taken into exile by Assyria followed by Judah's exile to Babylon. Daniel is a prophet and leader in Babylon.

### **The scenes**

#### **Scene 1: The northern kingdom is taken into captivity by the Assyrians** *(2 Kings)*

The northern kingdom of the ten tribes of Israel was the first to be taken into captivity. Hoshea, the last king of Israel made a deal with Shalmaneser, king of Assyria that failed to save Israel. In 722 B.C. after a three-year siege of Samaria, Israel was defeated and deported to Assyria.

#### **Scene 2: The southern kingdom is taken into captivity by the Babylonians** *(2 Kings)*

The southern two tribes of Judah were taken into captivity by Babylon in 586 B.C. Jehoiachin, the last king of Judah surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon when he laid siege to Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar took treasures, and the elite: officers, fighting men, craftsmen and artisans—a total of ten thousand, and left only the poorest in Jerusalem.

#### **Scene 3: The prophets of the exile**

Prophets were God's spokesmen. They were not only able to foretell the future but they were God's representatives for the present. They confronted the people with their sin and warned of the consequences of rebellion and serving other gods. They affirmed God's everlasting love and faithfulness and his plan of redemption.

There were 16 prophets who served God in Israel and Judah before, during and after the exile. Each has a book named after him. Jeremiah also wrote Lamentations.

#### **The prophets before the exile were:**

- In Israel—Amos, Hosea
- In Judah—Joel, Micah, Isaiah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk
- To the Assyrians—Jonah, Nahum
- To the Edomites—Obadiah

#### **The prophets during the exile were:**

- To the Jews in Babylonia—Daniel, Ezekiel

## The prophets after the exile were:

- To the Jews in Jerusalem—Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

## ERA 8: THE RETURN

*(Ezra-Esther)*

God's purpose in sending His people into exile was not just to punish them, but also to discipline them so they would repent and return to Him. Because of the seventy hard years in Babylon, God's people became humble, repentant and ready to love, serve and obey God. God was about to implement His plan to restore His people.

### The story line

God chooses Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah to lead His people back to Jerusalem where they will be restored to a right relationship with Him.

### The scenes

#### Scene 1: The rebuilding of the temple *(Ezra 1-6)*

In 537 B.C. a wonderful promise by God and prophecy by the prophets began to unfold. God uses Cyrus, king of Persia who defeated the Babylonians, to accomplish His purposes. Cyrus complies with the sovereign will of God.

*Ezra 1:2*

*<sup>2</sup>"This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah."*

With the endorsement and financing of King Cyrus, a Jewish leader from Persia, leads a group of people back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. Although there is opposition from Gentiles, with the moral and spiritual support of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the temple is restored.

#### Scene 2: The rebuilding of the people *(Ezra 7-10)*

There was a direct correlation between the rebuilding of the temple and the rebuilding of the spiritual lives of the people. There had been no temple worship for seventy years. The law had not been read or heard for all of this time. Ezra was the leader who helped turn the peoples' hearts back to God. The Scripture says,

*Ezra 7:10*

*<sup>10</sup>For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.*

When Ezra read the book of the law to the people for the first time, they wept for joy because they heard God's words. This caused them, to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them. Nehemiah 8:12

### **Scene 3: The rebuilding of the wall** (*Nehemiah*)

The temple had been rebuilt and many of the Jews returned to Jerusalem. The rebuilding of God's people, however, had just begun. The restoration of the broken down wall surrounding Jerusalem and the restoration of broken hearts needed to be continued. God touched the heart of Nehemiah, a Jew who was serving king Artaxerxes of Persia when he heard of the broken walls and hearts of the people in Jerusalem. The broken walls in some ways represent the lack of security and brokenness of the Jews. Nehemiah asked the king for permission and resources to rebuild the wall. He was given the green light and in 52 days, facing great opposition both from his own people and hostile neighboring countries, the wall was completed. The miraculous rebuilding of the wall was a symbol of God's power and faithfulness as well as the faith and hard work of the people. Listen to the results!

#### *Nehemiah 6:15-16*

*<sup>15</sup>So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days. <sup>16</sup>When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.*

### **ERA 9: SILENCE** (*Between the Old and New Testaments*)

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. The writing of God's "Old Covenant" with man ends in approximately 430 B.C. God's people are settled and Jerusalem is restored, but Malachi reminds the people that they are half-hearted in their commitment to the Lord. After Malachi puts down his pen there is "silence" until the coming of Jesus. God may be silent in terms of His written Word, but He is not silent in working out His plan of redemption for the world. During these 400 years of so-called silence, God is making a lot of "noise" orchestrating perfect preparations for the coming of His Son.

#### **The story line**

God is "silent" for four hundred years as He prepares the world for the coming of His Son while the Jews, led by the Pharisees and Sadducees become arrogant and steeped in legalism.

#### **The scenes**

##### **Scene 1: The Jews become religious**

The cycle of departing from God is repeated once again during the era of silence. As time went on commitment to God was replaced by legalism. Hundreds of restrictions were added to the Scriptures. Legalism was a form of religion that focused on the external observance of rules and the law rather than inner motivations of obedience because of loving God.

There were two primary parties that made up the religious elite in Jerusalem during this time. The Pharisees were the more orthodox, conservative party. They proudly promoted a "self-righteousness" based on their strict observance of the law and therefore separated themselves from secular society. The second primary party was the Sadducees. They tended to be the more liberal group, denying the resurrection from the dead and other core doctrines. The Sadducees tended to be more politically connected and wealthy. The two groups comprised the Sanhedrin which was the ruling religious board of the day.

## Scene 2: It's all Greek to me!

At the time the last book of the Old Testament was written, Jerusalem was ruled by Persia. This rule lasted until 333 B.C. when Alexander the Great defeated the Persians and established a Greek culture in that part of the world. The Greek culture and Greek language provided a unity to the part of the world that surrounded Jerusalem. This was all part of God's plan. The Greek language and culture became a useful vehicle for the spreading of the Gospel throughout the world. The Old Testament was translated from Hebrew into a Greek Bible called the Septuagint in 285 B.C. This Bible pointed the way to the Messiah and made the Scriptures more available to the common man. It continued to be popular into the second century A.D.

## Scene 3: All roads lead to Rome

By about 63 B.C. Rome had defeated Greece and ruled Palestine where Jesus was to be born. Israel became a part of the Roman Empire. Under the rule of Rome there was military peace. The Roman government gave stability and some self-government to the Jews, which would eventually allow Jesus and His followers the freedom to spread the message of salvation. Rome also constructed a vast network of roads and sea travel so that people could travel with relative ease. This paved the way for the extensive expansion of the Gospel into many countries.

## Scene 4: When the time had fully come

During the four hundred years of silence there grew a strong expectation of the coming of the Messiah or Savior that had been promised by the prophets. While some knew they needed spiritual salvation most looked for political salvation. When Babylon was about to capture Jerusalem, the prophet Jeremiah gave the following prophecy about the Messiah and the New Covenant. Many Jews would have read or heard this prophecy.

### Jeremiah 31:31-34

*<sup>31</sup>"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. <sup>32</sup>It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. <sup>33</sup>"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. <sup>34</sup>No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."*

The time had fully come. Every last detail in God's plan had been completed. Little did the world know that the greatest event in the history of mankind was about to happen. The Apostle Paul said:

### Galatians 4:4-5

*<sup>4</sup>But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, <sup>5</sup>to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*



## REFLECT AND RESPOND

What one thing has impressed you most about eras seven through nine of the Bible?



## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

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  - The Era of E\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of R\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of S\_\_\_\_\_

# DAY 4: THE ERAS OF THE GOSPEL, CHURCH AND MISSIONS

## THE NEW COVENANT

As we saw in our study on day three, everything was perfect for the coming of the promised Messiah. Every preparation had been made and every prophecy had been fulfilled. The Apostle Paul said,

Galatians 4:4-5

*<sup>4</sup>But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, <sup>5</sup>to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*

The New Covenant came into being when God sent his Son. The theme of the Old Covenant was that there must be a sacrifice for sins and Jesus is coming. The theme for the New Covenant is that Jesus has come and He is the sacrifice for our sins. The promise given by the prophet Isaiah hundreds of years before has been fulfilled. Isaiah prophesied,

Isaiah 7:13-14

*<sup>13</sup>Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? <sup>14</sup>Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*

## ERA 10: THE GOSPEL

The main theme of the New Covenant is the Gospel. Gospel means "good news". The good news of the New Covenant is that the Messiah has come to offer a final sacrifice for the sins of man and purchase for him eternal life. The gospel is described in John 3:16, one of the most beloved verses in the Bible.

John 3:16

*<sup>16</sup>"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

### The story line

In the fullness of time God sent His Son Jesus to fulfill the promises of the Old Covenant of a Messiah to serve as a permanent sacrifice for man's sins and to purchase for him eternal life.

### The scenes

#### Scene 1: The Gospels

There are four Gospel books in the Bible that tell the story of Jesus, each from a different perspective. Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the "synoptic" Gospels because they all tell the story of Jesus from a similar historical perspective. John presents the life of Christ in a less historical way, focusing on the theme of Jesus as the Son of God. Each of the Gospel accounts targets a different audience.

## Matthew

The book of Matthew, written around A.D. 60 by Matthew, one of the disciples, is primarily addressed to the Jews to convince them that Jesus is the Messiah. Therefore, Matthew serves as a bridge between the Old and New Covenants. Matthew includes more Old Testament prophecies than the other Gospels and meticulously traces Jesus' genealogy back to Abraham, the father of the Hebrews.

## Mark

Mark, written around A.D. 60, was authored by John Mark and written for a Roman audience. Mark is the shortest of the Gospels and presents Jesus as a compassionate servant in a very succinct way. Almost half of the book of Mark is about the last eight days of Jesus' life when He sacrifices His life for the sins of man.

## Luke

Luke was written around A.D. 60, by Luke the Physician, who writes to convince his Greek friend, Theophilus, that Jesus was indeed God. He presents Jesus as the perfect Son of Man. Because he deals with the wonder of Jesus being both human and divine, he gives insights into Jesus' relationship with people that the other authors do not include.

## John

The book of John was written around A.D. 90 by John the Apostle and was the last of the gospels to be written. This book is a biographical profile rather than an historical narrative. John writes to convince a more general audience that Jesus is the incarnate Son of God. The gospel of John is built around seven miraculous signs that Jesus did. John starts his Gospel account in a very philosophical way, showing how Jesus is the "Word" who was in the beginning with God, was from God and was involved in creation.

### **Scene 2: The early life of Jesus**

The early life of Jesus starts with His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit. He is born to the virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judea. When King Herod threatens Jesus' life, Mary and Joseph take Him to Egypt. A few years later they return to Nazareth where Jesus spends the next thirty years and learns the trade of a carpenter. Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist, baptizes Him in the Jordan River, launching His ministry. Jesus then goes through a period of preparation in the desert where He is tempted by Satan for forty days. Jesus resists the temptations, showing He is ready for His mission in life.

### **Scene 3: Jesus' public ministry begins**

After the baptism and temptation, Jesus begins His public ministry. In the first chapter of Mark we see Jesus involved in five major activities that He continues throughout His ministry. These are also five priorities that every believer is to follow in his own life. These are the five footprints of Jesus that you can learn more about in a future discipleship resource.



Telling the good news. Jesus immediately began to preach that the kingdom of God was near and that people were to repent and believe. (*Mark 1:14, 15*)



Training of the twelve. Jesus begins the process of calling the twelve disciples whom He will train for the next three years. (*Mark 1:16-20*)

-  Teaching about God. Jesus taught the crowds about His Heavenly Father and how to love and obey Him. (*Mark 1:21, 22*)
-  Time with His Father. Jesus always took time to be with His Father in prayer. He made it clear that it was His intimate relationship with His Father that empowered His ministry. (*Mark 1:35*)
-  Time touching people. Jesus reached out with compassion and touched people. Whether it was casting out demons, healing the sick, or feeding the hungry, Jesus demonstrated love in action. (*Mark 1:40-42*)

The results of the beginning of Jesus' public ministry were very positive. People were amazed at His teaching and miracles. Large crowds followed Him wherever He went (*Mark 1:27-28; 32-34; 36, 37; 43-45*).

#### **Scene 4: The middle part of Jesus' ministry**

Jesus continued to have great popular appeal to the masses as He performed miracles and met their needs, but there was jealousy on the part of religious leaders. The Pharisees and Sadducees hated Jesus and tried to discredit Him. Jesus confronts the religious leaders for their sin of disbelief and hypocrisy. This infuriates them even more and their attacks become more vicious. At the same time Jesus begins to spend more and more time training His disciples so they will be able to continue His ministry when He is gone. Jesus raises the bar on the cost of discipleship and many of the "hangers on" begin to depart.

#### **Scene 5: The end of Jesus' ministry**

Towards the end of Jesus' ministry the Jews became increasingly hostile towards Jesus. The people were becoming impatient with Jesus. Despite His teaching to the contrary, they expected Jesus to set up a temporal kingdom and free them from the rule of Rome. At the time of the Passover when many Jews were in Jerusalem to celebrate, the religious leaders were able to stir up a mob that was willing to crucify Jesus. After a fiasco of false charges and mock trials Jesus was crucified. He rose again on the third day and showed Himself to many people (500 at one time) and on at least 10 different occasions. With Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension to heaven the Gospel Era ends but the Gospel continues into the Church Era.

### **ERA 11: THE CHURCH ERA**

With the end of the Gospel Era comes the beginning of the Church Era. Before His death Jesus passed the baton to the twelve men He had trained to lead the Church that was about to be birthed. His final instructions were very clear. Jesus said,

*Matthew 28:18-20*

*<sup>18</sup>Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>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, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Those who responded to the gospel were to be part of the church—the Body of Christ on earth. They were not only to be saved by faith in Jesus Christ but they were also to be taught all that the disciples were taught so they could become mature in Christ. The church was about to have its beginning. The disciples waited with great anticipation to receive what Christ had promised.

## The story line

As the disciples waited in Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, filling them and giving birth to the church.

### Scene 1: The beginning of the church (Acts 1-2)

Just before Jesus ascended to heaven He told His disciples that they must wait in Jerusalem for the gift that the Father had promised. I am sure they heard the words but could not imagine what was to happen next. Jesus' final words before He was taken to heaven must have filled them with excitement and wonder. What would happen next? Jesus said,

#### Acts 1:8

*<sup>8</sup>"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

While they were praying in a house together the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples with tongues of fire and they all spoke in different foreign languages. Many of the Jews who had come to Jerusalem to observe Pentecost were amazed. Peter preached the first message and three thousand people were saved that day. The promise had indeed come and the church of Christ was started in a spectacular way.

### Scene 2: The growth of the body (Acts 2-6)

The book of Acts, written by Luke, gives a succinct but detailed history of the church. In chapters two through six we see the church expanding rapidly. It is obvious that the church is not merely an organization but an organism. It is the Body of Christ. The members are connected to one another as parts of one body. Their devotion to the Lord and to one another is seen as the body grows in love. In the second chapter of Acts we observe the believers' new life in the church. Luke says that,

#### Acts 2:42-47

*<sup>42</sup>They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup>Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup>All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup>Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. <sup>46</sup>Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup>praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

Only the supernatural grace of God could turn a faithless, fearful group of men who ran for their lives after Jesus was crucified, into godly and bold leaders who would lead a new church that was growing by the thousands.

### Scene 3: The persecution of the church (Acts 7)

It didn't take long for the new, fast growing church to face persecution. Stephen, one of the first young preachers, was arrested by the Jewish leaders for preaching about Jesus. When he is questioned Stephen preaches to the Sanhedrin and is stoned on the spot for his message, making him the first Christian martyr. The stoning of Stephen initiates a time of persecution of the young church that is so severe that Christians leave Jerusalem in fear of being killed. This, however, results in a blessing as these people share the message of the gospel in Judea and Samaria. One of the chief persecutors of Christians is Saul of Tarsus, a rising star among the Pharisees. He holds the cloaks of those who stone Stephen.

#### **Scene 4: Saul is converted and becomes Paul the Apostle** (*Acts 8-12*)

God's sovereign plan for the church includes converting and using a dreaded Pharisee named Saul. God hand picks Saul to be His chosen messenger to take the gospel to the Gentiles. As Saul heads to Damascus to persecute Christians, Jesus appears to him from heaven. Paul is struck blind and is converted to Christ. Paul's sight is restored and God tells him in a vision that he is to be a missionary to the Gentiles. From this point on Paul is an Apostle and the central figure in the doctrine and growth of the church.

### **ERA 12: MISSIONS**

(*Acts 13-28*)

Up to this point the gospel has been taken only to the Jews. Now Paul leads a transition as the church reaches out to the Gentiles. Paul, as we have seen, was chosen by God to lead this missionary effort. Although Paul was a Jew he spoke Greek fluently and was a Roman citizen. This background helped him relate to the Gentiles. The rest of Acts and the Letters of Paul and others record Paul's missionary travels and the expansion and life of the church.

#### **Story line**

God uses Paul as the first missionary to take the gospel into the Roman world for the next twenty years.

#### **The scenes**

##### **Scene 1: The first missionary trip – Asia Minor** (*Acts 13, 14*)

Paul was based in Antioch of Syria. This was where the new believers were first called Christians and was an ideal launching place for Paul's missionary tours. Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire and the church there had many strong believers. In A.D. 45 Paul and Barnabas headed for Galatia which is present day Turkey. They spent two years in Galatia with very good results. When they returned to Antioch they gave a full report to the church, telling how God opened the door to the Gentiles (*Acts 14:27*)

##### **Scene 2: The second missionary trip – Europe** (*Acts 15-17*)

Paul and Barnabas have some differences and part company for the second mission trip. In approximately 50 A.D. Paul intended to go back to visit the church from his first missionary trip but in a vision was told to go to Macedonia (Greece). Paul takes Silas, Luke and Timothy to various areas of Asia Minor for three years. They visit such cities as Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth and Athens.

##### **Scene 3: The third missionary trip – Turkey** (*Acts 18-21*)

For his third and final missionary trip Paul wants to encourage the believers from his first two missionary trips. He heads for Turkey, which was called "Asia" by the Romans. Paul has great success and then travels through Greece once again. Paul returns to Jerusalem where he reports to the church.

##### **Scene 4: Problems and prison** (*Acts 22-28*)

Jewish leaders arrest Paul in Jerusalem on false charges. He is transferred to Caesarea where he is tried by Felix, Festus, and Agrippa. Because he is a Roman citizen Paul takes his case to Caesar in Rome in A.D. 59. While he is in Rome he is placed under house arrest for two years while waiting for his appeal to be heard. While in prison Paul experienced great joy and wrote some of his great letters such as Philippians, Ephesians, and his letters to his spiritual son, Timothy.

## CONCLUSION

This week we have taken a very fast trip through the twelve eras of the Bible. I hope you have enjoyed the journey. The Bible ends with the book of Revelation This was written by the Apostle John in A.D. 95 and was the last book of the Bible to be written. This is a book of prophecy which describes the end times. About this book John says,

### Revelation 1:1

*<sup>1</sup>The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,*

What is revealed in this book is the end times. We get a glimpse of the terror of the end of the world and the judgment for those who do not have a personal relationship with Christ. But we also get a glimpse of the grandeur and joy of an eternity in heaven with our Heavenly Father. In the book of Revelation we see described the eternal era of heaven, which has been reserved for everyone whose name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. (Revelation 20:11-15) This gives us a glimpse of what heaven will be like.

### Revelation 21:2-4

*<sup>2</sup>I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*



## REFLECT AND RESPOND

What one thing has impressed you most about final the three eras of the Bible?



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## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Hebrews 1:1-2*. Write it in the space below.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Memorize and review the first three eras.
  - The Era of C\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of P\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of E\_\_\_\_\_

- The Era of C\_\_\_\_\_
- The Era of J\_\_\_\_\_
- The Era of K\_\_\_\_\_
- The Era of E\_\_\_\_\_
- The Era of R\_\_\_\_\_
- The Era of S\_\_\_\_\_
- The Era of G\_\_\_\_\_
- The Era of the C\_\_\_\_\_
- The Era of M\_\_\_\_\_

# DAY 5: BIBLE TIMELINE

Today's lesson will be different than the others you have done. Today will be a review with no more new information. I would like you to create a Time Line of the Bible. When you construct a Time Line you arrange events of Bible history in chronological order. When the twelve eras of the Bible are arranged on a Time Line you will receive a visual perspective of how the history of the Bible unfolded.

Today's lesson will also serve as a review for you to see how well you have learned the twelve eras of the Bible. I have given you space on the next three pages to build this Time Line. Many Study Bibles such as the NIV Study Bible have Time Line that you can use as an example. On the next page I have completed the first era of creation below to help you get started.

## TIME LINE OF THE BIBLE

<b>ERA</b> 1. CREATION	<b>ERA</b> 2. _____	<b>ERA</b> 3. _____	<b>ERA</b> 4. _____
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<b>Main Scripture</b> <i>Genesis 1-11</i>	<b>Main Scripture</b>	<b>Main Scripture</b>	<b>Main Scripture</b>
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<b>Main Person</b> Adam	<b>Main Person</b>	<b>Main Person</b>	<b>Main Person</b>
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<b>Story Line</b> God creates universe and Adam and Eve. They sin and become separated from God.	<b>Story Line</b>	<b>Story Line</b>	<b>Story Line</b>
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<b>ERA</b> 5. _____	<b>ERA</b> 6. _____	<b>ERA</b> 7. _____	<b>ERA</b> 8. _____
------------------------	------------------------	------------------------	------------------------

<b>Main Scripture</b>	<b>Main Scripture</b>	<b>Main Scripture</b>	<b>Main Scripture</b>
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<b>Main Person</b>	<b>Main Person</b>	<b>Main Person</b>	<b>Main Person</b>
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<b>Story Line</b>	<b>Story Line</b>	<b>Story Line</b>	<b>Story Line</b>
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ERA 9. _____	ERA 10. _____	ERA 11. _____	ERA 12. _____
Main Scripture	Main Scripture	Main Scripture	Main Scripture
Main Person	Main Person	Main Person	Main Person
Story Line	Story Line	Story Line	Story Line



## TEARS AND CHEERS

At the beginning of each week's group time you will be given an opportunity to share what is going on in your lives. This is voluntary and you will never be pressured to share if you choose not to. Your group leader will give you the opportunity to share the following:

- **Tears**  
"Tears" represents the burdens, disappointments and other issues you are facing. This will enable you to work through issues with the support of the group and receive encouragement and prayer.
- **Cheers**  
"Cheers" is the blessing, joys and spiritual progress for which you are thankful. Verbalizing these blessings will strengthen you and encourage others.

# WEEK 4

## GROWING THROUGH THE WORD

*“...we are not just to memorize God’s Word but also to do what it says. God’s Word contains truth and action... always think of what God wants you to do in response to His Word.”*

### INTRODUCTION

This is a pivotal week in the basic training course. This week you will learn the basic principles of growing through the Word of God. You will learn principles that will help you memorize, meditate and retain Scripture. You will learn three basic principles of studying the Word. You will learn the importance of having a regularly scheduled appointment with God at least five days a week.

The quality of your Christian life will depend to a large degree on committing to regular appointments with God in the Word and prayer.

The Bible says to “Train yourself to be godly...” (1Timothy 4:7) This week you will learn how to train yourself in the Word.

### WEEK 4 STUDY

DAY 1: Memorizing the word

DAY 2: Studying the word

PART 1: **Observation**

DAY 3: Studying the word

PART 2: **Interpretation**

DAY 4: Studying the word

PART 3: **Application**

DAY 5: How to have appointments with God

### WEEK 4 ASSIGNMENTS:

- Memorize and meditate on *Joshua 1:8*

*Joshua 1:8*

*“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”*

- Memorize the three principles of Bible study: Observation, Interpretation, and Application.
- Review all previous weeks’ memory assignments from your index cards.
- Prepare your memory/review index card. Write your memory verse on one side and the three principles of Bible study on the other side.

# DAY 1: MEMORIZING THE WORD

You have already been asked to memorize and review key Scripture verses that help you take those first steps of the Christian life. Now you will learn how to develop this discipline for the rest of your life. I have found that memorization and meditation on Scripture is one of the most important keys to spiritual growth. By storing God's Word in your mind and heart, verse by verse, you will "have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:16). This means that you will be able to know and obey God's Word. By memorizing and reviewing key verses of Scripture each day you will learn to "...walk as Jesus did" (1 John 2:6). When you have the mind of Christ and walk as Jesus did you will be spiritually mature. There are six benefits that are a result of memorizing and reviewing Scripture.

## BENEFITS OF MEMORIZING AND REVIEWING SCRIPTURE

### 1. You will overcome temptation

Memorizing Scripture will help you overcome temptation. When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the desert He overcame each temptation by answering Satan with a specific Scripture that He had memorized (Matthew 4:1-11). You can overcome temptation as Jesus did when you memorize Scriptures that deal with specific temptations. As it is said in the Psalms,

Psalms 119:11

*<sup>11</sup>I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*



### STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD

Look up *Psalm 119:9-11* in your Bible. What is the key to not sinning against God? What do you think it means to hide God's Word in your heart?

### 2. You will overcome trials and discouragement

As long as you are on earth you will face trouble. Pain, trials and discouragement are a part of life on a fallen planet. Memorizing and reviewing Scripture will strengthen you for these troubling times. You will be able to say as did the Psalmist,

Psalms 119:92

*<sup>92</sup>If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.*

### 3. You will walk in wisdom

God is the source of all wisdom and He has promised to give you wisdom. The wisdom of God is found in the Word of God. When we memorize and review Scripture we learn to think as God thinks and therefore possess His wisdom. You will not have to guess what God wants you to do; the light of His Word will guide you (*Psalm 119:105*). Your responsibility is to delight in God's Word so that you will gain His wisdom. The Psalmist says,

Psalms 119:24

*<sup>24</sup>Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors.*

#### 4. You will be able to offer godly counsel and encouragement to others

Believers and non-believers alike need sound counsel and encouragement. When you memorize God's Word you will know what to say and when to say it. Paul told the Christians in Colossi,

Colossians 3:16

*<sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom...*

#### 5. You will know correct doctrine

There are certain doctrines in the Bible that provide a foundation for all that we do and think. You can memorize key verses and passages that will help you hold to that sound doctrine and prevent you from being led astray by erroneous beliefs and false teachers. Paul stressed the importance of this to his disciple Titus. He told Titus that a leader,

Titus 1:9

*<sup>9</sup>... must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.*

#### 6. You will know how to answer non-believers

When people have questions about the faith they need to know what God thinks, not what we think. There is only one source of authority for all questions. That sole authority is God's Word. When you memorize God's Word you will be able to answer questions with clarity, authority and accuracy. It will be God's truth not yours. Peter makes that clear when he says,

1 Peter 3:15

*<sup>15</sup>But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,*

#### 7. You will have success

When you continually memorize and meditate on the Word of God, the Bible assures you that you will have success. Meditation is reflecting deeply on Scripture and putting what it says into practice. When you do this, developing the mind of Christ and walking as He did, you will have true success. True success is to know and do the will of God in all things. Joshua was promised this success when he was about to enter the Promised Land. The Lord said to Joshua,

Joshua 1:8

*<sup>8</sup>Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.*

### HOW TO MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE – REPEAT, REPEAT, REPEAT!

The first rule to memorization is repetition. There is no solution other than to repeat, repeat, repeat! If you go over something in your mind enough times it will stick in your memory. In general, the more times you repeat something the better you will be able to recall it from memory. Following are ten ways to make repetition more effective.

1. Take time to understand the verse or passage, using the Bible study principles of observation, interpretation and application, which you will learn in tomorrow's lesson.

2. Read the verse over several times before starting to memorize it.
3. Always repeat the Scripture reference at the beginning and the end of the verse or passage.
4. Begin by repeating the verse numerous times before actually trying to memorize it. This helps you become familiar with the words and content of the verse.
5. Learn a phrase at a time. Break the verse down into natural phrases. Once you have learned one phrase, add another, repeating both phrases. Proceed through the verse in this way until you have memorized it.
6. Write the verse several times.
7. Emphasize key words when repeating the verse.
8. Write the verse on a 3 X 5 index card with the reference on one side and the verse on the other side. Keep the cards handy so you can review them when you have a few extra minutes.
9. Review your verses with someone else. This adds pressure, but helps cement the verse in your mind.
10. Record the Scriptures and play them when you commute, are on a trip, or when you are working around the house.

### **HOW TO RETAIN SCRIPTURE: REVIEW, REVIEW, REVIEW!**

The goal of memorizing Scripture is to make God’s Word a permanent part of your thinking. This will only happen if you have a plan for review. The plan I want to suggest is called The “30/5 day” factor. If you memorize a Scripture and review it for thirty days you will be able to recall it easily. If you then review that Scripture five times a week you will be “anchored” by that Scripture. It will become a permanent part of your thinking and will serve as a reference point for all you think and do. On the other hand if you do not keep reviewing the Scripture you will soon lose it.

### **Other Anchoring Scriptures**

I suggest selecting a group of Scriptures that will “anchor” your life and then reviewing these Scriptures at least five times a week. These should be Scriptures that have special application to your life and keep you on course.

### **THE ONE-YEAR GOAL**

I want to encourage you to set a goal of memorizing and reviewing 50 Scriptures during the next 12 months. That is just one verse a week. If you continue to the next stages of **The Disciple’s Journey** you will not need the following list of verses. You will have memory verses assigned to you each week. I suggest the following key verses for those of you who do not choose to go on.

Week 1: *Proverbs 3:5*

Week 26: *Ephesians 2:8*

Week 2: *Proverbs 3:6*

Week 27: *Ephesians 2:9*

Week 3: *Philippians 4:19*

Week 28: *Romans 8:28*

Week 4: *Philippians 4:13*  
Week 5: *Jeremiah 33:3*  
Week 6: *Psalms 5:3*  
Week 7: *Jeremiah 29:11*  
Week 8: *Ephesians 2:10*  
Week 9: *Matthew 22:37*  
Week 10: *Matthew 22:38*  
Week 11: *Matthew 22:39*  
Week 12: *Matthew 22:40*  
Week 13: *John 3:16*  
Week 14: *1 Peter 2:9*  
Week 15: *John 14:21*  
Week 16: *Romans 12:1*  
Week 17: *Romans 12:2*  
Week 18: *Luke 9:23*  
Week 19: *Matthew 20:26*  
Week 20: *Matthew 20:27*  
Week 21: *Matthew 20:28*  
Week 22: *2 Timothy 3:16*  
Week 23: *2 Timothy 3:17*  
Week 24: *Joshua 1:8*  
Week 25: *Exodus 15:11*

Week 29: *1 Corinthians 10:13*  
Week 30: *Ephesians 1:3*  
Week 31: *Ephesians 1:4*  
Week 32: *Ephesians 1:5*  
Week 33: *Ephesians 1:13-14*  
Week 34: *Matthew 6:19*  
Week 35: *Matthew 6:20*  
Week 36: *Matthew 6:21*  
Week 37: *Matthew 6:33*  
Week 38: *Ephesians 5:18*  
Week 39: *John 15:5*  
Week 40: *Colossians 3:12*  
Week 41: *Colossians 3:13*  
Week 42: *Matthew 28:18*  
Week 43: *Matthew 28:19*  
Week 44: *Matthew 28:20*  
Week 45: *Matthew 26:41*  
Week 46: *1 John 2:15*  
Week 47: *1 John 2:16*  
Week 48: *Lamentations 3:21*  
Week 49: *Lamentations 3:22*  
Week 50: *Lamentations 3:23*

## ALWAYS RESPOND

Remember that we are not just to memorize God's Word but also to do what it says. God's Word contains truth and action. When you review the Scriptures you have memorized always think of what God wants you to do in response to His Word.



## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Joshua 1:8*. Write it in the space below.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Memorize the three principles of Bible study and write them in the space below. (See day 2)
  1. The principle of O\_\_\_\_\_ . What does it s\_\_\_\_\_?
  2. The principle of I\_\_\_\_\_ . What does it m\_\_\_\_\_?
  3. The principle of A\_\_\_\_\_ . What does it s\_\_\_\_\_ to m\_\_\_\_\_?

# DAY 2: STUDYING THE WORD

## PART 1: OBSERVATION – WHAT DOES IT SAY?

In order to grow up into spiritual maturity it is important to learn some basic Bible study principles and skills. As you know, the Bible was written over a period of 1500 years on three continents by 40 different authors in various cultures and languages. While we have clear and accurate translations in English, we still need a sound approach to understanding the Bible's meaning.

There are three principles of Bible study that will be of great value to you when you are memorizing, reading, listening or studying the Bible. These principles of **observation**, **interpretation** and **application** will help you interpret passages of the Bible correctly and avoid doctrinal error. This will be a rather brief introduction to Bible study so I strongly recommend taking another course or reading a book that covers Bible study in depth.

### SEARCH THE WORD

Today will launch a three day Bible study. We will “search the Word” using the three principles of Bible study. You will probably find this assignment difficult because you are just beginning to learn the tools of Bible study. This is just an introduction. Spend some time on each of the three principles and then you will complete the study as a group when you meet to discuss this week's material. Today you will begin to learn the principle of observation, tomorrow, interpretation and the next day application

### PRINCIPLE #1: OBSERVATION – WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Observation is looking at a passage of Scripture to see what it actually says. You are just looking for the facts. The question you need to answer in the observation stage of Bible study is, “What do I see?”

#### Investigation

Think of yourself as a detective just looking for “the facts”. Through the investigation of a passage you discover the raw data you will later interpret. As you investigate just step back and ask the question, “What do I see?” To help you discover the facts, ask some of the following questions and record the details:

- **Who?**
  - Who is speaking?
  - To whom is he speaking?
  - What is this about?
  - Who are the main characters?
  
- **When?**
  - What is the date of the author's writing?
  - When did or will the events occur?
  
- **Where?**
  - What places are mentioned?
  - Where is the location?
  - Are there important cities, buildings or landmarks?

- **What?**
  - What are the key ideas?
  - What are the major events?
  - What are the important words or phrases?
  - What issue is being addressed?

To help you discover these facts, read the following passage and answer the questions in the study guide. Use a Study Bible to aid you in your study. First read the introduction to the book being studied. Note what the Study Bible says about the authorship, date and purpose of the book. Not all of these questions will always apply to every passage in your study. Use the questions that apply directly to the Scripture you are studying. In addition to recording important facts, note any questions that you want to study later in the interpretation and application phases.



### **SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE**

SCRIPTURE: *John 1:1-14*

#### **2: Observation - What does it say?**

*(who, what, when, where, why)*

- What does the Study Bible say about the date, authorship and purpose of the book from which this passage comes?
  
- Who are the main characters and places in this passage?
  
- What are the key words and key phrases? Record them and underline them in your Bible.
  
- What is the main issue being addressed?



## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Joshua 1:8*. Write it in the space below.
  
- Memorize the three principles of Bible study and write them in the space below. (See day 2)
  1. The principle of O\_\_\_\_\_. What does it s\_\_\_\_\_?
  2. The principle of I\_\_\_\_\_. What does it m\_\_\_\_\_?
  3. The principle of A\_\_\_\_\_. What does it s\_\_\_\_\_ to m\_\_\_\_\_?

# DAY 3: STUDYING THE WORD

## PART 2: INTERPRETATION – WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Interpretation is attempting to understand what the author means. Of course since God inspired the authors in the Bible, we are really trying to understand what God means. There are six major keys that will help unlock the meaning of a passage. Following is a brief description of each of these. There is much more to learn about each key, but this will get you started.

### PRINCIPLE #2: INTERPRETATION – WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

#### 1. **Content**

This first key is the result of the work you did when you observed the passage using Principle #1. By doing this you actually began the first step of interpretation, which is analyzing the content of the passage.

#### 2. **Context**

Context refers to what precedes and follows a text. One of the most common errors people make when trying to understand Scripture is not fully understanding the context of a verse or passage. It is dangerous to pull a verse, a portion of a verse, or even a longer passage out of its context and attempt to understand it in isolation. That is what the cults do. They will use a verse or passage of Scripture to prove their point while ignoring the context within which the verse or passage is set. This is sometimes called “proof-texting”.

#### 3. **Culture**

Even though the Bible was written over a period of 1500 years in different cultures and in different languages, God has made it possible to understand His Word clearly. However, since we live in a vastly different culture and time, it is helpful to understand the culture in which the author of a particular book lived. This can help clarify difficult passages and concepts. I will mention just a few things to look for.

- **Customs**

Each book of the Bible was written to people who had distinct customs just as we do today in our culture. These customs influence how the book was written, how the people to whom it was written understood it, and how we can understand it today.

- **Communication**

To interpret a text accurately we must know some basic principles about the language at the time it was written. Following are some figures of speech that can help us understand the meaning of a difficult passage.

- *Hyperbole*

Hyperbole is a deliberate attempt to exaggerate for the purpose of emphasizing a point. Jesus used this when He wanted to emphasize that followers must be totally committed to Him if they were to be His disciples.

Luke 14:25-26

<sup>25</sup>Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: <sup>26</sup>"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.

This is obviously a figure of speech as Jesus uses the exaggeration of hyperbole to make a point. We know this because the Bible is consistent in its overall theme of love and definite prohibition of hating others. (*Matthew 4:21-22*)

○ *Simile*

A simile is a comparison using "like" or "as". Jesus used a simile to stress a point when speaking to His disciples.

Matthew 10:16

<sup>16</sup>I am sending you out **like sheep** among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd **as snakes** and as innocent **as doves**.

○ *Personification*

Personification is ascribing human characteristics or actions to inanimate objects or animals.

Isaiah 24:23

<sup>23</sup>The moon will be **abashed**, the sun **ashamed**; for the LORD Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders, gloriously.

○ *Paradox*

Paradox is a statement that seems self-contradictory or illogical. Jesus used paradox when He said,

Matthew 16:25

<sup>25</sup>For whoever wants to **save his life will lose it**, but whoever **loses his life for me will find it**.

○ *Metaphor*

A metaphor is a comparison where one thing represents something else. Jesus used a metaphor when He said,

Matthew 5:14

<sup>14</sup>**You are the light of the world**. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

These are a few of the frequently used figures of speech in the Bible. Having a basic knowledge of the culture including its customs and norms, will be an asset as you study Scripture, read the Bible or listen to sermons.

#### 4. Comparison

Sound interpretation includes looking at the whole of Scripture. To be accurate in your interpretation of a verse, topic, or doctrine you must always make an effort find out what the entire Bible has to say about the subject. Here are two rules of comparison.

- **Let Scripture interpret Scripture**

The best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture itself. Often what seems like a contradiction or a difficult passage to understand becomes clear when compared to other Scripture on the same topic. The parts of the Bible that seem hard to understand become clear when seen in the light of the whole Bible. For example if you were to base your belief about prayer solely on *Mark 11:24*, you would believe that God would give you anything you ask for with the only condition being that you believe you have received it.

*Mark 11:24*

*<sup>24</sup>Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.*

The problem with interpreting the verse in this way (and many do) is that God has much more to say about prayer than this one verse. Jesus also said,

*John 15:7*

*<sup>7</sup>If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.*

Jesus gives another condition here for answered prayer. Whatever we ask for in prayer will be given to us **if we remain in Him** and **if His words remain in us**. There are also other important conditions to answered prayer throughout the Bible.

- **Let what is clear clarify what is not clear**

Cults and people who teach false doctrines will often take certain difficult or obscure verses or passages of Scripture and base an entire religion or teaching on it. People will get stuck on these unclear passages rather than looking for what is clear on the subject. Indeed there are Scriptures that are difficult and seem unclear, however there are other Scriptures on the topic that are clear and can shed light on the difficult to understand Scriptures. Always look to see what else the Bible has to say about a subject.

## 5. Consultation

Consultation is using secondary sources to understand Scripture after you have made a thorough study of your primary source, the Bible. Use these sources to help you more fully understand a verse or passage. Hopefully you have already purchased a Study Bible and are learning to use it as a secondary source for consultation. Other secondary sources include:

- **Bible commentary**

Commentaries make comments on the text that can enlighten and help you understand difficult passages. A brief Bible commentary is included in your Study Bible

- **Bible concordance**

A concordance is somewhat like an index to the Bible, listing all the words in alphabetical order with the Scripture reference. It is helpful in finding verses and doing word studies. A short concordance is included in the back of your Study Bible.

- **Bible dictionary**  
Bible dictionaries are useful for looking up words that you want to define or subjects about which you want more information. Bible dictionaries provide much helpful information about Bible words, people, places and doctrine.
- **Bible handbook**  
A Bible handbook is a concise, simple tool to help you look up certain facts about the Bible. It is a kind of one-volume encyclopedia.
- **Bible translations and paraphrases**  
There are many Bible translations and paraphrases. A translation comes from the original language while a paraphrase uses the author's own words while trying to be true to the text. I have used The New International Version of the Bible in this study. There are parallel Bibles that allow you to see several translations and paraphrases at one time. Comparing translations and paraphrases can sometimes help you understand and apply Scripture.
- **Bible Atlas**  
An accurate knowledge of geography can be a useful aid to Bible study. Knowing where a Bible event occurred can give important clues to the meaning of Biblical books and passages. You will find some useful maps in your Study Bible.
- **Word studies**  
Word studies help you trace out the deeper meaning of a specific word in the Bible. These studies will give commentary on certain words and will give you a deeper understanding of what these words meant in the original language.
- **Computer tools**  
Most, if not all of the secondary sources I have mentioned, can be purchased in programs for your computer. The advantage of computer tools is that instead of buying and storing many books, you have much of what you need literally at your fingertips.

## TIME TO PRACTICE

It is now time to practice the second principle of Bible study. Today study *John 14:1-14* using some of the tools of observation. You may use your Study Bible or other helps to understand the passage. If you do not have a Study Bible or other such tools you can find free helps on the internet. If you go to the website "studythelight.org", you will find much useful information that will help you interpret this passage of Scripture.

The Search the Word Study Guide that follows will help you interpret the passage and deepen your understanding of what it means. Always use only the questions that apply to this passage. If you need more space for your answers use another sheet of paper.



## SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

SCRIPTURE: *John 1:1-14*

### 2: Interpretation - What does it mean?

(context, culture, comparison, consultation)

- Read what comes immediately before and after the passage. Is this context important?
- What are the main point and key principles?
- Comparison: What other Scriptures apply?
- What are the cultural considerations? (Customs, communication etc.)



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## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

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- Memorize the three principles of Bible study and write them in the space below. (See day 2)
  1. The principle of O\_\_\_\_\_. What does it s\_\_\_\_\_?
  2. The principle of I\_\_\_\_\_. What does it m\_\_\_\_\_?
  3. The principle of A\_\_\_\_\_. What does it s\_\_\_\_\_ to m\_\_\_\_\_?

# DAY 4: STUDYING THE WORD

## PART 3: APPLICATION

Observation and interpretation prepare us for application. The first two principles will not do us very much good if we do not apply what we have learned to our lives. As you have learned, the purpose of Scripture is not just to inform us but also to transform us. Paul makes this clear in his letter to the believers in Rome:

Romans 12:2

*<sup>2</sup>Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

There is a simple way to apply to your life what you have learned as a result of your Bible study. After you have used observation and application, you can respond with application by answering two questions:

- Based on this study, what is the most important thing for me to remember?

*Reflect on the passage. Ask yourself, "What is God saying to me in this passage? How is He speaking to my heart?"*

- Based upon this study, how will I think and act differently?

*Determine exactly what you are going to do differently. How will you change your thinking and how will you act differently? Write down what these new thoughts and actions will be.*

### TIME TO PRACTICE

Now you are ready to apply what you have studied to your life in a practical way. The main thing you want to ask yourself is "What is God saying to me? What does He want me to become as a result of this passage? How am I to think and act differently because of what I have learned from God?" Personalize *John 14:1-14* and apply the passage by answering the following questions.



#### SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

SCRIPTURE: *John 1:1-14*

#### 3: APPLICATION - What does it say to me?

- Based on this study, what is the most important thing for me to remember?
- Based upon this study, how will I think and act differently?

*\*\*\*On the next page you will find the entire Search the Word Study Guide on a single page. This will be the form you will be asked to use from now on when you are assigned to study certain passages of Scripture.*



**1: Observation** – What does it say?

*(who, what, when, where, why)*

- What does the Study Bible say about the date, authorship and purpose of the book from which this passage comes?
- Who are the main characters and what are the main places mentioned in this passage?
- What are the key words and key phrases? Record them and underline them in your Bible.
- What is the main issue being addressed?

**2: Interpretation** - What does it mean?

*(context, culture, comparison, consultation)*

- Read what comes immediately before and after the passage. Is this context important?
- Comparison: What other Scriptures apply?
- What are the cultural considerations? (customs, communication etc.)

**3: Application** - What does it say to me?

- Based on this study, what is the most important thing for me to remember?
- Based upon this study, how will I think and act differently?



## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

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  3. The principle of A\_\_\_\_\_. What does it s\_\_\_\_\_ to m\_\_\_\_\_?

## DAY 5: APPOINTMENTS WITH GOD

During this course you have learned to take some of your first steps with God. I hope that you are gaining confidence in your walk. I assure you that if you stay on course you will continue to get stronger and more mature. The Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint. It is not a walk in the park, but an exciting journey that will take you through mountains and valleys. Sometimes the view will be great while at other times adverse weather conditions will cause you distress, pain and confusion. The Christian life is certainly not free from pain, suffering and disappointments.

God has a course marked out for us. While this course will not be easy, God has promised to give us the strength to finish strong. The writer of Hebrews explains the key.

### Hebrews 12:1-3

*<sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. <sup>2</sup>Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup>Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

We are to run with perseverance the race God has marked out for us by fixing our eyes on Jesus. We first learn to walk and then run. We run successfully if we train ourselves to fix our eyes on Jesus. You will find many things to distract you in the race God has marked out for you. Many things in life will compete for your attention. The things of the world will yell “Look at me!” as you attempt to stay on course. But to continue growing in spiritual maturity you must learn to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. This will involve focusing on your purpose in life which is glorifying God and practicing spiritual disciplines. Today I want to show you how to have successful appointments with God so that you can grow in prayer and the Word.

### FIVE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL APPOINTMENTS WITH GOD

An appointment with God is a time set aside each day when you can be alone with God in the Word and prayer. There are five keys that can open the door to successful appointments with God. The first and most important is to prepare your heart.

#### **Key #1: Prepare your heart**

A heart that is prepared for successful appointments with God is a heart that has developed a deep thirst for seeking and knowing Him. David, King of Israel, had prepared His heart with this kind of thirst. Listen to the longing of his heart.

### Psalms 42:1-2

*<sup>1</sup>As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. <sup>2</sup>My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?*



## STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD

Look up *Psalms 42:1-3* in your Bible and underline the words that emphasize how we should long for an intimate relationship with God. How does this Scripture impact you?

God is always drawing us to Himself, desiring to give us a thirst for seeking and knowing Him. It is our responsibility to cooperate with God by responding to what He wants to do in our hearts. We can do this by asking God to prepare our hearts and responding by disciplining ourselves to spend time with Him.

Early morning of each day I ask God to prepare my heart. I would suggest you to do the same thing. I pray, "Lord, give me a heart to seek, love, know and glorify you more than anything else in life." I can assure you that this is a request the Lord delights in answering. Be ready to respond in obedience and spend time with Him.

### Key #2: Prepare your schedule

Most of us, if not all, face having more to do than we have time for. We live in a culture that robs us of our margin if we allow it. For most of us time is an issue, but the fact remains that we still reserve time to do what is most important to us. Our calendars reflect our values. Look at my calendar and my checkbook and you will know my true values.

It is a lie to say that we do not have time to have regular appointments with God. As an example, if you have faithfully done the assignments in this book, you will have had an appointment with God for twenty to thirty minutes a day, five days a week. That is a great start and I encourage you to continue the discipline. I'm sure that if you are faithful in keeping a regular appointment with God, He will be faithful in making the rest of your time go further. The Lord of the harvest will give you a generous return on your investment!

Jesus, even though He was the Son of God, constantly carved out time from His demanding schedule to spend with His Father. Mark says the following about Jesus' appointments with His Father:

#### Mark 1:35

*<sup>35</sup>Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.*

### Your Commitment

It is now time for the real test of whether or not your heart is prepared. Are you willing to commit a half hour a day, at least five days a week for an appointment with God? Usually first thing in the morning is best, but appointments with God can be planned for other times as well. In the space below record your commitment to have regular appointments with God.

I will commit \_\_\_\_\_ (total time) each day from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ for my appointment with God.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

### **KEY #3: Prepare your place**

Jesus had some favorite places where He went to be alone with His Father. Luke says that Jesus, "...Often withdrew to lonely places and prayed." (Luke 5:16). It was in one of these special or "certain" places that the disciples observed Jesus praying.

*Luke 11:1*

*<sup>1</sup>One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."*

I believe it is helpful for all of us to have a certain place to meet with God. Here are some things to consider when you are deciding on your certain place.

- **A place where you can be comfortable**  
When choosing a place, consider where you can be comfortable but not too comfortable. A favorite location, a favorite chair, or a favorite room can help create an environment of intimacy and expectation.
- **A place where you can have solitude**  
You need to find a place where you can focus on your relationship with God with the least amount of interruptions. This usually means you will need to be alone.
- **A place free of distractions**  
A distraction is anything that diverts your attention from your primary goal of focusing only on God. The place you meet with God should be as free as possible from things that might distract you.
- **A place for your resources**  
Make sure that all your resources are in your "certain place" before you go to bed at night. Your Bible, notebook, pen and whatever other tools you might need should be in place, ready to use. This will not only save you time but also make the environment conducive to focused time with God.

### **KEY #4: Prepare your plan**

A simple plan of what to do during your appointments with God is important. A course like this becomes your appointment with God as you study and memorize the Word. However there will be times when you are on your own. If you have a flexible structure for this time you will be much more likely to have consistent appointments with God that continues for the rest of your life.

On page 106, there is a simple plan for time in the Word and prayer that you can use in the future. Of course there are many other things you can do during your time with God such as reading through books of the Bible, and studying passages of Scripture. Your goal should always be consistent appointments with God in the Word and prayer.

### **KEY #5: Practice your plan**

All the information in the world and all the planning we do will only take us so far. Nothing is complete until we act. You must always take the next step and practice what you have planned. Paul reminded the Christians in Philippi:

Philippians 4:9

*<sup>9</sup>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.*

Put into practice what you have learned about appointments with God. Follow through with your commitment to have a thirty-minute appointment with God five times a week. You will find that if you will be persistent you will eventually become consistent. Of course you will go through dry times and occasions when you are not as consistent as you promised. But stick to the course. Get back on track. Never give up. God will bless your efforts and your appointments with God will become an essential part of your life. On the next page there is an Appointment with God Guide that you can copy and use.

## APPOINTMENT WITH GOD GUIDE

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### TIME IN THE WORD

**Memorization, meditation and review.** (Write on and index card)

New Scripture to memorize \_\_\_\_\_

How I will apply this Scripture to my life?

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Old verses to review \_\_\_\_\_

### Study of the Word

Scripture \_\_\_\_\_

Main point

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Personalize the main point

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Practice the main point

---

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Other thoughts from today's appointment with God.

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### TIME IN PRAYER

Use the Lord's Prayer Guide that you will learn in next week's study. (Matthew 6:9-13)



## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Joshua 1:8*. Write it in the space below.
  
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  3. The principle of A\_\_\_\_\_. What does it s\_\_\_\_\_ to m\_\_\_\_\_?



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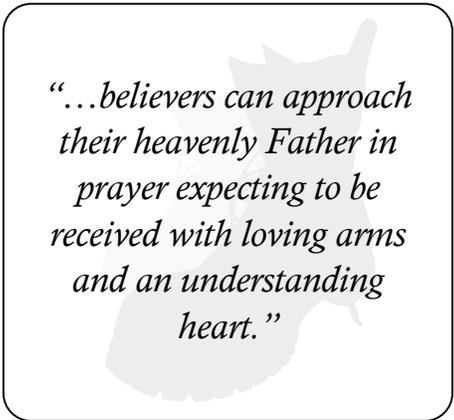
## TEARS AND CHEERS

At the beginning of each weeks group time you will be given time to share what is going on in your lives. This is voluntary and you will never be pressured to share if you choose not to. You group leader will give you the opportunity to share the following:

- **Tears**  
"Tears" represents the burdens, disappointments and other issues you are facing. This will enable you to work through issues with the support of the group and receive encouragement and prayer
- **Cheers**  
"Cheers" is the blessing, joys and spiritual progress for which you are thankful. Verbalizing these blessing strengthen you and encourage others.

# WEEK 5

## GROWING THROUGH PRAYER



*“...believers can approach their heavenly Father in prayer expecting to be received with loving arms and an understanding heart.”*

### INTRODUCTION

A second discipline that should be part of every appointment with God is prayer. Jesus set the example by constantly spending time with His Father in prayer. This so impressed the disciples that they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray.

Luke 11:1

*<sup>1</sup>One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”*

Jesus then taught His disciples five components of effective prayer. These components are an effective outline that you can follow in your prayer time. In today’s lesson you will learn how to pray through these five components. This will give you important principles of prayer and a structure that will be helpful in keeping you focused during your prayer time. This week you will memorize the “Lord’s Prayer”. There are five short verses. Memorize the verse each day that goes with that day’s component. At the end of the week you will have memorized the entire Lord’s Prayer.

### WEEK 5 STUDY

DAY 1: Enter God’s Presence

DAY 2: Pray for God’s Kingdom and His Will

DAY 3: Pray for Your Needs

DAY 4: Pray for Spiritual Cleansing

DAY 5: Pray for Spiritual Protection

### WEEK 5 ASSIGNMENTS

- Memorize *Matthew 6: 9-13*

Matthew 6:9-13

*<sup>9</sup>“This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, <sup>10</sup>your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup>Give us today our daily bread. <sup>12</sup>Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”*

- Memorize the five components and pray through the “Lord’s Prayer”
- Prepare your memory/review index card. Write your memory verse on one side and the five components of the Lord’s Prayer on the other.

- Mid Boot Camp review. At the end of this week's study there is a review of all previous week's memory projects. Complete this review to see how you are doing.

## DAY 1: ENTER GOD'S PRESENCE

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

#### Matthew 6:9-13 (Bold added)

*<sup>9</sup>"This, then, is how you should pray: **"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,** <sup>10</sup>your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup>Give us today our daily bread. <sup>12</sup>Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."*

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray He started with the most important lesson they would ever learn. Jesus knew that unless His disciples were able to grasp this basic principle they would never learn to pray effectively. He taught His disciples to enter God's presence in prayer by simply saying, *"Our Father in heaven..."* (Matthew 6:9).

With these first four words of instruction Jesus pointed His disciples to the heart of prayer — their relationship with the heavenly Father. The first thing they needed to know was that His Father was their Father as well. Jesus wanted His disciples to understand that the heavenly Father was delighted when they entered His presence.

### COMPONENT 1A - ENTER GOD'S PRESENCE AS ABBA-FATHER'S CHILD

*"Our Father in heaven..."*

#### **Remember your adoption**

Because the heavenly Father adopted us, we have permission to call Him Abba, Father. Paul explains that God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts so we can communicate with Him with deep emotion and closeness. Because we are sons and daughters God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, *"Abba, Father."*

#### Galatians 4:4-7

*<sup>4</sup>But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, <sup>5</sup>to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. <sup>6</sup>Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." <sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.*

The English equivalent for Abba, Father is Daddy, Daddy. Paul uses this kind of language to show that believers can approach their heavenly Father in prayer expecting to be received with loving arms and an understanding heart. Listen to how *Andrew Murray* in his book, *With Christ in the School of Prayer* describes our intimacy with Abba-Father.

*The intimacy that Jesus had with His Father was available to His disciples as well. An attentive, loving, compassionate heavenly Father was longing for intimate talks with His children. He wanted the disciples to come to Him with their requests, questions, problems and joys. A parent/child relationship of incredible love awaited them. For prayer to be all that God wanted it to be Jesus knew His disciples must be properly aligned with their heavenly Father. They must know their position as children.*

*The knowledge of God's Father-love is the first and simplest, but also the last and highest, lesson in the school of prayer. Prayer begins in a personal relationship with the living God as well as a personal, conscious, fellowship of love with Him. In the knowledge of God's fatherliness revealed by the Holy Spirit, the power of prayer will root and grow. The life of prayer has its joy in the infinite tenderness, care, and patience of an infinite Father who is ready to hear and to help.*

The secret to prayer is that our hearts are first and foremost filled with the Father-love of God. For this to occur we must not merely know how to address our heavenly Father in the correct manner, but hold the truth of the depth of His love for us in our hearts. We must truly believe that our relationship with our heavenly Father is meant to be the closest of all relationships, a relationship created by a perfect Father for His imperfect children.

### **Start by praying, "Our Father in heaven"**

Because prayer is primarily a loving relationship with God, Jesus teaches us first to approach our heavenly Father as a deeply loved child. He says to approach God by praying "*Our Father in heaven.*" Focusing on this intimate relationship touches our minds, wills and our emotions. It enables us to enter the Father's presence with joy, confidence and anticipation because we know how much He loves us and wants to be with us.

Start your prayer time by spending a few moments thinking about how much God loves you as a child of His and how much He wants to be with you right now. Thank the Father in heaven for that intimate love and ask Him to make real in your heart what you know to be true in your head.

*1 John 3:1*

*<sup>1</sup>How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!*

### **COMPONENT 1B - ENTER GOD'S PRESENCE PRAISING HIS NAME**

*"...hallowed be your name"*

In the second part to component 1 Jesus teaches His disciples to enter God's presence by focusing on His name. The purpose of the next four words of instruction Jesus gave in the school of prayer was to teach these men to focus on the character of God. Jesus said to pray, "*...hallowed be your name.*" (*Matthew 6:9*)

The Greek word for hallowed that Jesus uses here is *hagiozo* meaning to revere or sanctify. When we hallow God's name we are revering who He is and setting apart His name from all other names. Embodied in His name is everything He is and everything He does. It is through praise that we take our rightful position before God. When we hallow His name we humbly acknowledge His sovereign power throughout the universe and in our lives. Praise helps us clarify God's position and our position. It reminds us that He is the creator and we are his creation. We exist for the purpose of glorifying Him forever.

To hallow the name of God means to praise the name of God. Praise means that we prize or value Him above all else. Praise is the verbal expression of our adoration of God. It is a primary way we have of showing God

that we prize Him above all else. The Bible often refers to the name of God in a general sense to signify all that He is and does, but it also gives many different names for God that describes His attributes. There are many names given for God in Scripture. Becoming familiar with some of the names can help you praise His name.

### How to “hallow” God’s name

Following are some examples from Scripture of people hallowing or praising the name of God. We can learn from these prayers of praise by reflecting on them and then making the prayer our own.

Psalms 63:4

*<sup>4</sup>I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.*

Psalms 8:1

*<sup>1</sup>O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.*

Psalms 103:1-2

*<sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. <sup>2</sup>Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits*

Psalms 9:10

*<sup>10</sup>Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.*

Psalms 33:21

*<sup>21</sup>In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.*

### Names of God

Jehovah-Shommeh: “God is present with me” (Ezekiel 48:35)

Jehvoah-Rohi: “God is my Shepherd” (Psalm 23:1)

Jehovah-Jireh: “God is my Provider” (Genesis 22:14)

Jehovah-Rophe: “God is my healer” (Exodus 15:26)

Jehovah-Tisdkenu: “God is my Righteousness” (Jeremiah 23:6)

Jehovah-Mikaddism: “God is my Sanctification” (Leviticus 20:8)

Jehovah-Shalom: “God is my Peace” (Judges 6:24)

Jehovah-Nissi: “God is my Banner” (Exodus 17:45)

Forgiving God

Source of my strength

Refuge

God is my Rock

Holy One

Our Redeemer

All Loving

My Hiding Place

Lord of Lords

Eternal King

Almighty God

Most High

Creator of Heaven & Earth

The Majestic One

God My Maker

My Helper

King of Kings

Light of the World

Sovereign Lord

Wonderful Counselor

Everlasting Father

### ENTER GOD’S PRESENCE

Jesus told His disciples to start their prayer by entering God's presence, focusing on the fatherhood of God and the character of God. I suggest that you start your prayer time in this way. Spend a few minutes thinking about how much the Father loves you and enjoys your time with Him. Next spend some time just praising the name of God. Praise Him for who He is and give Him thanks for what He has done for you. Use the Scriptures on the names of God or other Psalms as your praise guide.



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## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows.

- Memorize and meditate on *Matthew 6:9-13*. Write it in the space below.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Memorize and pray through the five components of the Lord's Prayer.
  1. Enter God's presence as a \_\_\_\_\_ - F \_\_\_\_\_ and  
p \_\_\_\_\_ His n \_\_\_\_\_.
  2. Pray for God's k \_\_\_\_\_ and God's w \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. Pray for your n \_\_\_\_\_.
  4. Pray for s \_\_\_\_\_ c \_\_\_\_\_.
  5. Pray for s \_\_\_\_\_ p \_\_\_\_\_.

# DAY 2: PRAY FOR GOD KINGDOM AND WILL

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6:9-13

*<sup>9</sup>"This, then, is how you should pray: "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, <sup>10</sup>**your kingdom come, your will be done** on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup>Give us today our daily bread. <sup>12</sup>Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'" (Bold added)*

## COMPONENT 2 - GOD'S KINGDOM AND GOD'S WILL

*"Your kingdom come, Your will be done..."*

First Jesus taught his disciples to enter God's presence by focusing on His fatherhood and His character. Next Jesus tells them to pray, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done..." We are to pray for what God wants done in our lives and in the world. God's kingdom and will includes all His purposes and plans for the world in general and individuals in particular.

### Why pray for God's kingdom and will?

As incredible as it may sound, God has asked us to help Him accomplish his kingdom and will on earth. In His infinite wisdom God devised a plan to allow us the privilege and honor of partnering with Him in His work. Jesus said,

John 14:12-14

*<sup>12</sup>I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup>And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. <sup>14</sup>You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.*

Jesus brought glory to His Father by doing His will on earth. When He was about to leave earth he told His disciples that if they had faith in Him He would release divine power in their lives to accomplish God's will and bring glory to Him. In fact, Jesus said, they would do "...greater things..." than He had done (*John 14:12*). There is absolutely no limit to what God is willing to accomplish through our prayers of faith for His kingdom and His will. He wants to release His power through our prayers. Our prayers of faith are a conduit through which His power accomplishes His will. Jesus made this clear to His disciples.

Mark 11:22-24

*<sup>22</sup>"Have faith in God," Jesus answered. <sup>23</sup>"I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. <sup>24</sup>Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.*

We must always remember that God's promise to release His power through our prayers is to accomplish **His** kingdom and will not ours! This is not a "believe it and receive it" formula for a life of health and wealth exempt from all suffering and trials. Jesus also said to His disciples:

John 15:7

*<sup>7</sup>If you remain in me **and my words remain in you**, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.  
(**Bold added**)*

We must pray in God's will to pray for God's will. If we do not remain in a position to be filled with God's Spirit we will not be able to discern what His will is that we should be praying for. If we do not know His Word, we will not know what to ask for. These are two conditions that must be met for God's power to be released in our prayers.

### **What is God's kingdom and will?**

God's kingdom and His will is that He will sit on the throne of every person's heart. His kingdom and His will is that each one of us glorifies Him with our lips, our character and our service. In this way His will and kingdom will become a reality in our lives. Jesus said to His disciples,

John 15:8

*<sup>8</sup>This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

The fruit Jesus was talking about here is the fruit of our lives and our lips. We are to glorify Him by doing His will. The Apostle Peter wrote about our sole purpose of glorifying God.

1 Peter 2:9

*<sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

We can pray that God's kingdom and will be done in the lives of two groups of people. We will refer to these two groups as the "lost" and the "found"--those who do not know Jesus and those who have put their trust in Him.

### **PRAY FOR THE "LOST"**

#### **Pray for God's kingdom and will for non-believers**

First we can pray for those who are lost. Our heavenly Father wants all people to be reconciled to Him. They are like lost sheep and the Father loves them deeply. We can pray for God's kingdom and rule in their lives. Jesus taught his disciples to pray for the lost. He said,

Matthew 9:36-38

*<sup>36</sup>When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup> Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. <sup>38</sup> Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

### **Your prayer list for the lost**

Start a prayer list for those you know who do not have a personal relationship with Christ. Pray for these people each day and look for opportunities to share your faith with them. Pray that they will open their hearts to the Holy Spirit.

### **PRAY FOR THE “FOUND”**

We are to pray for God’s kingdom and God’s will in the lives of believers--those who have been “found”. First and foremost we are to pray for spiritual change. The prayers of Jesus and Paul conclusively show that prayer for spiritual change is to be our highest priority when praying for believers. Of the more than 25 requests by Paul and Jesus, only one is specifically for material concerns. This is not to minimize praying for material needs. Jesus specifically said that we were to pray for each day’s food, and our basic needs of life (*Matthew 6:11*). Jesus also prayed for the physical healing of people so the Father could be glorified. In James we are told to pray for the healing of the sick (*James 5:13-16*). We do need to guard against focusing on physical needs rather than spiritual change.

### **Jesus prayed for spiritual change**

Before His death Jesus prayed what is often referred to as the “Priestly Prayer” in John chapter seventeen. The entire prayer is recorded so we can see not only Jesus’ concern for His disciples but also how He prayed for spiritual change. Jesus knew that the ultimate success of the disciples would depend on this change. Jesus prayed:

- That they would know Him (*John 17:3*)
- That they would be protected from the world (*John 17:11*)
- That they would be protected from the evil one (*John 17:15*)
- That they would be protected by the truth (*John 17:17*)
- That they would be one in complete unity (*John 17:20-23*)

Jesus prayed for these spiritual changes in the lives of His disciples, but at the same time He was also praying for us. Jesus said,

*John 17:20*

*20”My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,”*

During the last days of Jesus’ life He also prayed for Peter, knowing that he would face temptation and fail. Jesus said,

Luke 22:32

*<sup>32</sup>But I have prayed for you, Simon that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers"*

### **YOUR PRAYER LIST FOR THE "FOUND"**

Take time each day to pray for God's kingdom and God's will to be accomplished in the lives of people you know. Start a prayer list for the following people

#### **Pray for God's kingdom and God's will in your life.**

What is God saying to you about yourself? What does God want you to be and do?

#### **Pray for God's kingdom and will in your family members' lives.**

What spiritual needs do your family members have? Write down the names of family members and specific spiritual needs for which you can pray.

#### **Pray for God's kingdom and will in other peoples' lives**

Pray for other believers, church leaders, missionaries, people groups, government officials etc.

I want to conclude the teaching on this second component by sharing with you a great prayer that the Apostle Paul prayed for believers. This is one of the Biblical prayers I pray each day for the “found” on my list. You may want to use this prayer as well when you pray for believers.

Colossians 1:9-12

*<sup>9</sup>For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. <sup>10</sup>And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, <sup>11</sup>being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully <sup>12</sup>giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.*

### PRAY FOR GOD’S KINGDOM AND WILL

I know that today’s study may take more than one day as you make a list of people for whom to pray. Do take time however, to spend some time in prayer for the people you have on your list. Add to this list as time goes on so you can pray consistently and persistently for the “lost” and “found” that God has put in your life.



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### WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week’s assignment and write it in the space that follows.

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- Memorize and pray through the five components of the Lord’s Prayer.

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# DAY 3: PRAY FOR YOUR NEEDS

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

### Matthew 6:9-13

*<sup>9</sup>"This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, <sup>10</sup> your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup>**Give us today our daily bread.** <sup>12</sup>Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." **(Bold added)***

## COMPONENT 3 - PRAY FOR YOUR NEEDS

*"Give us today our daily bread"*

It is interesting to note that the first three components of the Lord's Prayer all focus our attention on God. I believe there is a reason for this. It is only after focusing on God that our hearts are ready to think about our own needs. Because of our natural inclination towards self-centeredness, God has us think about Him, His character and what He wants first. It is only then that we will have a proper perspective on our own needs. It is only then that we will know how to ask God for what we need. But God does want us to come to Him with our needs.

### **What are our needs?**

When Jesus said that we are to ask for our daily bread He promises that our basic necessities in life will be met. In Jesus' time that would be food, and drink and clothes. In what is called "The Sermon on the Mount" found in Matthew chapters five through seven, we find Jesus' most extensive teaching on the Father's promise to meet our physical needs. After calling the disciples' attention to how the heavenly father feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field, he makes this important point:

### Matthew 6:26, 31-34

*<sup>26</sup>...Are you not much more valuable than they?... <sup>31</sup>So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup>For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup>But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup>Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

### **Be content with what God provides**

Our heavenly Father does not promise to meet all of our wants and wishes. He sometimes gives us more than our basic needs, but that is not what He promises. The problem in our culture is that we have come to believe that our basic needs are much more than food, clothes and shelter. We face a constant barrage of media indoctrination that wants us to believe that we never have enough; there is always more that we need and deserve and that it is our right as Americans to have it all! The same Bible that tells us God will meet our basic needs also tells us that we are to be content with what we have. The Apostle Paul says,

### 1 Timothy 6:6-10

*<sup>6</sup>But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. <sup>8</sup>But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. <sup>9</sup>People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into*

ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup>For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Contentment means that we are satisfied with what God provides. Sometimes we will have more than what we need. There may be times when we have less than what we think we need. What the heavenly Father says is, "Trust me. You will have enough."

### **We are to put first things first**

Jesus made it clear in His teaching that the key to receiving his provisions and being content with what we have is to first seek Him. We are to "...seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:34). Our focus should be on what God's will is for us and living righteous lives. The rest will take care of itself. Paul also emphasized this principle when he said, "But godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6). The questions you need to ask yourself right now are, "Am I seeking God first in my life?" "Am I content when the Father meets my basic needs or do I always want more?"

### **We are to ask**

As a deeply concerned and loving Father He wants us to trust Him and be dependent on Him for our needs. Jesus said,

#### Matthew 7:7-11

<sup>7</sup>"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup>For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

<sup>9</sup>"Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup>Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? <sup>11</sup>If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

How much more will our heavenly Father give good gifts to His children than would an earthly father? You can be one hundred percent certain that your heavenly Father will meet your basic needs: physical, emotional and spiritual. Consider for a moment how diligently you are in meeting the needs of your children. And you are an imperfect parent. Now think about how much more our perfect heavenly Father wants to meet the needs of His children. And He has the divine resources to meet all of our needs.

### **We are to trust**

One of the great themes of the Bible is the faithfulness of God. From beginning to end we are told in Scripture that God is perfectly faithful. Jesus came in human flesh to not only teach about the heavenly Father's faithfulness but to demonstrate that faithfulness. He not only taught about the faithfulness of God, He was faithful in all He said and did. Right before teaching the disciples "The Lord's Prayer," Jesus reminded them they did not have to babble like the pagans when asking God to meet their needs.

#### Matthew 6:7-8

<sup>7</sup>And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. <sup>8</sup>Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Above all else the heavenly Father wants us to trust Him. He knows that if we truly trust Him everything else will be a result of that trust. While He does tell us that we are to be persistent and bold in our prayers, He also wants us to know that we don't have to worry about whether we have asked often enough because

the Father already knows what we need. God does not want His children to beg, but to trust that he will provide for their basic needs. The Apostle Paul summed it up in this way:

Philippians 4:19

<sup>19</sup>And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

### Prayer list for your needs

Now is the time to pray for your needs. In the space below list all of your physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

### PRAY FOR YOUR NEEDS

Take time right now to ask God to meet those needs, believing that He will answer your prayer.



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## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

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3. Pray for your n \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Pray for s \_\_\_\_\_ c \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Pray for s \_\_\_\_\_ p \_\_\_\_\_.

# DAY 4: PRAY FOR SPIRITUAL CLEANSING

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6:9-13

*<sup>9</sup>"This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, <sup>10</sup>your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup>Give us today our daily bread. <sup>12</sup>**Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.** <sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."* (Bold added)

## COMPONENT 4 - PRAY FOR SPIRITUAL CLEANSING

*"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."*

In the fourth component of the Lord's Prayer Jesus teaches His disciples the importance of being spiritually clean before the Father. We must never forget that God has made us holy and pure in His sight. This is positional holiness and purity. We also must remember that God wants us to be pure and holy in our practice. Jesus reminds His disciples that when they come to God in prayer they are to ask for forgiveness from God and offer forgiveness to others. Because of our position in Christ, all of our past, present and future sins have been nailed to the cross and forgiven (1 Peter 2:24; Hebrews 10:17). Our salvation is eternally secure because we are in Christ and Christ is in us (Ephesians 1:11-14; Galatians 2:20).

## ASK FOR FORGIVENESS

### Why ask for forgiveness?

Why, when our sins have already been forgiven, are we to continue to confess our sins to God and ask for forgiveness? Confessing our sins is not for forgiveness of sins but for acknowledgement of our sins, a commitment to be pure, and a reminder of the great sacrifice of Jesus. It is also to remind us that we are to forgive others as Christ has forgiven us. In practice--day to day living--our relationship with God is affected by sin. It continues to separate us from communion and communication with our heavenly Father. Therefore we are told by Jesus to confess our sins and ask the Father for forgiveness so our communion and communication will not be interrupted.

God does not just casually suggest that for our own good we clear up our debts with Him and others. He mandates it. God says,

*"...be holy as I am holy (1 Peter 1:15). We are to be sanctified (made holy) "...through and through" (1 Thess. 5:23). Paul says that we are to "...purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit..." (2 Corinthians 7:1). Jesus said, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).*

Since we have such a clear mandate from God it is important to understand what clearing up current debts with God involves.

## How to ask for forgiveness

- **Confess your sins**

What is Jesus asking us to do when He tells us to ask for forgiveness? Exactly what is confession? Confession means agreement. When we confess our sins to God and ask Him for forgiveness we first must agree with God about the nature of our sins. We are agreeing that what we have done is sin. We are agreeing that all sin is serious. We are acknowledging that when we sin we suffer the consequences of sin.

- **Repent**

Repentance is a change of mind that occurs when we turn from sin to righteousness. It means we are willing to clear up old debts with a change of mind and actions. Repentance is a commitment to obey God. God always forgives our sins and purifies us. God's Word says,

*1 John 1:9*

*<sup>9</sup>If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness*

- **Commit**

As you will learn in next week's study, our old nature is a persistent problem. We must commit to living a pure life. The Apostle Peter says:

*2 Corinthians 7:1*

*<sup>1</sup>Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God*

We will always struggle with the old nature and face many temptations. We must make a commitment to live a holy life, but the power to do that will always come from God. Our responsibility is to respond to God's work in our lives. The Psalmist gives us a great prayer of commitment that we can make our own.

*Psalm 19:12-14*

*<sup>12</sup>Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults. <sup>13</sup>Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression. <sup>14</sup>May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.*

Take a few minutes right now to pray for forgiveness. Use *Psalm 19:12-14* as a model prayer. Be specific. Tell God the exact nature of your sin and ask for forgiveness. Make a commitment to be pure. Write a commitment to be pure in the following space.

## OFFER FORGIVENESS

There is a second part to spiritual cleansing. We are to ask God to, "*Forgive us our debts, **as we also have forgiven our debtors***". (Bold added) This means we are to confess our sins to God and because God forgives us, we are to also forgive others. We cannot come before God as spiritually clean until both happen.

## Understand grace

It is impossible to forgive until we truly understand how God by His grace forgave us. We started this study in week one by focusing on grace. We defined grace simply as “the gift of Jesus”. Grace is the love of God in action as He offered His Son on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. Grace is the underserved favor that God offers to you and to me. This has a great impact on our willingness to forgive others who do not “deserve” our forgiveness. Biblical forgiveness is not about forgiving someone because they deserve it, but forgiving a person because they do not deserve it. We forgive because God forgave us and asks us to do the same for others. God’s Word says,

*Ephesians 4:32*

*<sup>32</sup>Be kind and compassionate to one another, **forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.** (Bold added)*

We are told in God’s word not to forget this grace that enables us to forgive others as in Christ God forgave us. If we somehow miss this essential understanding of God’s love and forgiveness it will only cause trouble.

*Hebrews 12:15*

*<sup>15</sup>See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.*

## UNDERSTAND “DEBTS”

### The need for forgiveness starts with a debt

When Jesus said to forgive other peoples’ debts just as He has forgiven our debts He was referring to sins that people commit against us. In Luke’s version of the Lord’s Prayer he uses the term “sins” rather than debts (*Luke 11:4*). These sins are things that people say or do that we consider offenses against us and that hurt us. Each sin or offense becomes a debt that someone owes us.

Jesus told a powerful story about how we are to forgive others. Jesus told this story in answer to the Apostle Peter’s question on how many times we have to forgive someone. In this parable Jesus told about a servant who owed his master ten thousand talents, which would be about \$15,180,000 in today’s currency. Jesus says,

*Matthew 18:23-24*

*<sup>23</sup>“Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup>As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him.”*

### Debts people owe us

The need to forgive comes in the form of a debt. As we have seen, a debt occurs when someone hurts us in some way. Because we feel something of value has been taken from us, we write an I.O.U. on the tablet of our hearts and put the person in the prison of our bitterness until they pay. There are various kinds of debts:

- A friend is disloyal or lets us down in a major way.
- A spouse betrays us through an affair, divorce, or some other form of deceit.
- A child that we have poured our life into rebels or gets into serious trouble.
- We are falsely accused or treated unfairly.
- Our parents abused or neglected us when we were growing up.

- Someone hurts a family member or close friend.
- We are disappointed by the decisions or actions of church leaders or Christian friends.
- Someone important in our life seems to not value us.
- Someone minimizes or neglects our needs.

### **The need for forgiveness proceeds with debt collection**

The Master called the servant in to collect the debt. The servant was unable to pay so the master ordered that the servant and his wife and children be sold to repay the debt (*Matthew 18:21-25*). Upon hearing this, the servant begged for mercy.

#### *Matthew 18:25-26*

*<sup>25</sup>Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. <sup>26</sup>"The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything'.*

### **Bitterness is compounded**

Bitterness accumulates interest at an alarming rate. We let the interest compound on the offense until it is impossible for the person to pay. The longer we hold on to the offense the greater the debt. In the story Jesus told, how could a simple servant ever repay over \$15,000,000? It would be impossible to repay that kind of debt.

### **We throw the person into the debtor's prison**

Since a person is not able to pay back the debt they owe we throw him into the prison of our bitterness. We might have him in maximum security, lock down, isolation, honor farm, or even parole, but he is still in our prison. We might even throw away the key. While in prison we allow the person to pay only on the interest and never on the principal, so they will never be free.

The problem is that when we throw someone into prison we sentence ourselves as well. A jail must have a jailer on duty at all times. It takes resources to keep someone in prison. What a waste of the precious resources God has given us. We pay a personal price in our relationship with God and others as our bitterness drains our resources.

### **Who is in your prison?**

Is there someone you are holding in the prison of your bitterness? Is there someone you have not forgiven for an offense? You can tell if someone is in your prison by looking at his account. Are you still making him pay off his debt for the offense? Check and see if you have someone on one of the following payment plans:

- You make them pay by saying things are OK when they are not.
- You make them pay by saying nothing.
- You make them pay by saying everything.
- You make them pay by what you do.
- You make them pay by what you don't do.
- You make them pay by what you think about them.
- You make them pay by not thinking about them.

These are just a few of the payment plans I have heard about and confess I have sometimes used. You may have some creative payment plans of your own that I have not mentioned here.



## REFLECT AND RESPOND

Have you thought about anyone who might be in your prison? What is the debt they owe you? (The offense) In what ways have you been collecting that debt?

## UNDERSTAND FORGIVENESS

### **We only forgive when we cancel the debt**

The parable Jesus told was very clear about forgiveness. To forgive we must cancel the debt--no strings attached. The debt must be stamped, "Paid in full". We must let go of the offense completely. We must fully pardon the person. We must follow the master's example.

Matthew 18:27

*<sup>27</sup>The servant's master took pity on him, **canceled** the debt and **let him go.** (Bold added)*

Complete forgiveness is one of the most difficult things we will ever do. Following are some things to remember that will help you forgive. I know I have mentioned this first principle several times but if we don't start here we can never forgive.

### **Forgiveness is always motivated by grace**

In the parable Jesus told, the master had mercy on the servant and extended grace to him. The servant did nothing to deserve forgiveness of the debt. The servant, however, still did not understand grace because he immediately had a man thrown into prison who owed him a measly \$15.00. It is hard for us to imagine someone who has been forgiven \$15,000,000 not being willing to cancel a debt of \$15.00.

It is easy for us to feel a little self-righteous when we hear this story. We are willing to forgive the small offense but what about the large debts? Most of us have a distorted perspective when it comes to the size of offenses. When we think about how much we have been forgiven by God, any offense, no matter how huge we might consider it, is small in comparison.

### **Forgiveness is a decision not a feeling**

God made a decision to forgive us. If forgiveness was based on God's feelings we would all be in trouble. It certainly doesn't sound like Jesus felt like dying on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. We see his human side when he faced death.

Matthew 26:39

*<sup>39</sup>Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."*

Jesus died on the cross and forgave us our sins in spite of His feelings, not because of them. Yet often we will not forgive others because we do not feel like it. If we wait until we feel like forgiving someone it will probably never happen. We will never feel our way into a better way of feeling. We can only think, pray and act our way into a better way of feeling. Positive feelings always follow practical steps of obedience (*John 15:10-11*).

You will be amazed at how your feelings change toward a person when you obey God and take intentional steps to forgive him.

The first practical step we make in forgiving someone is the decision to forgive based on God's forgiveness of us. Your decision must be followed by action. When a step of action is taken God's love will flow powerfully through you to the other person. Forgiveness is not natural but supernatural.

It's interesting to note that in the thousands of volumes of self-help resources, books on forgiveness are almost non-existent. Those books that do exist advocate a conditional forgiveness much different than you find in the Bible. The reason for this is that true forgiveness comes only from the heart of God and is therefore supernatural. It cannot be fully understood or practiced until a person has received God's forgiveness. The disciples were stunned when Jesus told them that they were to forgive someone seven times a day if necessary. Their response was, "*Increase our faith!*" Luke 17:5

We all need to ask God to supernaturally "increase our faith" so that we can forgive as God forgave us.

### **Forgiveness is costly**

Forgiveness is a costly gift. It cost God his Son. When Jesus forgave us it cost Him his life. There is always a cost when you forgive someone who has wronged you. You will bear the pain of the offense yourself so that the person you are forgiving can be free from the debt. You pay the price for them. Jesus did this when He,

#### 1 Peter 2:24

*<sup>24</sup>"... bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed."*

### **Forgiveness means paid in full**

True forgiveness means that you have completely forgiven the debt. You have stamped the I.O.U. you have tucked away, "Paid in full!" just as Jesus did with your sins. There are four ways you can tell if you have canceled a person's debt. Ask yourself:

- "Have I burned the I.O.U.?"
- "Am I keeping the I.O.U. in a secret place where I can occasionally take it out and rehearse the hurt and what the person owes me?"
- "Am I still making the person pay in any way? Are there still some subtle or not so subtle ways that I am still making the person pay for the pain he has caused me? Is there still a remnant of retribution in my soul?"
- "Do I remember in a different way?"

There is a myth about forgiveness that states that if you still remember the offense you haven't forgiven the person. I believe this is inaccurate. How do you erase the memory of a wound? Your memory is not something you can simply discard. However we can remember in a different way. When we remember the wound we do not have to fret about it. We do not have to rehearse the experience and we do not have to renew the anger. We may experience some pain or sadness, but we must express it to God and turn it over to him once again and move on.

### **Forgiveness is a process**

Forgiveness is both an event and a process. We start the event by making a decision to forgive. The process may take years as we renew our commitment to forgive. Each time the old thoughts or habits pop up we must renew our commitment to forgive. In a sense we make the decision to forgive and then just keep on forgiving. Forgiveness is a process that takes time. Just as we keep growing towards the stature of Christ, we keep growing in our ability to forgive.

### **Forgiveness is not optional**

Forgiveness is not something we can take or leave. God has not given us that option. The parable of the servant who would not forgive a \$15.00 debt after being forgiven of \$15,000,000 ends on a sobering note. Jesus says,

*Matthew 18:34-35*

*<sup>34</sup>In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.*

*<sup>35</sup>"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."*

Forgiveness is such a serious issue that God gives us a serious warning. We will reap the consequences of unforgiveness if we do not forgive someone from our heart. One obvious consequence is that we will have to live our life in the prison of our own bitterness. This will, in turn, affect many of our other relationships including our relationship with God.

### **FORGIVE!**

After all of this there is just one word we need to obey. Forgive! Understanding forgiveness is only the first step in actually forgiving someone. When we make a decision to forgive someone, it is wise to make a personal plan to carry out that decision. I suggest the following three-step process. Jesus said,

*Matthew 5:23-24*

*<sup>23</sup>"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."*

#### **Name it**

First we are to remember what the offense is. We must say to God and to ourselves, "This is the debt. This is what hurt me".

#### **Claim it**

Next we are to take responsibility for holding on to the I.O.U. We must take responsibility, not for what the person has done to us, but for our part in not forgiving. That is a sin. Pray, "Lord, I confess the sin of bitterness".

#### **Pay it**

Now here is the hardest part. We must pay the debt ourselves. That is exactly what Jesus did for us. He paid for our sins although we did nothing to deserve it. He paid the price for what we had done. He

settled the debt and tore up the I.O.U. It no longer exists. We can pray, "Lord I forgive (name of the offender) I have destroyed the I.O.U."

Jesus clearly advocates going to a person with whom you have an issue and reconciling with Him (*Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-17*). This includes confessing to the person that you have had bitterness in your heart and asking him to forgive you. This means that you take responsibility for your root of bitterness. You should be careful not to put the person on the defensive by blaming him for your bitterness. They hurt you in some way. It might have been unintentional or intentional. The issue you are resolving is not the offense but your own attitude. If you believe it would be productive you might want to discuss the issue with the person at another time. If you try to resolve the issue first you may not get to your responsibility which is to forgive the person.

There are times when it would not help to go directly to the person. They might not even know that they have offended you. Through prayer you will need to make that decision. Another reason for not going directly to a person is that they might be a person who would not be open to reconciliation. There are some people who are so emotionally and spiritually unhealthy that it would be unwise to go to them in person. Remember that Paul says "...that if it is possible as far as it depends on us...we are to live at peace with everyone" (*Romans 12:18*). It is simply impossible to live at peace with someone who is not willing.

## **CONTINUE TO FORGIVE**

This may sound strange, but remember that forgiveness is a process. We make a decision to forgive, but the process takes time. There are people I continue to forgive each week during my prayer time. This helps prevent me from starting to review the old offense and writing a new I.O.U.

## **YOUR PLAN TO FORGIVE**

Now it is time to write out your plan to forgive.

- Who I will forgive
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- The offense I will forgive
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What I will do and when I will do it



## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows.

- Memorize and meditate on *Matthew 6:9-13*. Write it in the space below.
  
- Memorize and pray through the five components of the Lord's Prayer.
  1. Enter God's presence as a \_\_\_\_\_ - F \_\_\_\_\_ and  
p \_\_\_\_\_ His n \_\_\_\_\_.
  2. Pray for God's k \_\_\_\_\_ and God's w \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. Pray for your n \_\_\_\_\_.
  4. Pray for s \_\_\_\_\_ c \_\_\_\_\_.
  5. Pray for s \_\_\_\_\_ p \_\_\_\_\_.

# DAY 5: PRAY FOR SPIRITUAL PROTECTION

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

### Matthew 6:9-13

*<sup>9</sup>"This, then, is how you should pray: "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, <sup>10</sup>your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup>Give us today our daily bread. <sup>12</sup>Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup>**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.**" (Bold added)*

## COMPONENT 5 - SPIRITUAL PROTECTION

*"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."*

The last component Jesus gives is to pray for spiritual protection. You will learn next week how Satan loves to trip you up in your walk with God. He devises schemes to distract you, deceive you and tempt you. Therefore, you are to pray for spiritual protection. Jesus say to pray, *"Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one"*.

I suggest that you pray for spiritual protection each day by praying on the Armor of God that Paul describes in his letter to the Christians in Ephesus. In a moment I want you to read *Ephesians 6:6-10-18*. Then put on each part of the armor in prayer.

## PROTECTED BY THE ARMOR OF GOD

God has provided us with supernatural protection from the evil one. God knows exactly how and when we need to be protected. I want us to inspect each piece that makes up the armor of God. Paul told the believers in Ephesus that they must be careful to protect themselves with the armor of God. We also must learn to put it on!

### Ephesians 6:10-18

*<sup>10</sup>Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup>Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup>For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup>Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup>Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup>and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup>In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup>Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. <sup>18</sup>And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints*

### 1. THE BELT OF TRUTH

The belt of truth is the authority of God's Word. It is the anchor because it holds all the rest of the armor in place. It is to be buckled around your waist. Truth protects us because it opposes Satan's lies and

destroys them. Satan by nature is a liar. The basic nature of Jesus is truth (*John 1:1-14*). He not only spoke the truth but was the truth (*John 14:6*).

### **Truth frees**

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said,

*John 8:31-32*

*<sup>31</sup>"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. <sup>32</sup>Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

Truth frees us from the lies of Satan that bind us to ungodly thought patterns and actions. Truth frees us to live in accordance with God's pattern for life.

### **Truth transforms**

*Romans 12:2*

*<sup>2</sup>Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Truth renews our minds so that we have the mind of Christ. When we are made new in the attitude of our minds we will be transformed into the image of Christ so we will walk as He walked. Only then will we consistently do His will.

### **Truth protects**

*Psalms 40:11*

*<sup>11</sup>Do not withhold your mercy from me, O LORD; may your love and your truth always protect me.*

The truth of God's Word protects us from believing the lies of Satan and conforming to the worldly lifestyle he promotes. The truth is that our heavenly Father loves us unconditionally and we do not have to search for significance and value apart from His provisions. God will provide for us and therefore we do not have to provide for ourselves.

### **Pray on the belt of truth**

Put on the belt of truth in prayer. Ask God to always protect you through the truth of His Word. Make a commitment to knowing and living the Word.

## **2. THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

### **Our position of righteousness**

The belt of truth prepares us for the breastplate of righteousness. Righteousness means to be right before God and others. It also means to do what is right. These are the two dimensions of righteousness. There is our position of righteousness which means we are imputed or given the righteousness of God through

no effort of our own. We can only be what is right in God's eyes if we are given the righteousness of Christ. The Bible says.

2 Corinthians 5:21

*<sup>21</sup>God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

**Our practice of righteousness**

God makes it possible through His power for us to live righteous lives. We can do what is righteous. God enables us to live right before Him and man. It is only through Christ living in us and us living in Christ that righteous living is possible. When He imparts His righteousness to us we are to respond in obedience. We are to practice righteousness. The Apostle tells us how that is possible.

Ephesians 4:22-24

*<sup>22</sup>You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup>to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup>and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

**Pray on the breastplate of righteousness**

Thank God for giving you the righteousness of Christ. Take off any old thoughts and actions and make a commitment to living like God in true righteousness and holiness.

**3. THE GOSPEL SHOES OF PEACE**

We are told to put on the "gospel shoes." Gospel means "good news". The good news is that Jesus died for our sins and gave us peace with God. A soldier's footgear is of great importance in battle. We are to be able to defend our faith with the gospel of peace. The gospel bridges the gap between God and man caused by sin. The gospel provides a bridge that enables man to reconcile with God through Jesus.

Romans 5:1

*<sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

**Be prepared**

Our feet are to be fitted with the readiness that comes from this gospel of peace. We are to be prepared at all times to share this peace with those who are ready for the gospel.

1 Peter 3:15

*<sup>15</sup>But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,*

### **Pray on the gospel shoes of peace**

Ask God to help you to be ready at all times to answer questions about your faith. Ask God to help you do this with boldness, clarity and wisdom.

#### **4. THE SHIELD OF FAITH**

The Roman shield was a long, oblong piece of wood. It was made to absorb the fiery arrows that the enemy would shoot. The soldier would hold out the shield and the arrow would be buried in the wood and extinguished. We are told to “...take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one” (Ephesians 6:16).

#### **Extinguish Satan’s schemes**

The fiery arrows are schemes that Satan devises to tempt us. Every scheme of Satan is an attempt to deceive so we will not trust God for His provisions. Satan tries to convince us that we can meet our own needs. When we fail to trust God and attempt to meet our own needs we sin. Every scheme of Satan can be extinguished by faith that God is sufficient to meet all of your needs.

Philippians 4:19

*<sup>19</sup>And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

#### **Position your shield**

We can extinguish every arrow of Satan by the shield of a precept or promise of God. We do this by answering every one of Satan’s lies by a corresponding truth of God. This is what Jesus did when He was tempted by Satan in the wilderness. When Satan tempted Jesus to provide for Himself by turning the rocks into bread Jesus was prepared with His shield of faith. He positioned His shield of faith to extinguish each fiery arrow as it was launched. A direct statement of faith destroyed each arrow. Jesus trusted in the all sufficiency of His Father.

Matthew 4:4

*<sup>4</sup>Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”*

Satan constantly tries to dethrone God in your life. Remember that every temptation is a temptation not to trust God. Every sin is a sin not to trust God. Therefore the ultimate weapon to wipe out distrust is faith in God. We are to trust in God alone for everything. The Psalmist reminds us:

Psalms 20:7

*<sup>7</sup>Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.*

### **Pray on the shield of faith**

Ask God to increase your faith. Make a commitment to answer every temptation not to trust God with an affirmation of His faithfulness to meet all of your needs.

## **5. THE HELMET OF SALVATION**

### **The protection of your adoption**

The helmet of salvation represents the hope we have in Christ Jesus. This hope starts with our adoption by our heavenly Father. Our significance, value and identity are in Christ alone. Not only have we been given a new name and the riches of our heavenly Father's inheritance, we have been made "...*holy and blameless in His sight*" (Ephesians 1:3-5).

### **The protection of your security**

We are also eternally secure because He has marked us with His seal of ownership (Ephesians 1:13-14). We are His and no one can take us out of the Father's hand. But Satan wants to play mind games with you and convince you that you are not secure. The "Accuser" will accuse you of not being good enough--of not being worthy of God's love. Satan schemes to mess with our minds so that we will be insecure children of God and therefore vulnerable to his many other deceptions. But Jesus assures us:

John 10:27-30

*<sup>27</sup>My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup>I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup>My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. <sup>30</sup>I and the Father are one."*

Our ultimate protection is that we are safe in God's hand. Nothing will ever happen to us that will not be used for our ultimate good. We can be certain that we will spend eternity with our heavenly Father. We are protected emotionally, spiritually and physically. We are in the perfect hands of God.

### **Pray on the helmet of salvation**

Ask God to help you know in your heart as well as your head the reality of your adoption. Pray that you will always see yourself through God's eyes so that your significance, value and identity are in Him alone. Pray that you will never doubt the assurance of your salvation.

## **6. THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT**

Paul says that we are to take hold of the "... *sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*" (Ephesians 6:17). Word here denotes God's utterance and refers to the fact that God speaks to you about specific situations. God's Word is personal.

### **God operates**

The Word of God not only cuts through the lies of the world, exposing their foolishness but operates on us as well. We are protected from the spread of the cancer of sin in our lives when we go under the scalpel of the Great Physician. He lovingly speaks to us about wrong attitudes and actions as He removes them from our lives.

#### Hebrews 4:12

*<sup>12</sup>For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

### **We cooperate**

We must agree to the operation. God's Word judges our attitudes and actions, but we must be willing to let God operate and remove the cancer. This means we take specific Scripture and apply it to specific areas of our life.

### **Pray on the sword of the Spirit**

Pray that God will enable you to use the sword of the Spirit. Pray that you will believe in the power of God's Word and be willing to allow God to cut deeply into your life, exposing wrong attitudes and removing sin. Commit to memorizing specific Scripture for specific situations.

## **KEEP ON THE ARMOR OF GOD WITH PRAYER**

Not only do you put on the armor of God by prayer, the armor protects and equips you so you can pray for others. Paul ends his instructions for putting on the armor of God by exhorting;

#### Ephesians 6:18-20

*<sup>18</sup>And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. <sup>19</sup>Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup>for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.*

I suggest that you pray on the armor each day as you complete your prayer time. You can review this Scripture in just a few moments, asking God to protect you with each piece of armor.



## MID BOOT CAMP REVIEW

Take an extra day this week to review all you have learned so far in this study. Write each week's memory projects in the space provided.

### WEEK 5 MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows.

- Memorize and meditate on *Matthew 6:9-13*. Write it in the space below.
  
- Memorize and pray through the five components of the Lord's Prayer.
  1. Enter God's presence as a \_\_\_\_\_ - F \_\_\_\_\_ and  
p \_\_\_\_\_ His n \_\_\_\_\_.
  2. Pray for God's k \_\_\_\_\_ and God's w \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. Pray for your n \_\_\_\_\_.
  4. Pray for s \_\_\_\_\_ c \_\_\_\_\_.
  5. Pray for s \_\_\_\_\_ p \_\_\_\_\_.

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### WEEK 4 MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on Joshua 1:8. Write it in the space below.
  
- Memorize the three principles of Bible study and write them in the space below. (See day 2)
  4. The principle of O \_\_\_\_\_ . What does it s \_\_\_\_\_ ?
  5. The principle of I \_\_\_\_\_ . What does it m \_\_\_\_\_ ?
  6. The principle of A \_\_\_\_\_ . What does it s \_\_\_\_\_ to m \_\_\_\_\_ ?

## WEEK 3 MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Hebrews 1:1-2*. Write it in the space below.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Memorize and review the first three eras.
  - The Era of C\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of P\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of E\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of C\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of J\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of K\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of E\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of R\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of S\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of G\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of the C\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of M\_\_\_\_\_

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## WEEK 2 MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *2 Peter 1:20-21*. Write it in the space below.

- Memorize the acronym DUMPS.

D \_\_\_\_\_

U \_\_\_\_\_

M \_\_\_\_\_

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## WEEK 1 MEMORY AND REVIEW

- Memorize and meditate on *Ephesians 2:8, 9*. Write it in the space below.

- Memorize and write the acronym **GRACE**

G

R

A

C

E



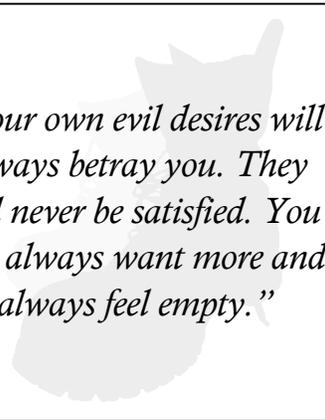
## TEARS AND CHEERS

At the beginning of each weeks group time you will be given time to share what is going on in your lives. This is voluntary and you will never be pressured to share if you choose not to. Your group leader will give you the opportunity to share the following:

- **Tears**  
“Tears” represents the burdens, disappointments and other issues you are facing. This will enable you to work through issues with the support of the group and receive encouragement and prayer
- **Cheers**  
“Cheers” is the blessing, joys and spiritual progress for which you are thankful. Verbalizing these blessing strengthen you and encourage others.

# WEEK 6

## OFF WITH THE OLD SELF



*“Your own evil desires will always betray you. They will never be satisfied. You will always want more and always feel empty.”*

### INTRODUCTION

In this week’s session you will learn what it means when the Bible says we are to take off the old self. As you are probably well aware, the old self with its attitudes and actions that were part of how you lived your life before you became a Christian did not automatically change. That is why we are to “die to sin”. Our old nature is to be put to death and we are to put on the new nature. We are to count or consider ourselves “dead to sin” but “alive to righteousness” (*Romans 6:11*). Old sinful patterns will die and new patterns of right living will be born as we learn to put on the new self.

This week you will learn how your old nature is put to death and no longer controls you. You will come to understand the key doctrines of man and sin. You will understand how you are tempted by Satan, the world and your own evil desires. This will help you put on the new self with its new attitudes and actions.

### WEEK 6 STUDY

- DAY 1: Understanding the Old Self
- DAY 2: Three Origins of Temptation
- DAY 3: Three Areas of Temptation
- DAY 4: Three Stages of Temptation
- DAY 5: Putting to Death the Old Self

### WEEK 6 ASSIGNMENTS:

- Memorize and meditate on *Romans 6:11*.

*Romans 6:11*

<sup>11</sup> *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

- Memorize and review the three areas of temptation. (*1 John 2:15-16*)
  - Lust of the eyes
  - Lust of the flesh
  - Boastful pride of life
- Review all previous memory work assignments from your index cards.
- Prepare your memory/review index card. Write your memory verse on one side and the three areas of temptation on the other side.

# DAY 1: UNDERSTANDING THE OLD SELF

When I first became a Christian I had a lot of thoughts and actions that were certainly not according to God's Word and will. I did however, have a new direction for my life and wanted to live for God and conform to His will. It didn't take long for me to recognize that although I was a new creation, the old creature still existed. Some of the long-standing patterns of thought and actions were deeply ingrained. They stubbornly resisted change. I often wondered if I would ever get it right. Some of the more deeply imbedded strongholds persisted for years and still have to be put off daily.

I'm sure as a new believer you will also face this dilemma. It is easy to think you are alone in your struggle and become discouraged. You may look around at mature Christians and think that they are beyond having temptations and struggles. This is simply not true. Every Christian I know has struggles, suffers setbacks, and faces discouragement. Mature Christians know that they must continue to grow in maturity until the day they die. The struggle will never be over because our old nature is always waiting to exert its evil influence and cause us to sin and become discouraged. Today I want you to learn how to gain power over the old self by understanding four important things you need to know about how it works

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE OLD SELF

There are some things we need to know about the old self so we can overcome temptation and live a holy life.

### 1. We need to know that the old self still exists.

We will always have an inclination to go our own way and sin. Left to our own devices we will always pursue our own desires and not God's. Even when we want to do what is right, the old self with its selfish desires continuously lurks behind us, just waiting for the right moment to trip us up. The Apostle Paul was well aware of how this nature still had the potential to exercise power in his life. He admitted,

Romans 7:18

*<sup>18</sup>I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.*

Perhaps you have heard the saying, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions". It is also true that the way to spiritual defeat is paved with good intentions. As Paul says, most of us really do want to do what is good.

We have good intentions. When we receive Christ we are excited about the new life and want to live for Him. Most of us think we can change on our own, not recognizing the power that our sin nature continues to exert on us.



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

What has surprised you about the presence and power of your old nature since you became a Christian? How has the presence and power of old thoughts and actions affected you?

## 2. We need to know that the old self still exerts power.

Here is the problem with you and me: although we want to do what is right, we end up not doing that at all, but exactly the opposite. We keep doing the things we don't want to do—the very things that we know are wrong. Paul admits,

Romans 7:19

*<sup>19</sup>For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.*

Our old sinful nature not only exists it can exert power over us. However the only power it has is the power we give it. We may be tempted to blame our old nature for our sins. Of course this is not entirely correct. While our old nature exists and has the potential to have power over us it is something we must face and can never be an excuse for doing wrong. It is critical that we understand our old nature, but not blame it for our shortcomings. As you will learn next week you have a new nature with divine power to overcome the old nature. The old nature is to be put to death so that it no longer has the power to control us.



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Give an example of something that you really want to do differently but never really seem to get right.

## 3. We need to know that the old self has been defeated and does not have power over us.

The solution is that your old self has been defeated and no longer has power over you. When Jesus Christ died on the cross He defeated Satan and the hold he had on your old nature. The old nature was nailed to the cross so you could be free to live for God. Paul says,

Romans 7:24-25

*<sup>24</sup>What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup>Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.*

We can thank our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that by His death He released us from the power of our old nature. Never again would we be a victim to Satan's power. Never again would we be a slave to him. We are now slaves to God's presence and power in our lives. Paul says,

Romans 8:9

*<sup>9</sup>You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*

We may not be victims to Satan's control, but we can be volunteers! If the old nature has been defeated and we have been set free, then why do we live as slaves? We are much like the slaves who were freed after the Emancipation Proclamation. They were set free but some chose to stay as servants. They did not fully understand their freedom so they stayed as volunteers. For them to really be free they had to participate in their new life by leaving their old life and exercising their new freedom and power. We also

must participate in our new freedom in Christ. The old self has been defeated but we must learn to walk in this new way of life.



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

In your own words, explain what it means to have your old nature defeated.

- Are you still in any way a volunteer? Explain.

#### 4. We need to know that we must put off the attitudes and actions of the old self.

While God supplies us with His divine power, we are required to “participate in His divine nature” (1 Peter 1:4). In other words we are to do what God requires of us. We are to be filled by His Spirit and obey His Word so that we can appropriate His power. Paul shows how we are to participate in putting off the old self:

##### Romans 6:11-12

*<sup>11</sup>In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. <sup>12</sup>Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.*

We are first to believe that God really has destroyed the power that the old nature had over us. We are to “count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (V.11). We are to claim the victory over sin that God has already given us through Christ. God wants us to count on the fact that we have a new nature. He wants us to live as freed men and women. We have a new Master. Sin no longer is our boss. We are no longer to identify with our old identity but with our new identity in Christ. When we received Jesus we were acquitted from all of our guilt and have the righteousness of Christ. We have His nature.

Because our old self has been put to death we are to obey God by not letting sin reign or have control in our lives. We are responsible to live like liberated children. How do we do this? We are to take control by taking action. Paul goes on to say,

##### Romans 6:13-14

*<sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.*

Sin will not be our master if we refuse to offer our bodies and souls to sin as instruments of wickedness but to God as instruments of righteousness. For this to happen we must exercise self-discipline by stopping what is wrong and doing what is right. We must be obedient to God’s Word. We must learn to consistently make choices to do God’s will and not our own. This means we will put off the attitudes and actions of the old self. Remember that God will empower you to do this. Paul says,

Philippians 2:13

<sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.



**STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD**

Read *Romans 6:11-14* in your Bible. Underline the words and phrases that say the most to you. Then answer the following questions:

- How will you participate with God by putting off the old self?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- List one old attitude or action that you will put off.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Explain how you will do this.



**WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW**

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Romans 6:11*. Write it in the space below.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Memorize the three areas of temptation (*1 John 2:15-16*).
  - Lust of the e\_\_\_\_\_
  - Lust of the f\_\_\_\_\_
  - Boastful p\_\_\_\_\_ \_ \_ \_

# DAY 2: THREE ORIGINS OF TEMPTATION

Why are we so susceptible to temptation? Why is it that our old nature gives us so much trouble? First of all we must remember that every temptation is a temptation not to trust God for His provision and live independently of Him. This was the source of Adam and Eve's temptation in the Garden of Eden and it is the source of all of our temptations. The power behind temptation comes from three primary forces. It is good to know the enemy because we are called to do battle with him. The three primary forces of temptation are:

## THE DEVIL

### His origin

The Devil or Satan as he is often referred to, is the primary power behind all evil. His goal is to tempt us and cause us to sin. He was originally an angel serving God in heaven but something went terribly wrong.

#### Revelation 12:7-9

*<sup>7</sup>And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. <sup>8</sup>But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. <sup>9</sup>The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.*

For a reason that is difficult to understand, Satan led a rebellion against God in heaven. Of course he lost the battle and was tossed out of heaven. He continues this rebellion against God on earth.

### His organization

We do know from Scripture that Satan has a large organization of demons and a hierarchy of power. Paul tells believers to protect themselves with God's armor because,

#### Ephesians 6:12

*<sup>12</sup> ... our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

### His operation

How does Satan operate? In what ways does he use his organization for evil? What are his characteristics and how does he tempt us? Following are some of his characteristics and tactics.

- **He deceives**

From the very beginning in the Garden of Eden Satan's primary tactic was to deceive. He started with Adam and Eve and will try to deceive you as well. Deception is an intentional act with the goal of leading someone away from the truth. Satan used this strategy with Adam and Eve. Paul warns the Christians in Corinth;

#### 2 Corinthians 11:3

*<sup>3</sup>But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.*

- **He lies**

Satan lies because that is his basic nature. A liar is what he is and lying is what he does. Satan represents the opposite of God's truth. Jesus said of Satan,

John 8:44

*<sup>44</sup>...there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

Satan promotes a worldview based on his lies. It is his goal to persuade as many people as possible, including Christians, to believe his worldview.

- **He blinds**

Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers but he can also blind the mind of Christians if they are not careful to know and obey the Word of God. Paul says,

2 Corinthians 4:4

*<sup>4</sup>The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

Think of some of the ways you were blinded from the truth before you had your eyes opened to the truth and received Jesus.



#### **REFLECT AND RESPOND**

Satan wants to deceive us into believing his lies. How have you seen Satan's lies deceive people you know?

- Can you think of any deceptions from Satan that still make their way back into your thinking now that you are a Christian?

- **He masquerades**

Satan often deceives us because he disguises himself. He wears a mask so that his true nature is covered up and he presents himself as being something that he is not.

2 Corinthians 11:14

*<sup>14</sup>And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.*

Satan makes good appear as evil and evil appear as good. (*Isaiah 5:20; 29:16*) For example, false teachers present themselves as being holy and speaking for God but they are really evil, manipulating people for their own gain.



## THE WORLD

Satan and his organization have been given **limited** powers in this world until the end of time on earth. He is called the “*god of this age*” which means he does exert great influence in the world in which we live. As you read earlier, “*The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers,*” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Of course Satan does not have more power than God, but those who follow him have made him their god. Shortly before He left earth Jesus told His disciples;

John 14:30

*<sup>30</sup>I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me,*

Satan’s lies permeate this world. Those who have not yet received Jesus are blinded from knowing the truth and even Christians must be careful not to become part of the thinking of the world. Remember that Satan’s primary goals are to dethrone God, deify himself, and deceive people.



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Can you see Satan’s world system in operation in our country today? How do you see him trying to dethrone God, deify himself, and deceive people?

## OUR SELF

Our own desires are the source of many of our temptations. In day one of this week’s study we discussed how our old self does not go away. That old nature wars against our new nature. Left to our own desires apart from the divine power of Christ in us, we will usually follow our own evil desires rather than what God wants.

### A word of caution

It is good to know about how Satan works, but it is not good to focus on him. I have shared this with you so that you will be alert to his schemes but not overly focused on his darkness. You can trust Scripture when it says that Satan has been defeated in the lives of believers.



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## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week’s assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week’s memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Romans 6:11*. Write it in the space below.

- Memorize the three areas of temptation (*1 John 2:15-16*).
  - Lust of the e\_\_\_\_\_
  - Lust of the f\_\_\_\_\_
  - Boastful p\_\_\_\_\_ \_ \_ \_

# DAY 3: THREE AREAS OF TEMPTATION

Today we will study the three areas of temptation that the Bible mentions. Every temptation you face will fall under one of the following areas given by the Apostle John:

*John 2:15-16 (NAS)*

*<sup>15</sup>Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup>For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.*

## THREE AREAS OF TEMPTATION

The three areas of temptation that you have memorized are the same three areas of temptation that Jesus faced after He had fasted and prayed for forty days in the desert. At a time when He was physically weak Satan approached Jesus and tempted Him to give in to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life. Satan has not changed his tactics and every temptation we face will fall under one of these three broad categories. These are the areas in which we are most vulnerable.

### 1. Lust of the flesh

The NIV version of the bible refers to this as "...the cravings of sinful man..." Lust of the flesh is all inappropriate desires of our body. For example one of the significant temptations of men and women is sex outside of marriage. There are other temptations that would fall under the category of lust of the flesh such as overeating, or an over emphasis on the body of any kind.

### 2. Lust of the eyes

The lust of the eyes means an over emphasis on money and the possessions of this world. There is a constant deluge of advertising that is intent on convincing you that to be happy you must have riches and many possessions. The world says happiness is in how much you possess; that you need it all, you deserve it all, and you need it all now! The world says life is about your pleasure.

### 3. Boastful pride of life

One of the highest values in our culture is the individual and individual rights. Man's value, it seems, is not only in how much he possesses but also in his status and what he accomplishes. You have probably heard the term, "The self-made man". What a lie! We know from Scripture that all man is and all he has comes from the creator of heaven and earth.



## REFLECT AND RESPOND

Think about these three areas of temptation for a moment. Which areas were most troublesome to you before you became a Christian? In which areas do you now face the most temptations?

## 7 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THIS WORLD

From these three areas of temptation come seven basic principles of this world. Many people live their lives and make their choices based on these principles. These are lies that come from Satan, *the father of lies*. When

Satan can deceive people so that they believe these lies, he can control their actions. As you will see, each one of these principles is connected to one or more of the three areas of temptation. With each of the seven principles I will give an example of temptations that you might face.

1. **Sovereignty:** Western Society says you are in control of your own destiny. Life is random and so there is no divine plan or purposes. Life is what you make it. You must awaken your giant within. What you can conceive you can achieve. **(Boastful pride of life)**
  - The temptation to determine your own destiny
  - The temptation to take credit for you own accomplishments
  - The temptation to do things in your own strength
  - The temptation to work out your own problems
  - The temptation not to wait on God for answers to your prayers
  
2. **Truth:** The world says there is no one source of authority for truth. Therefore you may choose your source of authority. Truth is relative, therefore moral choices are based on what you think is right. Tolerance is the highest virtue. **(Boastful pride of life)**
  - The temptation to rely on what you think as your source of authority
  - The temptation to avoid Scripture or change beliefs to match your behavior
  - The temptation to listen to the wisdom of the world rather than God’s wisdom
  - The temptation to rationalize your behavior rather than obey God’s Word
  - The temptation to believe that truth is relative
  
3. **Identity:** You are a self-made person. You are what you do and what you possess. Your significance and value is based upon achievements, status and possessions. **(Boastful Pride of life)**
  - The temptation to take pride in who you are
  - The temptation to measure your value and significance by what you do
  - The temptation to measure your value and significance based on pleasing others
  - The temptation to measure your value based on your possessions
  - The temptation to judge yourself and others based on society ’s standards of status
  
4. **Purpose:** Your purpose in life is to glorify yourself by pursuing your dreams and enjoying life. Pursue only what makes you happy. Lust of the flesh: (sex), Lust of the eyes: (stuff), and the boastful pride of life: (status), is what will make you most happy. **(Lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, boastful pride of life)**
  - The temptation to pursue your dreams rather than God’s purposes for your life
  - The temptation to do what brings pleasure to you rather than God’s glory
  - The temptation to make plans without considering God’s will
  - The temptation to start your days without time alone with God
  - The temptation to not glorify God in your thoughts and all that you do

5. **Needs:** Trust only in yourself. You alone are in charge of your own needs and you can never have enough. You must provide for your own physical, emotional and spiritual needs. **(Lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, boastful pride of life)**

- The temptation to trust in yourself to meet your own needs
- The temptation to fill your emptiness with inappropriate sex
- The temptation to use your resources for yourself rather than for God
- The temptation to depend on others to fill your needs
- The temptation to fill your life with substitutes rather than be filled with God

6. **Treasures:** Store up treasures on earth because there may be no tomorrow. Live for today because eternity is a myth. All that really counts is what happens during my lifetime on earth. You deserve it all and you can have it all—now! **(Lust of the eyes, boastful pride of life)**

- The temptation to accumulate stuff
- The temptation to focus on this life rather than eternal life
- The temptation to lay up treasure on earth rather than in heaven
- The temptation to fill up your life with too much busyness
- The temptation to accumulate wealth rather than pass it on to others

7. **Relationships:** Relationships are for your benefit and to meet your needs. Love and commitment are conditional. When a relationship no longer fulfills my needs, I need to move on. **(Lust of the flesh, boastful pride of life)**

- The temptation to focus on what you need, rather than what others need
- The temptation to define love as a feeling rather than commitment and action
- The temptation to be served rather than serve
- The temptation to not love God with all your heart and others as yourself
- The temptation not to pursue peace and forgiveness at all times

All of these basic principles of this world have a significant impact on how we live and the daily choices we make. It is what we believe that dictates what we do. To change our behavior we must always change the way we think as well.



#### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Take a close look at the seven basic principles of the world. Reflect on each one and do an honest evaluation of your own life. Do you still adhere to some of the beliefs? Are you still tempted in some of these areas? Write down your evaluation of each in the spaces provided.

- Sovereignty:

- Truth:

- Identity:
  
- Purpose:
  
- Needs:
  
- Treasures:
  
- Relationships:
  
- What specific beliefs or actions of the “old self” have you identified that you will “step away” from? What temptations do you face?

This project was to help you see where you still need to grow in these seven areas. Of course you will need to grow in these areas for the rest of your life. There will never be a time when Satan stops tempting us or when we have “arrived” at spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity is a lifelong process. In lesson five of this week you will revisit these seven areas and make some commitments to “step away” from the old self.




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## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week’s assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week’s memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Romans 6:11*. Write it in the space below.
  
- Memorize the three areas of temptation (*1 John 2:15-16*).
  - Lust of the e\_\_\_\_\_
  - Lust of the f\_\_\_\_\_
  - Boastful p\_\_\_\_\_ \_ \_ \_

# DAY 4: THE THREE STAGES OF TEMPTATION

The Bible tells us that there are three distinct stages of temptation that lead to sin. It is important for us to understand these stages so that we can avoid temptation. The book of James helps us deal with these three stages.

## James 1:13-15

<sup>13</sup>When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; <sup>14</sup>but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.

<sup>15</sup>Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

The first thing James says in this passage is that God is never the source of evil. Because God is perfectly holy, He can never be tempted and He Himself will never tempt us (v.13). God may allow us to be tempted or tested for our own good, but He will never Himself tempt us with evil. Satan, the world, and our own desires do a good enough job of that! Following are the three stages of temptation:

## STAGE 1: WE DESIRE

The first stage of temptation is desire. Each person is tempted "by his own evil desire..." (v.14). We have seen how our old self and its evil desires do not go away when we receive Christ. While we are to put these evil desires to death, in reality they are still alive. They can reassert their power if we do not constantly keep them in check. Our desires are dead in the sense that they have been defeated by Christ and only have power over us if we allow them to have power. Remember that we are no longer victims but volunteers if we give in to our evil desires. We start to slip and slide when we allow ourselves to be dragged away by our desires.

### We slip

In the first stage of desire there is always an initial slip when we face temptation. James calls this *being dragged away and enticed*. (v.14) **We allow ourselves to be dragged away and enticed when we make the first compromise.** This slip may consist of listening to a deceiving voice—our own or someone else's. Adam and Eve slipped in the Garden of Eden when they compromised by listening to Satan. (Genesis 1:3-5) If they had watched where they hung out and refused to listen in the first place they would not have given in to their evil desires.

When David, king of Israel, committed adultery with Bathsheba, he compromised by being in a place of vulnerability and looking at her from the roof of his palace when she was taking a bath. He could have walked away, but he slipped when he chose instead to give in to the evil desire of voyeurism. (2 Samuel 11:2)

### We slide

Perhaps you have heard of the classic film, "A Streetcar Called Desire". Well, as you probably are aware, the desire of the flesh is more like a bullet train than a streetcar. When we allow ourselves to slip by giving in to even the slightest compromise, we will slide faster and go further and stay longer than we could ever image. We will wonder, "how did I ever get to this point?" The answer is "I allowed myself to slip and didn't stop the slide".



## REFLECT AND RESPOND

What has been your experience with slipping and sliding? Can you think of an example when a slip took you faster and further and you stayed longer than you could have ever imagined?

### How to stop the slip and slide

There are several steps we can take that will stop the slipping and sliding of this first stage of temptation:

- Desire God more than your own desires

Your relationship with God will bring you far more joy than satisfying your own desires. The Psalmist said,

*Psalms 37:4*

*<sup>4</sup>Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.*

Your own evil desires will always betray you. They will never be satisfied. You will always want more and always feel empty. When you delight yourself in the Lord you will never be disappointed and will always be filled with joy.

- Never give in to the first compromise

The first seemingly innocent compromise is not necessarily a sin but it will almost always start the slide that will result in sin. When we allow our flesh to be enticed in any way it will soon have a powerful hold over us. A friend who was a well-respected Pastor became involved in a long term affair with a woman from his church. When asked what he thought was the primary reason he fell, my friend answered; "When I made that first compromise. I had an internal warning that I did not heed. Because I made that first "minor" compromise, one thing led to another until I was deeply entangled in the web of sin."

The Scripture says to "...*Avoid every kind of evil.*" (1 Thessalonians 5:22) Be on the alert and take action when you first become aware of the potential of temptation.

- Put the desire to death

We need to put the desire to death. This means preparing in advance for temptations we know we will face. Deciding ahead of time what we will do will keep us from that first compromise. In tomorrow's lesson you will learn how to put your desires to death.

## STAGE 2: OUR DESIRE CONCEIVES AND GIVES BIRTH TO SIN

If we allow ourselves to be dragged away and enticed by our evil desires the second stage will give birth to sin. James says, *Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin... (V.5)*

### We fall

When desire takes over, sin is conceived in the mind and carried out in action. Sin is born and we fall. After Adam and Eve compromised by listening to Satan, sin was conceived in their minds when they considered the option to disobey God and eat of the forbidden fruit. Sin was born when they ate the fruit. David

compromised when he did not immediately leave the roof when he saw Bathsheba naked. Sin gave birth when he committed adultery with her and had her husband killed in battle.

If you allow yourself to slip and slide, you will be in a precarious position and probably fall into sin. Stay away from dangerous places. Few can survive the slippery slope of enticement.

- Can you see how slipping and sliding on the slippery slope caused you to fall? Give an example.

### What to do when you fall

Since you are human there will be times when you fall. There are times when even the most mature Christians slip and slide and fall into sin. God knows our weaknesses and will always forgive us. God is a God of unlimited chances because His love for us is unconditional. There are two things to do when you fall.

- Confess your sin  
The first things you need to do when you sin, is to immediately confess your sin to God. To confess means to admit to God what you have done. There is no need to try to cover up your sin or not face God because He already knows what you have done.



### STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD

Read *1 John 1:8-9* in your own Bible. Underline the important words and phrases about confession and write them in the space that follows.

#### 1 John 1:8-9

*<sup>8</sup>If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup>If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

Unconfessed sin breaks fellowship with God. We still have assurance of our salvation, but there are always consequences to unconfessed sin, the greatest of which is losing our intimacy with the Father. Our heavenly Father longs to restore that fellowship with us.

- Repent of your sin  
Sin is serious. Sin grieves the heart of God and it should grieve your own heart. To confess your sins to God and then not repent would make the confession a farce. With confession must come repentance. Repentance involves a change in thoughts and actions. Repentance requires us to obey God.

### STAGE 3: SIN GROWS UP AND GIVES BIRTH TO DEATH

There is a third stage mentioned by James. If we do not confess and repent of our sins they will eventually grow up and cause spiritual death. James says,

#### James 1:15

*<sup>15</sup>Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

## We die

Spiritual death happens when a person continues in sin. Since intimacy with God is broken, the person can no longer be filled with the Spirit. Spiritual darkness comes to the person's soul, mind, will and emotions. The person might be able to fool others for a while, but God is never fooled. The spiritually dead person will only go through the motions of faith.

When sin is fully-grown the conscience is seared. The sin is blocked out of the person's conscience and becomes a normal part of his life. The Bible calls this a stronghold. This stronghold will eventually encompass all of the believer's life.

David is a good example of what happens when sin is allowed to become full-grown. David not only committed adultery, but also sent Bathsheba's husband out to battle where he knew he would be killed. He then took Bathsheba for his own wife. God sent a messenger to David to confront him with his sin. Nathan tried the subtle approach by telling a story that should have convicted David of his sin. When that didn't work Nathan confronted David with God's own words.

### 2 Samuel 12:9

*Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.*



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Can you see how one stage leads to another until there is spiritual death? What is most important for you to remember about this stage?

## What to do when sin is full grown

We can see how David allowed his sin to become full-grown so that it completely seared his conscience. We need to note that if this could happen to a "man after God's own heart" as David is called, it could happen to anyone, including you and me. But God is eager to forgive even full-grown sin. Here is what you are to do if sin becomes full grown:

- Listen and respond to God's rebuke

God will speak to us about our sins but we must listen. God will continue to put pressure on us until we finally listen. We need to confess and repent just as David finally did when he listened to God and responded to His rebuke. This was a sign of true repentance.

*Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." - 2 Samuel 12:13*

- Receive God's forgiveness

Remember that no sin is beyond God's forgiveness. God forgave David of his horrible sin when he truly confessed and repented. God removes the consequences of spiritual death from us and remembers that sin no more.

*Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die." - 2 Samuel 12:13*

While the spiritual consequences of sin are removed in and God remembers our sin no more, the natural consequences are not removed. For example, adultery hits families like a tsunami. It leaves a path of destruction in human relationships that is difficult to restore. We need to take sin seriously!



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Write some brief notes on what is most important for you to remember about each stage.

- Stage 1: Desire
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Stage 2: Birth
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Stage 3: Death



### WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Romans 6:11*. Write it in the space below.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Memorize the three areas of temptation (*1 John 2:15-16*).
  - Lust of the e\_\_\_\_\_
  - Lust of the f\_\_\_\_\_
  - Boastful p\_\_\_\_\_ \_ \_ \_

# DAY 5: PUTTING TO DEATH THE OLD SELF

Now that you understand your old self and how you are tempted, it is time to learn how to put to death the old self. As always, there is God's part and your part. Here is what the Apostle Paul says about putting to death the evil desires or your old self.

## Colossians 3:5-9

<sup>5</sup>Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup>Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. <sup>7</sup>You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. <sup>8</sup>But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. <sup>9</sup>Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices

## OFF WITH THE OLD

To put off your old self and put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature you must do the following four things.

### 1. Define the actions or attitudes that need to be put to death.

First you must be honest with yourself. What areas of temptation are you most vulnerable to? What specific temptation are you facing? What specific attitudes and actions are you now aware of that need to be put off? Later in this lesson you will be given a project where you will write down specific temptations and your plans to put them to death.

- Be on the alert

You cannot relax when it comes to temptation. Just about the time you think you are safe, here comes temptation. Peter says,

## 1 Peter 5:8

<sup>8</sup>Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

The teaching in this week's session has been to prepare you for temptation. However the Word of God is not just to **inform** you but to also **transform** you. The Word of God will **prepare** you in advance for temptation. Jesus said,

## Matthew 26:41

<sup>41</sup>"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

Know yourself and your vulnerabilities well. You may have good intentions but not yet have learned the godly disciplines to prevent yourself from falling into temptation. Be sure to watch and pray. Prayer will release God's power within you and help keep you alert to possible danger.

### 2. Decide to put the evil desire to death.

Notice that Paul says in *Colossians 3:5* to "put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature". Then Paul gets very specific about some of the temptations he knew the believers were facing. Paul wanted the

people to define those temptations and then take responsibility for putting them to death. In others words they were to decide to obey God's Word. Putting to death the old nature always starts with a decision to obey God.

If we do not resolve in our hearts to put the specific temptations of our old natures to death, we will always fail. Just trying to do better is never good enough. We will revert to our old ways. We must have the resolve that Daniel possessed when he was faced with critical decisions in Babylon. Even though Daniel was captive in a foreign land, because he had resolved in advance to obey his God in all things, he avoided being killed and was appointed a top ruler in Babylon.

Daniel 1:8

*<sup>8</sup>But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.*

### 3. Deploy God's Word

We have at our disposal the supernatural power of God to destroy the temptations that we face. We are not asked to do hand to hand combat with the devil. We are told to wage war with the very divine weapons of God.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

*<sup>3</sup>For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup>The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup>We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*



#### STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD

Study 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 carefully and answer the following questions:

- What makes our weapons different from the weapons of the world?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What does Paul say that our weapons have the power to do?

This is great news! We do not have to wage war in our own strength. God has given us His Word to destroy any strongholds that might be present in our lives. His weapons have the divine power to destroy strongholds. A stronghold is a pattern of thoughts and actions that leads to sin. Strongholds from our old self can remain entrenched if God's Word does not target them for destruction.

We have seen how the principles of the world are set up against the knowledge of God. When we have any of these thoughts or principles of the world they must be taken captive and made obedient to God's Word. God's Word will destroy any argument or pretension that sets itself up against who God is and what He says.

God's Word is like a smart bomb. Specific Scriptures can seek and destroy certain temptations or strongholds that persist in your life. You will learn more about how to do this in next week's session.

#### 4. Just do it!

There comes a time when we must put into practice what we have decided to do. Until we have obeyed God, what we say is our "resolve" is merely good intentions. And if you are like me your good intentions don't get you very far. We must trust God enough to do exactly as He says, knowing that it will always be what is best for us. Every act of disobedience is a sin not to trust God and to live independently from Him. What God has for us is always better than what we are trying to get for ourselves by giving in to our evil desires. James says,

James 1:22-25

*<sup>22</sup>Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. <sup>23</sup>Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror <sup>24</sup>and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup>But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.*

The Word of God is not only a weapon that will destroy strongholds; it is also a mirror that shows us where we have gone wrong and how we are to obey. If we do not obey, the temptations will master us instead of us mastering them. However, when we look intently at the Word of God and do not forget what it tells us to do, we will always overcome temptation and put our old nature to death.

### PUTTING TO DEATH THE OLD SELF: A "DEATH ROW" PROJECT

Are you ready for a "death row" project? I hope so for now is the time to practice stepping away from the old self by making some decisions about specific temptations you are currently facing. As the Apostle Paul says, they must be put to death. On day three you completed a project that involved evaluating how the seven principles of the world affect your life. I asked you to be specific and list some temptations that you now face.

Now I want you to refer back to that project and list your three greatest temptations in the space below. Under resolve write down what you have decided to do to execute those temptations. Then write out a short prayer, committing that temptation to God and asking Him for His strength to overcome it.

#### DEATH ROW PROJECT

1. Temptation:

Resolve:

Prayer:

2. Temptation:

Resolve:

Prayer:

3. Temptation:

Resolve:

Prayer:



## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Romans 6:11*. Write it in the space below.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Memorize the three areas of temptation (*1 John 2:15-16*).
  - Lust of the e\_\_\_\_\_
  - Lust of the f\_\_\_\_\_
  - Boastful p\_\_\_\_\_ \_ \_ \_



## TEARS AND CHEERS

At the beginning of each weeks group time you will be given to share what is going on in your life. This is voluntary and you will never be pressured to share if you choose not to. Your group leader will give you the opportunity to share the following:

- **Tears**  
"Tears" represents the burdens, disappointments and other issues you are facing. This will enable you to work through issues with the support of the group and receive encouragement and prayer
  
- **Cheers**  
"Cheers" is the blessing, joys and spiritual progress for which you are thankful. Verbalizing these blessing strengthen you and encourage others.

# WEEK 7

## ON WITH THE NEW SELF

*“We stay in the presence of God when we practice the disciplines of knowing and obeying the Word of God and listening and talking to God in prayer.”*

### INTRODUCTION

Last week you learned about how we are tempted by our own evil desires, the world in which we live and Satan. You gained insight into how to put to death your old nature and its thoughts and actions. This week you will learn some exciting principles that will help you put on the new self. You will see how God has given you the divine power for “everything you need for life and godliness”. You will learn how to be in a position to be filled with God’s Spirit and therefore His power.

One of the greatest challenges new believers face is how to make permanent changes in their old attitudes and actions. During this week’s study you will learn a simple but powerful Biblical strategy for making changes that last a lifetime. What you will learn this week can help keep you on a path of growth for the rest of your life.

### WEEK 7 STUDY

DAY 1: Choosing to Live Above the Line

DAY 2: Filled for the Walk

DAY 3: Putting On the New Self

DAY 4: Destroying Strongholds - Change the Way You Think

DAY 5: Destroying Strongholds - Develop New Actions

### WEEK 7 ASSIGNMENTS

- Memorize *Ephesians 4:22-24*

*Ephesians 4:22-24*

*<sup>22</sup>You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup>to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup>and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

- Memorize how to change your “CD”.

**C**hange your thinking

**D**evelop new actions

- Review all previous memory work assignments on your index cards.
- Prepare your memory/review index card. Write your memory verse on one side and the CD acronym on the other side.

# DAY 1: CHOOSING TO WALK ABOVE THE LINE

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FIRST STEPS

Last week you learned about temptation and how to put off the old self. This week you will learn how to step in the new self. There are some very important steps that you need to take early in your Christian walk that will give you an excellent start on your journey toward spiritual maturity.

### God's part

As you have learned, there is God's part and your part. God will always do His part of empowering you for spiritual growth. Paul assures believers,

*Philippians 1:6*

*being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

### The goal

The good work that God wants to complete in you is to make your character like the character of his Son. The measure of our Christian maturity is always the measure of Christ. Paul says we are to keep growing until,

*Ephesians 4:13*

*<sup>13</sup>... we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

### Your part

The choices you make at the very beginning of your Christian life are critical. If you set your mind to respond to God's invitation to grow, you will experience great joy with a sense of fulfillment. Spiritual growth takes hard work. To grow we need to cooperate with God in what He wants to do in our lives. Paul says,

*Philippians 2:12-13*

*<sup>12</sup>Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed-not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence-continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*

As you can see God works **in** as we work out. God works to accomplish His purposes for us. We are to work out our salvation with diligence. Of course Paul does not mean that we have to work **for** our salvation. As you have seen you have been saved by grace through no effort of your own. But because of grace you are to work out, or grow up in your salvation. Peter says,

*1 Peter 2:2*

*<sup>2</sup>Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,*

## LIFE ABOVE THE LINE

The following illustration will demonstrate how we choose whether we will walk above the line in the Spirit or below the line in the flesh. You will make decisions that will either enable you to walk in the Spirit and live above the line or walk in the flesh, living below the line.

## The line

The line is to show that all Christians chose whether they are going to walk in the Spirit toward maturity in Christ or walk in the flesh. According to George Barna, a well-respected pollster, the average Christian lives below the line and doesn't look much different from the non-believer. When he surveyed the beliefs and behavior of Christians and non-Christians he found them to be about the same. In fact when it came to marriage and divorce he found the divorce rate among believers to be a bit higher than among nonbelievers.

What does this say to the new believer? Beware! Satan would like you to believe that living below the line is the normal Christian life. Nothing could be further from the truth. As a Christian you are called to live above the line in all areas. The Christian character is to be exemplary so that people notice the difference. The Bible says,

### 1 Peter 2:12

*<sup>12</sup>Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

### MEASURE OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST

1. God alone is sovereign
2. The Bible is my sole authority
3. My identity is in Christ alone
4. My purpose is to glorify God
5. God meets all my needs
6. I am a trustee of God's resources
7. My relationships are to bring glory to God

**SPIRIT**

## THE LINE

### MEASURE OF THE FULLNESS OF THE WORLD

1. I alone rule as sovereign
2. I am my own authority
3. I am a self-made person
4. I live to glorify myself
5. I will meet my own needs
6. I desire it all and can have it all
7. Relationships are for my benefit

**FLESH**



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

What do you think of Barna's research? Why do you believe that there is almost no difference between the way that the average Christian and non-believer thinks and behaves?

## The measure

On the right of the illustration there are two measures of Spiritual maturity that you learned about in this study. One represents the measure of Christ and the other the measure of the world. Those who live above the line are growing toward the measure of Christ. Those who live below the line are growing toward the measure of the world.

## Growing up

Growing up means you choose to **live in the Spirit** as you can see from the line that ascends upward toward the measure of Christ. Paul says,

Galatians 5:16

*<sup>16</sup>So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

To live in the Spirit means to live as Jesus did. We are to follow His example and walk in His steps. John says, <sup>6</sup> *“Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did”*. - 1 John 2:6

- The power of growing up

You will notice that at the top of the illustration there is a magnet, which represents the power of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life. You will never be able to live above the line, growing up in Christ on your own. The Holy Spirit supplies you with the power to stay on the upward path toward Spiritual maturity (*Galatians 5:16-26*). It is however, essential that you learn to be in a position to be filled with the Holy Spirit. In tomorrow’s lesson you will learn how to be filled for the walk.

## Growing down

It is impossible to just stay on the line. You will either grow upward toward maturity in Christ or downward toward the standards of the world. Last week we looked at how Satan, the world, and our own evil desires can be a force to pull us down.

- The power of growing down

The magnet at the bottom of the illustration shows how Satan exerts his power to have us grow down so that we walk in the flesh. Living above the line, keeps us away from His power and control. If we live in the Spirit we will not satisfy the desire of the flesh. Satan will have no power over us.

## YOUR CHOICE

It really is your choice whether you will live above or below the line. Spend some time looking at the illustration and then answer the following questions:

- What does this illustration say to me right now about my life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What is the danger for all Christians and how can this danger be overcome?

- What is your choice? What commitments are you willing to make to live above the line?



## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Ephesians 4:22-24*. Write it in the space below.

- Memorize how to change your "CD"

**C**hange your t\_\_\_\_\_

**D**evelop new a\_\_\_\_\_

# DAY 2: FILLED FOR THE WALK

Today I want us to look at the Holy Spirit's role in enabling us to live above the line. As we have seen it is impossible to live above the line on our own strength. It is through the filling and the power of the Holy Spirit that we are able to walk above the line. There are three important things you need to know and do.

## 1. YOU ARE TO BE SANCTIFIED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

When Jesus ascended to heaven the Holy Spirit came to take up residency in our hearts. As Jesus' representative in our lives, two of the primary tasks of the Holy Spirit are to fill us and to sanctify us.

- **Sanctification** is the work that the Holy Spirit does in our lives to transform our character into the image of Christ.

It is the progressive work of making us pure and holy. We need to remember that in our position as a child of God we are pure and holy in His sight. In our practice we have far to go. The Apostle Paul says,

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

*<sup>23</sup>May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.*

### God's part

The greatly respected British theologian John R.W. Stott helps us understand the role of the Holy Spirit in this process of sanctification.

*"Once he has come to us and taken up residence within us, making our body his temple (1 Cor. 6:19-20), his work of sanctification begins. In brief, his ministry is both to reveal Christ to us and to form Christ in us, so that we grow steadily in our knowledge of Christ and in our likeness to Christ. (see, e.g., Eph. 1:1; Gal. 4:19; 2 Cor. 3:18). It is by the power of the indwelling Spirit that the evil desires of our fallen nature are retrained and the good fruit of Christian character is produced" (Gal. 5:16-25). (Baptism & Fullness, John R.W. Stott, InterVarsity Press, 1977, Page 20)*

### Your part

The Holy Spirit's role in sanctification is clearly to make you like Christ, but what is your role? Will the Holy Spirit transform you without your cooperation? The answer to this question is that we are always required to do our part. Progressive sanctification involves mutual cooperation between God and us. We can see an example of this in Paul's instructions to the believers in Thessalonica.

1 Thessalonians 4:3

*<sup>3</sup>It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality;*

We can be sure that God will always do His part. Through His Spirit, God will initiate in you a desire to be made holy. When you respond in obedience to what He shows you, He continues His work of sanctification by making you holy. Your responsibility in cooperating with God is to be in a position to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

## 2. YOU ARE TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

The first way we are to cooperate with God is to be filled with the Spirit. When you placed your faith in Jesus Christ you received the gift of the Holy Spirit. At the moment of your conversion, the Spirit took up permanent residence in your life. However, there is a difference between the Holy Spirit being present in your life and filling your life. We are told that the Holy Spirit is not just to be present in our lives but is to permeate our lives. The Apostle Paul says,

*Ephesians 5:18*

*<sup>18</sup>Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.*

This Scripture does not just suggest that you be filled with the Spirit it commands it. The verb, “be filled” is in the imperative mood meaning that to be filled is not optional. It is required of all Christians. The verb is also in the passive voice meaning literally, “let the Holy Spirit fill you”. This requires you to yield to the Holy Spirit’s work in your life. You are to be open and obedient to what the Spirit says to you about your character. Finally the verb is in the present tense. This means that rather than being filled once and for all the filling is to be present and continuous. There are two important things you must do to be continuously filled by the Holy Spirit.

### **You must position yourself to be filled.**

I want to use the illustration of living above the line again so that you can picture how to be in a position to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

#### MEASURE OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST

1. God alone is sovereign
2. The Bible is my sole authority
3. My identity is in Christ alone
4. My purpose is to glorify God
5. God meets all my needs
6. I am a trustee of God’s resources
7. My relationships are to bring glory to God

THE WORD  
& PRAYER  
JOHN 15:1-7

# SPIRIT

### THE LINE

#### MEASURE OF THE FULLNESS OF THE WORLD

1. I alone rule as sovereign
2. I am my own authority
3. I am a self-made person
4. I live to glorify myself
5. I will meet my own needs
6. I desire it all and can have it all
7. Relationships are for my benefit

# FLESH

There are two primary resources that God uses to fill us with His Spirit. We are to stay connected to Him through His Word and prayer. We stay in the presence of God when we practice the disciplines of knowing and obeying the Word of God and listening and talking to God in prayer. The Bible calls this **remaining** or abiding in Jesus. Jesus said:

John 15:1-5, 7

*<sup>1</sup>"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup>He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. <sup>3</sup>You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. <sup>5</sup>"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing...<sup>7</sup>If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.*



### **STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD**

Look up *John 15:1-5, 7* in your own Bible. Underline the word “remain” every time it appears. What do you think it means to “remain” in Jesus?

It is through this intimate communication of the Word and prayer that you remain in the presence God so that you can be filled with the Holy Spirit. It is through these disciplines that you remain in Jesus. You are then filled so that God can produce in you the fruit of a godly character that results in service to Him.

### **You must prepare your heart to be filled.**

The filling of the Holy Spirit requires more than the practice of the disciplines of the Word and prayer. As important as it is to be disciplined in these two areas, it is even more important to prepare your heart to receive what the Spirit has to say to you. To make the connection and filling complete you must always obey what God says. Jesus said,

John 14:23

*<sup>23</sup>"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."*

If you truly want to be filled with the Holy Spirit you will love and trust God enough to obey His Word. God makes His home in the hearts of people who are prepared for His presence.

### **3. YOU ARE TO INVITE THE HOLY SPIRIT TO “DWELL” IN YOU**

Living above the line means living in the Holy Spirit. When you position yourself to be filled with the Holy Spirit and prepare your heart for His presence, you will give him access to every room in your heart. Paul prayed that the Spirit would dwell in the hearts of the believers at Ephesus.

Ephesians 3:16

*<sup>16</sup>I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.*

Paul knew that for the believers to be filled with the Spirit, Christ must dwell in their hearts. The word in the Greek rendered “dwell” denotes permanent residency with full access to the whole house with no restrictions. God does not want to be treated like a guest who has limited access to your life. His Spirit wants to dwell in every room. It makes sense that it is only when the Spirit has full access to your hearts that you can be filled by the Spirit.



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

In His classic book *My Heart Christ's Home*, Robert Boyd Munger vividly portrays the heart as a home with rooms that the Holy Spirit wants to fill. I want you to look at each of these rooms and ask yourself, “Am I willing to give the Holy Spirit full access to all of these rooms?”

Write your response in the space provided.

#### 1. The study

The study represents your mind. It is the room in the house where a file of your attitudes, thoughts and beliefs are kept. Are you developing the pure mind of Christ or is your mind contaminated by impure or incorrect thoughts?

- My response

#### 2. The dining room

This is the room where you satisfy your desires. Do you seek the spiritual food of knowing and doing God's will or do you pursue your own selfish interests?

- My response

#### 3. The living room

This room is reserved for fellowship with Christ in His Word and prayer. Are you learning to faithfully keep your appointments with Jesus or do you allow your busy schedule and other priorities to keep you from this room of intimate fellowship?

- My response

**4. The workroom**

This room represents your service for God. Do you rely on your own efforts or are you learning to depend on God's power, allowing Him to work through you?

- My response

**5. The recreation room**

This is a room where you go for fun and fellowship. Are your activities and relationships pure and holy or do you compromise your walk with questionable activities and relationships?

- My response

**6. The bedroom**

This room represents your marriage relationship or your moral purity if you are not married. Is this room completely pure and holy? Are your marriage and other relationships beyond reproach?

- My response

**7. The family room**

This room is where you make time for people. Does your life have enough margins so that you can take time for your family and other relationships within the Body of Christ and community?

- My response

**8. The hall closet**

This is the room where you keep the secrets of your life locked up. Have you given Jesus the key so He can clean out the closet or does it remain an area of your life that is off limits to God?

- My response

- What one room do you most need to give the Holy Spirit full access to? What action are you willing to take right now?



## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Ephesians 4:22-24*. Write it in the space below.

- Memorize how to change your "CD"

**C**hange your t\_\_\_\_\_

**D**evelop new a\_\_\_\_\_

## DAY 3: PUTTING ON THE NEW SELF

Being filled with the Spirit is the essential first step to putting on the new self. Without the filling and empowerment of the Holy Spirit you will not be able to resist temptation by putting off the old self and putting on the new self. If you ask God to fill you with his Spirit and allow Him to dwell in every part of your life you will be successful in putting on the new self. The Apostle Paul tells us how this is to be done.

### Ephesians 4:22-24

*<sup>22</sup>You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup>to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup>and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

### YOU PUT OFF THE OLD SELF

You learned last week what it meant to put off your old self with its evil desires. It involves believing that you have become partakers of Christ's death and the joy of having been acquitted from **all** of your guilt. God remembers your sins no more. You are declared "not guilty" and have been set free. You are no longer under the reign of sin. You have been raised to a new life in Christ. Randy Travis has a wonderful song that paints a vivid portrait of what happens. God transforms us at the moment of our new birth in Christ. Picture the scene of a young man chest deep in the water of an east Texas river. On the shore are this man's mother and father and a few people from the church to witness the baptism. The chorus goes,

*And it was down with the old man, up with the new.  
Raised to walk in the way of light and truth.  
I didn't see no angels, just a few saints on the shore.  
But I felt like a newborn baby, cradled in the arms of the Lord.*

There is no clearer picture than baptism to help us understand "down with the old man and up with the new", that Randy Travis sings about in this song. Paul describes what happens in baptism.

### Romans 6:1-7

*<sup>1</sup>What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup>By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? <sup>3</sup>Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. <sup>6</sup>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 — <sup>7</sup>because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.*

This beautiful picture of what happens when we are reborn through the Spirit is complete. We were baptized into Christ's death. He died for us so we could die to our old self. This happened so we could be raised with Him to a new life—a new self that no longer has sin as its basic nature.

## YOU PUT ON THE NEW SELF

We are reborn in the Spirit of God into an intimate relationship with God where sin longer appeals to us as it once did. We have the life of our risen Lord and therefore we have His righteousness. Since we have died to our old self and have been given a new self we are to put on the new self by setting our hearts and minds on the things of God. Paul says,

### Colossians 3:1-3

*<sup>1</sup>Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. <sup>3</sup>For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*

Something must take the place of what you have taken off. Simply making a decision **not** to do something is not enough. This decision gives you a good start, but the place of that old thought and action must be filled by a new thought and action. The Apostle Paul gives the solution.

### Ephesians 4:22-24

*<sup>22</sup>You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup>to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup>and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

## YOU DEVELOP A NEW ATTITUDE

Putting on the new self and living for Jesus is the most important attitude for you to develop. Before you were a believer you lived for yourself, independent of God. Your thoughts were self-centered rather than God centered. Because you held to the seven basic principles of the world you were alienated from God in your thoughts and actions. Now you are to have a new attitude. It starts with your mind—the way you think. Paul says,

### Colossians 1:21

*<sup>21</sup>Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.*

Because our old way of thinking alienated us from God, He gave us a new mind—a new way of thinking. Paul reminds the believers at Corinth,

### 1 Corinthians 2:16

*<sup>16</sup>“For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.*

This new way of thinking comes directly from God’s Word, but it is obvious we do not think like Christ immediately upon becoming a believer. We are to be made new in the attitude of your minds; (*Ephesians 4:23*). This happens as we study the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit changes our thoughts and attitudes. God’s Word is called the “...sword of the Spirit...” (*Ephesians 6:17*). As the sword of the Spirit operates on our minds, the old cancerous thoughts are cut away and in their place are the new thoughts and attitudes of the Spirit. The writer of Hebrews says,

Hebrews 4:12

*<sup>12</sup>For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

## HOW TO PUT ON THE NEW SELF

With this new attitude you are ready to put on the new self. It replaces the old self because it is created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. That's quite a statement. We were not created to be clothed in the old self-but to put on the new self which is to be like God. God's divine nature is to live within us so we think and act like Christ. This happens through a process the Bible calls renewal. This process will be a part of our spiritual growth until the day we enter heaven. Paul says,

Romans 12:2

*<sup>2</sup>Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

We put on the new self when we allow our thoughts and attitudes to be made new as we learn and obey Scripture. There is no other way this will happen. That is why reading, studying, memorizing and meditating on Scripture is essential to spiritual growth.

## PUTTING ON THE NEW SELF: 7 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE WORD

For the rest of this session I want you to work at putting on the new self. In day three of week six you learned how the 7 principles of the world tempt us. You did a project to put off some of those temptations. Today you will learn how to replace those 7 principles of the world by putting on the 7 basic principles of the Word.

## NEW SELF PROJECT

Each of the 7 basic principles is a basic foundational belief that can serve as an anchor for your life. Each belief starts with a definition followed by a truth from the Bible. Read and reflect on both of these and then under action write what you will do in response to this truth. By committing to this truth and action you will practice putting on the new self.

### 1. Sovereignty

God alone is sovereign, all powerful and has absolute rule over everything that exists. Since He created all, he owns all. Nothing happens in heaven or on earth without His permission or initiative. Therefore, I will put my complete trust in His plans for the world and for my life.

- God's truth

Daniel 4:34-35

*<sup>34</sup>His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. <sup>35</sup>All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"*

- My action

## 2. Truth

The Bible is the actual words of God. Therefore my sole authority for all that I think and do is the Bible. The Bible will be my guide for life. I commit myself to obeying God's Word in all things.

- God's truth

### 2 Peter 1:20-21

<sup>20</sup>Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup>For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

- My action

## 3. Identity

My identity, significance and value is in God alone as a deeply loved child of my heavenly Father. I will not depend on status, possessions, achievements, or other peoples' opinions of me to determine my value.

- God's truth

### Ephesians 1:4-5

<sup>4</sup>For he choose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he <sup>5</sup>predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-

- My action

## 4. Purpose

My primary purpose in life is to glorify God in all my thoughts and actions. God has specific purpose and plans for me so that I will glorify Him by carrying out His mission on earth.

- God's truth

### 1 Peter 2:9

<sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

- My action

## 5. Needs

I have complete faith in the character of God and therefore I will be completely dependent on Him for all of my needs. He will never fail nor forsake me and will always supply my basic needs.

- God's truth

Mark 11:22-24

*<sup>22</sup>"Have faith in God," Jesus answered. <sup>23</sup>"I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. <sup>24</sup>Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.*

- My action

## 6. Treasures

God is the owner and supplier of all that there is. Therefore, I will be a faithful trustee of all that He has entrusted to me. I will use my spiritual, physical and emotional resources for His kingdom.

- God's truth

Matthew 6:19-21

*<sup>19</sup>"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup>But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

- My action

## 7. Relationships

All my relationships are to bring glory to God. I acknowledge that love is a decision, a commitment and action. I will lay down my life in love for others just as Christ laid down His life in love for me.

- God's truth

1 John 3:16-17

<sup>16</sup>This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. <sup>17</sup>If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?

- My action



## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Ephesians 4:22-24*. Write it in the space below.
  
- Memorize how to change your "CD"

**C**hange your t\_\_\_\_\_

**D**evelop new a\_\_\_\_\_

# DAY 4: DESTROYING STRONGHOLDS

## CHANGE THE WAY YOU THINK

### THE PROBLEM OF CHANGE

For two weeks we have been discussing change. Any kind of change is difficult, but permanent change sometimes seems almost impossible. For example, how many times have you tried to lose weight or establish a permanent exercise program? Or perhaps you have tried to give up a habit that you know is hurting you. Maybe you have tried to change an attitude that you know is wrong. Over the years I have made many “decisions” to change and eventually ended up at the same place I started. One of my daughters once said to me, “Dad, you have lost that same thirty pounds at least thirty times!” She was absolutely right. We all face two major issues when we try to change:

#### 1. The issue of resistance

What is it that makes permanent change so difficult? One reason is that when we form bad habits we often follow the path of least resistance. In other words, we give in to our own vulnerabilities, needs and weaknesses. When we try to change we are called on to follow the path of most resistance. We fail to recognize that there will be a powerful force working against that change. That force will always be trying to lead us back to those former ways that were so much a “normal” part of our life.

#### 2. The issue of how we change

I believe that most of us are very sincere when we try to make changes. We have good intentions. The problem is that we sincerely try to change in the same old ways. We seldom look carefully at the way we are trying to change. Because we try to change in the same way that we have proven beyond a doubt does not work, we end up with the same results. Failure! There is a saying that goes something like this,

*If you always do what you've always done,  
You'll always get what you've always got.*

The grammar in this saying isn't great but I'm sure you get the point. If you always try to change in the same old way that you have proved doesn't work for you, you will always get the same result. You will eventually revert back to your old behavior.



#### REFLECT AND RESPOND

What has been your experience in trying to change? What successes and failures have you experienced?

### CHANGE YOUR “CD”

Imagine for a moment that you have a CD player and want to change the music. You are tired of the same old songs that have been playing and you want to hear something new. Let's say you take out the CD, look at it and put it back in your CD player. What will happen? You will hear the same old song. Nothing will

change. No matter how good your intentions are—no matter how much you say you want to change the music, until you insert a different CD you will get the same results. There will be no change.

In very much the same way you will not be able to make permanent changes in your life until you learn to insert a new CD into your life. The CD you insert consists of two essential components of change. You have used these two Biblical principles before in this study but here you will learn the CD as an acronym to help you remember and use these two components for the rest of your life.

### **Two components of change: You can't have one without the other!**

**C**hange your thinking

**D**evelop new actions

To make changes that last a lifetime you must change the way you think as well as the way you act. This is where most people get off track. They focus on the behavior without giving proper consideration to how they think.

- ❖ Actions changed because of good intentions or external pressure, when not accompanied by a change in thinking, will almost always revert back to the previous state.

To put off the old self and put on the new self, these two disciplines must be practiced. The Bible tells us how to do this.

#### 1 Peter 1:13-15

*<sup>13</sup>Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. <sup>14</sup>As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. <sup>15</sup>But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;*

### **Truth and action**

To be holy or Christ-like is the goal God has for all Christians, we must "...prepare our minds for action..." (1 Peter 1:13). Our minds are prepared when we know the truth of God's Word. This allows us to think differently. We become new in the attitude of our minds when we are able to think the thoughts of God (Ephesians 4:23). When we know what God has to say about a situation we will be prepared to develop new actions. We are to prepare our minds so that we can make permanent changes and "...be self-controlled..." (1 Peter 1:13). Truth and action will always lead us to truth in action. The Bible always links the two together. John gives the following example:

#### 1 John 3:16-18 (Bold added)

*<sup>16</sup>This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. <sup>17</sup>If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? <sup>18</sup>Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with **actions and in truth.***

Notice that this passage contains both truth and action. Believers are urged to insert a new CD. They are to think differently (know the truth about God's love) and develop new actions. Look up this passage in your Bible and underline the key words "actions and truth."



- **False belief**

The person intentionally hurt me. They don't deserve to be forgiven. They need to pay for what they have done to me.

## 2. **The smart bomb (Divine weapon)**

It is now time for you to take the second step in the process of change. You have defined your target by specifically naming the wrong action you want to change and the false belief behind it. First you must learn to change your thinking by learning God's truth about your action. This means finding what God has to say about your action. The **smart bomb** is a specific Scripture that will seek out and destroy your false belief and replace it with the truth. This smart bomb is the divine weapon that God has given all Christians to destroy strongholds in their lives. Paul explains how the smart bomb works.

### 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

*<sup>3</sup>For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup>The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup>We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*



### **STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD**

Look up 2 *Corinthians* 10:3-5 in your own Bible and underline words that have to do with the divine weapons that will demolish strongholds. How do you feel about having these weapons available for your use?

A stronghold is a sin that has a strong hold on us. It is a sin that will keep us from being all that God wants us to be. It is a belief and behavior that will rob us of our Christian joy and prevent us from becoming mature in Christ. Paul uses the word stronghold to describe the fortress of false beliefs that Satan builds in our minds that results in sinful behavior. Notice that God has given us a solution to the persistent sins in our lives. We have the weapon of the Word of God that will destroy these strongholds. When the Word hits the target of our false beliefs it destroys those lies and replaces them with the truth of God.

It is now time to discover and use your smart bomb. I want you to find the **truth of God** to destroy the false belief that has led to your wrong action. This will involve finding and memorizing a verse or verses from the Bible. I know this might be difficult because you may be a new believer with limited knowledge of Scripture. Since you will probably be going through this study with a more mature Christian or in a group, you may want to call your mentor or group leader for help in finding just the right Scripture. But first try to find one on your own. This will be good practice. A Study Bible will help you. In the back you will find a concordance with topics in alphabetical order. You can look up such things as "forgiveness" and "lust" and find Scriptures relating to those topics. Select one of these Scriptures for your **smart bomb** and write it the space that follows. On day 5 you will finish the project by developing new actions.

### **Change your thinking (God's truth)**

## EXAMPLES

Following is an example of how you might do this if the wrong action and false belief was one of the two areas mentioned above.

- **Target**  
Sin of lust, viewing porn sites on the computer and or other provocative material.

- **Change your thinking (God's truth)**

Ephesians 5:3

*<sup>3</sup>But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.*

- **Target**  
Unforgiving attitude toward a brother who has been insensitive. Change your thinking (God's truth)

Ephesians 4:32

*<sup>32</sup>Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

### Practice-practice-practice

Memorize the verse or verses you have chosen. Review the verse at least once a day. Make this verse a permanent part of your thinking. Changing the way you think is a huge step in overcoming any stronghold or persistent sin.



## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Ephesians 4:22-24*. Write it in the space below.

- Memorize how to change your "CD"

**C**hange your t\_\_\_\_\_

**D**evelop new a\_\_\_\_\_

# DAY 5: DESTROYING STRONGHOLDS

## DEVELOP NEW ACTIONS

Today we will focus on how to use the second part of your CD. As you have seen it takes both changing the way you think and developing new actions to completely destroy strongholds and make permanent changes.

### CHANGE YOUR CD

**C**hange your thinking

**D**evelop new actions

### DESTROY GENERATIONAL STRONGHOLDS

I want to revisit the problem of strongholds once more. We saw in yesterday's lesson that strongholds consist of a fortress of lies that holds us captive. The result of believing these lies is that we become slaves to certain sins that prevent us from becoming spiritually mature.

#### **The sins of the fathers**

Sometimes these strongholds are passed on from generation to generation. The Bible refers to this dynamic as the "sins of the fathers." The second of the Ten Commandments says,

*Exodus 20:4-6*

*<sup>4</sup>"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. <sup>5</sup>You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup>but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

The worst possible sin is to insult God by replacing Him with other gods. How do we do this? This happens when we make other things more important than our relationship with Him. When we start looking to something or someone other than God to meet our needs they replace God in our lives. They become our idols. When people begin to believe the lie that they can have greater significance apart from God they have replaced Him with an idol. This is exactly what happened to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

#### **The sins visit the children**

The consequences of these sins are felt for generations to come. Sin always has its consequences. Adam and Eve discovered this when they were expelled from the Garden of Eden. The Israelites found this out when because of their disobedience and idolatry they were taken captive in Babylon. There are not only national consequences but there are personal consequences as well. Children learn most of their beliefs from their parents. Children are also great imitators of their parents. Therefore we can see patterns of strongholds being visited on generation after generation in families.

The sins of the parents don't cause their offspring to sin, but those beliefs and behaviors cause future generations to have vulnerabilities to certain kinds of sins. From over thirty years of counseling I have observed the following. Much of this is backed up by research:

- Children of alcoholics are more likely to become alcoholics.
- Children who have been abused are more likely to become abusers.
- Children of divorce are more likely to be divorced.
- Children of parents who have committed adultery are more likely to commit adultery.

We see an example of generational strongholds in the lives of Abraham and Isaac. Abraham, although He was promised by God to become a *great nation* (*Genesis 12:2*), failed to trust God to provide for him when he felt threatened. Because of a famine, Abraham moved to Egypt where there was more food. Listen to what he says to his wife, as they are about to enter that country.

*Genesis 12:11-13*

<sup>11</sup>As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know what a beautiful woman you are. <sup>12</sup>When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live. <sup>13</sup>Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you."

Abraham thought God needed some help to protect him, so he gives in to temptation and constructs an elaborate lie. As a result of Abraham's lack of trust, Sarai is taken by Pharaoh to his palace—with her husband's consent! Now let's fast forward through the years and see how the sin of the father is visited on the next generation. Abraham died and his son Isaac traveled to Philistia because of a famine. Listen to the eerie similarities between the beliefs and behaviors of the father and son. In a similar situation Isaac repeats the sin of his father:

*Genesis 26:7*

<sup>7</sup>When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, "She is my sister," because he was afraid to say, "She is my wife." He thought, "The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful."

We have here an account of almost the exact circumstances with the same disastrous results. Isaac did not **have** to repeat the sins of his father but he **chose** to. It is obvious that Isaac had absorbed the false beliefs that led to the sinful actions of his father Abraham.

**Patterns of beliefs and behaviors**

Why does this happen? Is there some kind of "sin gene" that is passed on from the parents? I believe that the major contributing factor in generational strongholds is that the children learn the thought patterns of their parents, which led many to commit the same acts. If you came from an unbelieving family or an emotionally or spiritually unhealthy family, be on the alert for patterns of beliefs or behaviors that you learned that still have you enslaved. Remember that some of these patterns became a natural part of the way you thought as a child. We can discover these lies and replace them with the truth.

**How to destroy generational strongholds**

Generational strongholds are destroyed in the same way that other strongholds are destroyed. They may be more deeply entrenched so you may have to deploy the divine weapons even more diligently. The smart bombs of the Scripture will need to be deployed consistently, day after day.

The Word of God is always to be deployed in the power of prayer. Not only do we need to memorize and meditate on Scripture, we are to pray in faith that the stronghold will be destroyed. This further releases

God's power in our lives. If a stronghold persists the discipline of fasting and prayer may need to be added. When Jesus' disciples asked Jesus why they could not cast an evil spirit out of a boy, Jesus replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer". (Mark 9:29) Be sure you ask for prayer, support and accountability from mature brothers and sisters in Christ for any ongoing struggle with strongholds.



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Are there any strongholds in your life that you suspect may have their origin through patterns and behaviors of your family? What are these specific beliefs and behaviors?

## OBEDIENCE: THE EVIDENCE OF A CHANGE IN THINKING

There is only one accurate way of knowing if you have really changed the way you think. That evidence is obedience. A true change of thinking will always lead to being obedient to the Word of God. It shows that we know and love God and accept His truth. Jesus said,

John 15:9-10

*<sup>9</sup>As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.*



### STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD

Look up *John 15:9-10* in your own Bible. Underline words and phrases that indicate obedience is proof that your thinking has changed. In what ways do your actions show that your thinking has changed?

Throughout the Bible obedience is emphasized. If we fail at the point of obedience we will fail to grow in Christ.

### Obedience will always bring us joy

The Bible makes it abundantly clear that when God asks us to do something it is for our good. We can be 100% certain that obeying God will result in joy and peace in our lives. Remember that every act of disobedience is a sign that we do not trust God. Therefore every act of obedience is a sign that we do trust God. Sin is often born of a belief that we must go outside of God's provisions to ensure our happiness. Nothing is further from the truth. John refutes this argument.

1 John 5:3

*<sup>3</sup>This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,*

When Jesus emphasized the essential nature of obedience to His disciples, in *John 15:9-11* He went on to say how He wanted them to obey so they could have complete joy:

John 15:11

*<sup>11</sup>I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

### **The key to obedience is action**

The well-worn Nike commercial says, "Just do it!" That is not bad advice when it comes to developing new actions. We must not only decide in our minds what we are going to do, but also put those plans into action. I want to conclude this week's session by having you practice developing new actions. In day four you chose a target to demolish. You took the first step by discovering a false belief and by changing your thinking by replacing it with truth of God.

Now it is time to finish changing your CD by developing new actions. I want you to refer back to the work you did in day four. Write your target or stronghold (what you want to change) in the space provided. Next write the first part of your CD—God's truth that will change your thinking. Next complete your CD by developing at least one new action. This will be your commitment to obey God's truth.

Before you start this final project for the week I want to give you a couple of examples of how to do this using the examples from day four.

- **Target**

Sin of lust, viewing porn sites on the computer and other provocative or erotic material. Change your thinking (God's truth)

Ephesians 5:3

*<sup>3</sup>But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people*

### **Develop new actions (Obey God's truth)**

*Lord I ask your forgiveness for my sin of lust. I make a commitment to you this day to never again visit a porn site on my computer or view any kind of sexually provocative material. I will be accountable to Jim for this commitment.*

- **Target**

Unforgiving attitude toward a brother who has been insensitive. Change your thinking (God's truth)

Ephesians 4:32

*<sup>32</sup>Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you*

### **Develop new actions (Obey God's truth)**

*Lord, I make a commitment today to forgive Bob for his lack of concern for my situation. I will call him tomorrow to make an appointment to ask forgiveness for my bitterness. I will make every effort to make peace with Bob.*

## PROJECT: CHANGE YOUR CD

Now it is time to practice changing your own CD. Write out your target, change of thinking, and new actions.

- **Target (stronghold)**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **C hange your thinking**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **D evelop new actions**

## CONCLUSION

I know that changing your CD to destroy strongholds is very difficult. There may be some of you who have strongholds that are so strong that you will need help overcoming them. These strongholds can have an addictive component that makes them extremely difficult to destroy on your own. Therefore you will need someone to come along side of you for prayer, encouragement and accountability. Perhaps it will be the Mentor who is leading you through this study. There are two important Scriptures that demonstrate how we are to help one another overcome persistent sins and strongholds

### James 5:16

*<sup>16</sup>Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*

### Hebrews 3:13

*<sup>13</sup>But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.*



## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Ephesians 4:22-24*. Write it in the space below.

- Memorize how to change your “CD”

**C**hange your t\_\_\_\_\_

**D**evelop new a\_\_\_\_\_



## TEARS AND CHEERS

At the beginning of each weeks group session you will be an opportunity to share what is going on in your life. This is voluntary and you will never be pressured to share if you choose not to. Your group leader will give you the opportunity to share the following:

- **Tears**  
“Tears” represents the burdens, disappointments and other issues you are facing. This will enable you to work through issues with the support of the group and receive encouragement and prayer
- **Cheers**  
“Cheers” is the blessing, joys and spiritual progress for which you are thankful. Verbalizing these blessing strengthen you and encourage others.

# WEEK 8

## A NEW PURPOSE AND NEW PRIORITIES

*“When God chose you to be adopted into His family, He gave you the honor of representing Him to the world. Your purpose on earth became to declare His praises.”*

### INTRODUCTION

This week you will learn some valuable insights into how to step in new priorities now that you have a new life. Your old priority system must be replaced by one that will glorify God at all times. Our priorities in life are made up of what is most important to us. They are our true values. We make decisions and allocate our resources of time, money, and talent based on these priorities. This week you will learn five general principles that govern how to use the resources God has given you. These principles will help you set priorities that will glorify God.

### WEEK 8 STUDY

DAY 1: Life with a New Purpose

DAY 2: Life As a Trustee of God’s Resources

DAY 3: The New Priorities of Treasure

PART 1—The Problem of Treasure

DAY 4: Practicing New Priorities of Treasure

PART 2—The Potential of Treasure

DAY 5: Practicing the New Priorities of Time and Talent

### WEEK 8 ASSIGNMENTS:

- Memorize and meditate on *1 Peter 2:9*

*1 Peter 2:9*

*“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”*

- Memorize the five principles of a trustee
  - God owns it all
  - God has made us trustees of it all
  - Invest it all for God
  - Believe and practice the law of the harvest
  - Keep an eternal perspective
- Review all previous memory work on previous week’s index cards.
- Prepare your memory/review index card. Write your memory verse on one side and the five principles of a trustee on the others side.

# DAY 1: LIFE WITH A NEW PURPOSE

Now that you have a new self, you have a new purpose in life. The old self had at its center, living for self. Whether we want to admit it or not, before we were adopted by the heavenly Father our purpose in life was to glorify ourselves. Our resources were directed toward what we thought would bring us fulfillment. Of course this never works because self-glory never completely satisfies. Our heavenly Father has designed us with a God shaped vacuum in our souls that can only be filled with Him. When our purpose in life is self-glory, we will always come up empty. We will always yearn for more because it is only in living for God's glory that we will be truly fulfilled.

## CREATED FOR HIS GLORY

The sovereign creator of the universe included you in his purposes and plans. Your primary purpose on this earth is to glorify God in all that you are and all that you do. It is for this purpose you were created. Through the prophet Isaiah God said,

Isaiah 43:7

*<sup>7</sup>everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."*

God indeed formed you and made you for His glory. This means that His plan for you has always been for you to bring Him glory. Your purpose on earth is to glorify God by bringing honor to His name in every aspect of your life.

## You will experience joy

It is when you exalt and praise God with your lips and with your life, that you will experience the most joy and fulfillment in your life. David experienced this in his life. He said,

Psalms 16:8-11

*<sup>8</sup>I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. <sup>9</sup>Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, <sup>10</sup>because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. <sup>11</sup>You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

There is a direct correlation in your life; the more you bring glory to God the greater your joy. The more you bring honor to God the greater your own pleasure. Honoring God brings you into direct contact with His greatest blessings for your life. You were not only created for His pleasure, but to experience pleasure through your relationship with Him.

## You are chosen to declare His praises

When God chose you to be adopted into His family, He gave you the honor of representing Him to the world. Your purpose on earth became to declare His praises. Peter said,

1 Peter 2:9

*<sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

The Bible reveals many different ways that we are to declare God's praises. Today we will look at four ways that we are to bring glory to God.

## GLORY THROUGH YOUR LIPS

First we are told to bring glory to God with our voices. The Psalmist says,

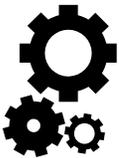
*Psalms 34:1*

*<sup>1</sup>I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.*

This verse means that you should always be in a spirit of praise. Of course it would be impossible to praise God every moment of the day, but you should have a spirit of praise. This means that you should be constantly aware of who God is and what He does. You should continually praise God in your mind and with your lips. The writer of Hebrews says,

*Hebrews 13:15*

*<sup>15</sup>Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name.*



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Start each day with a time of praise. Include praise in your daily appointment with God. You can learn to praise God effectively by selecting a Psalm as your model. I want you to try this now. Look up *Psalm 100* in your Bible and pray this passage aloud to God as your own praise prayer.

## GLORY THROUGH YOUR CHARACTER

Your character is the sum total of who you are, demonstrated by your attitude and actions. You are to have a godly character meaning that you are to live your life in accordance with God's Word. You are to reflect the character of God. God's Word says,

*1 Peter 1:15-16*

*<sup>15</sup>But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; <sup>16</sup>for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."*

When we live a holy life it brings glory to God. By our attitudes and actions we honor God's name and enhance His reputation among those who do not know Him. The Apostle Paul prayed that Christians at Philippi would honor God by reflecting his character.

*Philippians 1:9-11*

*<sup>9</sup>And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, <sup>10</sup>so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup>filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.*



## STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD

Look up *Philippians 1:9-11* in your own Bible. Underline the words and phrases that show where righteousness comes from and then answer the questions that follow:

- In *Philippians 1:11*, what is righteousness called?
- Where does Paul say that righteousness comes from?
- What does the fruit of righteousness bring to God?

Your righteousness or character is a fruit that is a result of being connected to Jesus and His Word. (*John 15:1-5, 7*) It comes directly from God. Your character then becomes a praise offering to God. You bring glory to Him by the way you live your life.



## REFLECT AND RESPOND

What aspect of your character do you believe brings glory to God?

What aspect of your character do you believe does not bring glory to God?

## GLORY THROUGH YOUR SERVICE

God is also glorified by the way you serve Him. Jesus brought glory to His Father by being a servant. We also bring glory to God by being servants and accomplishing the work God has designed for us to do. Paul said, "*Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God.*" (*Romans 15:17*). Whatever we do for God in His name brings glory to Him. We honor God by completing the tasks He has for us. God has something for us to do each day. We need to remember that even the simplest acts of service bring glory to God. The writer of Hebrews reminds us,

*Hebrews 13:16*

<sup>16</sup>*And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*



## REFLECT AND RESPOND

Had you ever thought about your seemingly insignificant acts of service for others as bringing glory to God? How are you currently glorifying God through your service? In what way do you think God wants you to grow in this area?

## GLORY THROUGH YOUR CHOICES

Your life is full of many choices. The choices you make each day can either bring glory to God or glory to yourself. Those individual choices indicate your values in life. They are a clear sign of what you think is important. In the choices you make you should ask yourself the question, "Will this choice bring glory to God?" The Apostle Paul challenged the Christians in Corinth to do this. He said,

1 Corinthians 10:31

*<sup>31</sup>So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

Some of the choices Paul was referring to here were neither right nor wrong. But Paul was challenging these people to walk on higher ground. He did not want them to merely ask, "Is this right or wrong?" but rather, "Will my choice bring glory to God?" Each of us needs to ask himself the same question: "Are the choices I am making bringing glory to God?"



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Have you ever thought about how your choices bring glory to God? Think through some of your recent choices. Did they bring glory to God? Are there any things you need to do differently to bring glory to God in all of your choices?



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### WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *1 Peter 2:9*. Write it in the space below.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Memorize the five principles of a trustee.
  - God o\_\_\_\_\_ it all
  - God has made us t\_\_\_\_\_ of it all
  - I\_\_\_\_\_ it all for God
  - Believe and practice the l\_\_\_\_ o\_\_ t\_\_\_\_ h\_\_\_\_\_
  - Keep an e\_\_\_\_\_ p\_\_\_\_\_

## DAY 2: LIFE AS A TRUSTEE OF GOD'S RESOURCES

Now that we have established that our primary purpose in life is to glorify God, we will see how to do this as managers of all the resources He has entrusted to us. Today we will look at some general principles of what it means to be a trustee of God's resources. These principles will serve as a foundation for the rest of this week.

### GOD OWNS IT ALL

In our culture much is made of the person who starts with "nothing" and acquires great wealth. While we can certainly admire the person who works hard, is creative and invests well, there is a false belief system at work here. Everything that exists came from nothing at the hand of our creator God. Every human or physical resource comes from His hand. God owns it all! There is no such thing as a "self-made man" or "self-made riches." The creator of all is the giver of all. That includes even what seem to be our personal abilities. For thousands of years people have wanted to turn the things of God upside down. God said through the prophet Isaiah,

Isaiah 29:16

*<sup>16</sup>You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, "He did not make me"? Can the pot say of the potter, "He knows nothing"?*

### God owns the earth

The creator of heaven and earth owns what He has made. The Psalmist says,

Psalms 24:1

*<sup>1</sup>The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;*

The first step in learning to be a faithful trustee is to believe this truth and put it into action. Acknowledging that God is the owner of all, even our ability to produce wealth, will cause us to reject the common wisdom of the world that says man produces and owns all. God's Word cautions,

Deuteronomy 8:18

*<sup>18</sup>But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth...*

When you embrace the uncommon wisdom of God that says that all is His, you will always look at what you possess differently. You will see all resources through God's eyes as simply entrusted to you to accomplish His purposes. You will see every blessing as coming from God's hand and to be used as an extension of His hand in this world. Then you will be able to praise God as the Psalmist did when he said,

Psalms 115:15-16

*<sup>15</sup>May you be blessed by the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. <sup>16</sup>The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has given to man.*

## GOD HAS MADE US TRUSTEES OF IT ALL

The owner of all has entrusted us with the great privilege and awesome responsibility of managing all that is on the earth. Following is a wonderful Psalm that describes how the maker of heaven and earth has included you in His plan for managing His resources.

### Psalms 8:3-9

<sup>3</sup>When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, <sup>4</sup>what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? <sup>5</sup>You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. <sup>6</sup>You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: <sup>7</sup>all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, <sup>8</sup>the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. <sup>9</sup>O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!



### STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD

Look up *Psalm 8:3-9* in your own Bible. Study it carefully and underline the words that show how God has made you a trustee of His resources. Write these words and phrases in the space below.

In this Psalm David is in awe that the God who created the heavens would personally care so much about man that He would appoint him “ruler” of all things and put everything under his feet. It is obvious that David saw this as an honor. God has honored you with a wealth of resources that He expects you to manage for Him. Here are just a few that you possess:

- Your talents and abilities
- Your money
- Your possessions
- Your influence
- Your relationships
- Your time
- Your wisdom
- Your life experiences
- Your spiritual resources
- Your family

## WE ARE TO INVEST IT ALL FOR GOD

We are asked by God to wisely invest every resource He has given to us for His kingdom and His glory. Jesus told a parable about talents to show how we are to invest His resources. A man was going on a journey so he gave his servants each a certain amount of money, according to each man’s ability, to invest for him while he was gone. Here is what we can learn from this story.

## **You will be held accountable for what you have been given**

Matthew 25:19

*19" After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.*

God gives us His resources according to our ability to invest them wisely. It is then our responsibility to invest them. There will be a day when we will be accountable to tell our Lord how we invested the talents that were given to us.

### **Invest well and you will be given more**

When the master returned he asked his servants for an account of what they had done. The first two men, who were given the greatest amounts to invest, doubled their money for the master. The master said,

Matthew 25:23

*23" His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"*

### **Invest well and you will share in God's happiness**

Each of the faithful servants was told, come and share your master's happiness! There is great joy in being a faithful trustee of God's resources. The more we invest, the more we give, the greater will be our joy.

### **Invest poorly and what you have will be taken away**

The third man who was given only one talent to invest played it safe and hid it in the ground so he wouldn't lose it. The problem is that this was not what the master had asked him to do. The master was very displeased and said:

Matthew 25:25

*25" Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him."*

The point of the story is clear. We must be faithful. Faithful managers will be given more to invest while those who are unfaithful will lose even what they have not invested. The Apostle Paul stressed the importance of faithfulness.

1 Corinthians 4:2

*2Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*



### **REFLECT AND RESPOND**

What do you think the Master would say to you today if you were asked to give an account of the resources God has entrusted to you?

What one resource are you investing well and what one resource have you yet to invest well?

## WE MUST BELIEVE IN THE LAW OF THE HARVEST

One of the reasons we fail to be generous and sacrificial in our giving is that we are afraid that we will not have enough for ourselves. In the law of God's harvest, the resources that He has given us are like seeds. He wants us to plant them in His fields to produce crops that will meet the needs of others. In doing so God will always make sure there is more than enough for us and for others. Paul emphasized this to the believers in Corinth.

### 2 Corinthians 8:14-15

*<sup>14</sup>At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, <sup>15</sup>as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little."*

The law of the harvest is not that we are to sow so that we will reap for ourselves, but that we are to sow so that God will meet the needs of others through us. By being faithful stewards God promises that our needs will always be met as well. God has said there will always be "just enough" to meet the needs of others and ourselves.

## WE MUST KEEP AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

To be faithful trustees we must keep an eternal perspective. An eternal perspective is based on the fact that this life on earth is brief compared to the eternity that we will spend in heaven. A person with an eternal perspective sees this current life not as an end in itself, but as preparation for the real life with God in heaven. Therefore this person sets his eyes on the promises of God rather than the temporary circumstances of life. Paul shares this eternal perspective with the Christians in Corinth.

### 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

*<sup>16</sup>Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup>For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. <sup>18</sup>So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Based upon this Scripture would you say that you have an eternal perspective or are you more focused on the values and circumstances of this life? Explain.



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## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *1 Peter 2:9*. Write it in the space below.

- Memorize the five principles of a trustee.
  - God o\_\_\_\_\_ it all
  - God has made us t\_\_\_\_\_ of it all
  - I\_\_\_\_\_ it all for God
  - Believe and practice the l\_\_\_\_\_ o\_\_\_\_\_ t\_\_\_\_\_ h\_\_\_\_\_
  - Keep an e\_\_\_\_\_ p\_\_\_\_\_

# DAY 3: THE NEW PRIORITIES OF TREASURE

## PART 1 – THE PROBLEM OF TREASURE

We will start each days study for the rest of the week with a brief review of the five general principles of being a trustee of God’s resources. When thinking about our priorities we must always remember that:

- God owns it all
- God has made us trustees of it all
- We are to invest it all for God
- We must believe and practice the law of the harvest
- We must keep an eternal perspective

### THE TALE OF TWO TREASURES

Throughout the Bible the tale of people pursuing treasure is often a story with a sad ending. The desire for money and possessions has caused heartbreak throughout history. The Bible recounts many occasions when God’s people became greedy and violated God’s principles of stewardship. The Bible constantly warns that a focus on money and possessions will cause us to take our eyes off God and make earthly treasure an idol. The path towards earthly possessions is often a path away from God. What we possess often ends up possessing us.

The story of Jesus and a rich young man demonstrates the power that treasure can have over a person. This young man approached Jesus with the question, “*What must I do to inherit eternal life?*” (Mark 10:17) When Jesus told the young man that he must obey the commandments, he answered; “Teacher,” he declared, “*all these I have kept since I was a boy.*”(v. 20)

While the young man was obviously very religious, there was still one decision that would determine his spiritual future. Jesus tested his heart. The test involved this young man’s treasures. For the man to be a true disciple there was a major decision he must make. The treasure of his relationship with God must be greater than the treasure of his possessions.

#### Mark 10:21-23

*<sup>21</sup>Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” <sup>22</sup>At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. <sup>23</sup>Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”*

The tale of the allure and power of treasure is not just a story about the rich, but one that is deeply rooted in the nature of man. As we have already learned “lust of the eyes” is one of the three primary areas of temptation that we face (1 John 2:16). Lust of the eyes is an overemphasis on money and possessions. Just like the rich young man, most of us are reluctant to trust God with our treasure. The “*one thing*” that most of us lack is to give complete control of our finances to God. In order for this to happen we must learn to trust that God will meet all of our needs. True riches come when God possesses us, not with what we possess.



## REFLECT AND RESPOND

What is your tale of treasure? How did you look at money and possessions before you became a believer? How has that changed? In what way do you still struggle with giving complete control of your finances to God?

## THE TRAP OF TREASURE

How are we to look at money? What should be our guiding principles when it comes to how to use our money and possessions? We live in a culture that promotes a belief system about money and possessions that is in direct opposition to what the Bible teaches. Satan wants to lead you down a road to spiritual poverty while promising you true wealth. Since we all have within our old nature an innate desire for earthly treasures, we can be easily enticed and led away. (*James 1:14-15*) That enticement can lead us straight into the trap of treasures. The Apostle Paul warns Timothy about three traps:

### 1 Timothy 6:9-10

*<sup>9</sup>People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup>For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

### 1. The trap of foolish and harmful desires

Wanting to get rich is the first step towards temptation and a trap. The focus on money means that we have missed the first crucial step of a believer. We have failed to put on the new self with the new purpose. As we saw in lesson one of this week, that purpose is to glorify God in all that we are and all that we do. It is impossible to have our desires set on money and God at the same time. The desire for more money, more and better possessions, and increased personal pleasure will cause us to make unwise decisions.

#### **Result – plunge into ruin and destruction**

The result is that these foolish and harmful desires will eventually plunge people into ruin and destruction. The reason for this is that when a person's main priority is accumulating wealth, there is little left to invest in relationships with people and with God. Physical and emotional energy is dissipated on things that in the eternal scheme of things don't really matter.



## REFLECT AND RESPOND

Reflect on our culture of consumerism and excess for a moment. How do you see people being trapped by foolish and harmful desires? What examples can you give of people being plunged into ruin and destruction because of these desires?

### 2. The trap of the love of money

Paul says that "*the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil*" (*1 Timothy 6:10*). It is when money replaces God on the throne of our lives that we allow a strain of "root rot" to develop. Money itself is not the culprit. It is the love of money. God has given certain people the ability to develop wealth. The Bible never says that

it is wrong to be wealthy, only that becoming wealthy should not be the focus of one's life. When our focus is to first seek God, wealth will be used to further God's kingdom.

### **Result—root of all kinds of evil**

It is at the point that we love money that things such as work, possessions and pleasure start becoming a priority while seeking God and His kingdom takes a back seat. The love of money causes a root rot to grow that ends up causing us to lose our focus on God as we focus on money, possessions and pleasure. We become vulnerable to making all kinds of compromises in our priorities and integrity. These compromises will lead to all kinds of evil deeds.



### **REFLECT AND RESPOND**

Explain in your own words how the love of money can result in a root of all kinds of evil. What kind of evil can come as a result of the love of money? How can this be prevented?

### **3. The trap of wandering from the faith**

Paul finishes his discourse about the dangers of loving money by warning that such misplaced priorities could result in a person wandering from the faith. The road toward riches takes a person farther and farther from God. That is why Jesus said that it is impossible to serve (love) God and riches at the same time.

#### Matthew 6:24

*<sup>24</sup>"No one 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."*

### **Result—many griefs**

It is impossible to serve God and money at the same time. The power of money will win and you will end up distancing yourself from God and his purposes for your life. When you serve money instead of God you set yourself up to be pierced by many griefs. Money and possessions always disappoint in the end. Solomon writes,

#### Ecclesiastes 5:10

*<sup>10</sup>Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.*



### **STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD**

Read *Ecclesiastes 5:10-15* in your own Bible and then answer the following questions: What does *Ecclesiastes* say about having enough money? How much is enough?

How have you seen the dynamic of "never enough" at work? Why does it seem that no matter how much people have it is never quite enough?

Solomon, the writer of Ecclesiastes nails it on the head. No matter how much money we have it is never enough. Money yearns for more money. How much is enough? Just a little more! It is a well-documented fact that no matter how much money people have they always believe that they need more to be completely happy. In addition, what people hope will bring happiness and fulfillment often brings trouble and grief. People find that all the treasures they have accumulated at great personal sacrifice of time, energy and relationships, have in the end, brought only grief.

Which of the three traps are you most vulnerable to? How will you need to change your thoughts and actions to avoid this trap?



## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *1 Peter 2:9*. Write it in the space below.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Memorize the five principles of a trustee.
  - God o\_\_\_\_\_ it all
  - God has made us t\_\_\_\_\_ of it all
  - I\_\_\_\_\_ it all for God
  - Believe and practice the l\_\_\_\_ o\_\_ t\_\_\_\_ h\_\_\_\_\_
  - Keep an e\_\_\_\_\_ p\_\_\_\_\_

# DAY 4: PRACTICING NEW PRIORITIES OF TREASURE

## PART 2 – THE POTENTIAL OF TREASURE

Today we will once again start with a brief review of the five general principles of being a trustee of God's resources. When we evaluate our priorities we must always remember that:

- God owns it all
- God has made us trustees of it all
- We are to invest it all for God
- We must believe and practice the law of the harvest
- We must keep an eternal perspective

### THE TRUTH ABOUT TREASURES

Yesterday you learned about the problems and pitfalls associated with treasure. Today we will look at that great potential of treasure. We will see that God places treasure in our hands for some very specific purposes. God also gives us some very specific ways we are to handle these treasures. The teaching is crystal clear and to the point. You can be assured that if you follow these Biblical guidelines you will glorify God by being a faithful trustee of your finances. When you are a faithful trustee of your finances you will find that God will bless you with peace, "prosperity" and joy. You will have peace because through proper management of your finances you will not have the stress of always being in debt.

You will also have prosperity. By "prosperity" I mean that God will meet your basic needs and you will always have enough to help meet the needs of others. I am not implying that you will be rich or prosperous in the way that the world defines prosperity. In the Bible prosperity is defined as being content with God's basic provisions and being rich in good works (*1 Timothy 6:17-19*). You will have joy because there are few things that are more fulfilling than having God's resources flow through you to others (*1 Chronicles 29:14*).

Following are five truths that if followed, will assure you of this peace, prosperity, and joy in your finances:

#### 1. **You can't take it with you but you can send it on ahead**

There is an eternal perspective that is essential to being a faithful trustee. Life is temporary. To be faithful trustees it is necessary that we live for the line and not the dot as demonstrated in the following illustration:

THE DOT . (life on earth)

THE LINE \_\_\_\_\_ (life for eternity)

The dot represents our brief life here on earth. If we live life for the dot our perspective on life will be limited to what we accomplish and acquire in our brief life on earth. The line represents eternity. If we live life for the line we will be constantly thinking about how we can use our resources on things that count for eternity. We will be continually aware that there is not one thing that we can take with us, but we can send on ahead a lifetime of treasures for all eternity. Here is an amazing fact. Every resource that

you invest in God's kingdom will be sent on ahead to heaven and will be waiting for you. There is an eternal account in your name. Jesus made this clear when he said,

Matthew 6:19-20

*<sup>19</sup>“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup>But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.*



#### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Can you honestly say that you have developed an eternal perspective? Are you intentionally laying up treasures in heaven? Are you currently living life for the dot or for the line? Explain.

### 2. Your heart will always follow your treasure

A true measure of where your heart is, is where your treasure is. Your heart will always follow your treasure. As Jesus continued His teaching on laying up treasure in heaven He said,

Matthew 6:21

*<sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Jesus makes a direct connection here between where we put our money and where our true values lie. In other words, if I show you my checkbook you will get a real insight into my heart. You will see what is really important to me. My checkbook will lead you to where my treasures lie and there you will also find my heart. A true heart change will always be accompanied by a change in treasures.



#### REFLECT AND RESPOND

Where would you say your heart is right now when it comes to your finances? If I could look at your checkbook, what would I conclude about your heart?

### 3. Your basic needs will always be met

There is one thing that you can go to the bank on. God promises that He will meet your basic needs. Jesus went to great lengths to help His disciples understand this principle. He gave two examples to which they could relate.

Matthew 6:26-34

*<sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? <sup>27</sup>Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? <sup>28</sup>“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. <sup>29</sup>Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup>So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup>For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.*

## Trust your heavenly Father

The meaning here is clear. If the heavenly Father feeds the birds of the air He is certainly going to make sure His children are fed because they are much more valuable than the birds. If the heavenly Father clothes the grass of the field he will much more clothe His children. The heavenly Father knows in advance what we need, therefore we can be fully assured that He will supply what we need. God wants us to depend on Him. When we put our trust in the heavenly Father, we eliminate much of our worry and we become free to be generous in meeting the needs of others.

## Be content with the basics

There is another very important truth that is an integral part of trusting God to meet our basic needs. We must learn to be content with the basics of life. Paul told Timothy,

### 1 Timothy 6:6-8

*<sup>6</sup>But godliness with contentment is great gain. <sup>7</sup>For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. <sup>8</sup>But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.*



## STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD

Look up *1 Timothy 6:6-8* in your own Bible. Underline the principles that bring contentment and write them in the space below.

Paul gives three basic principles for being content. First we must understand that when we focus on developing a godly character, we will be content with what we have. We must always remember that we came into the world with nothing and we will leave this world with nothing. And we can be completely content when our basic needs are met.

Paul described the basic needs of Christians in that day. Food and clothing were what each person needed to survive. They were to be content with those basics things. In many cultures today the basic needs are still seen as food, clothing and shelter. In our culture we have much greater expectations. Advertisers and the media attempt to convince us that the basics include several new cars, expensive vacations, the latest electronic gadgets, a widescreen TV, trendy clothes, large houses and a host of other things. We are told we deserve all these things. We not only deserve them we can have them all now—on credit which is inexhaustible.

I am not going to attempt to tell you what the basics are for you, but it is obvious they do not include many of the excesses of our culture. Remember that as a general rule the more we have, the more we want, and the less satisfied we become.



## REFLECT AND RESPOND

What do you consider the basics of life? Are you content with the basics? What would you have to change in your thoughts and actions to be content with the basics of life?

#### 4. God has promised us the law of the harvest

The law of the harvest is this. If we “sow”, (use, give away), our resources generously we will “reap” generously (be given more) so that we will have enough for ourselves and for others. The Apostle Paul taught the Christians at Corinth that there were four principles of the harvest:

##### 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, 10-11

*<sup>6</sup>Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. <sup>7</sup>Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup>And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work... <sup>10</sup>Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. <sup>11</sup>You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.*

##### ***You will reap in proportion to what you sow. (V.6)***

The first principle of the harvest is that you will reap in proportion to what you sow. Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. (V.6) This means that the more of your resources you invest in God’s work the more resources He will give you in return. You will never be able to out-give God!

##### ***You are to give from your heart not from compulsion. (V.7)***

God wants our motivation for giving to be from love not from the law. We are not to give reluctantly or under compulsion. (V.7) Until we allow God to touch our hearts so that we have a spirit of joyful giving, we have missed the purpose of giving. We give because He first gave to us, just as we love because He first loved us. Giving is our response to God’s grace in our lives. God makes his grace (gifts) abound in us and then abound to others. This should bring us great joy.

##### ***God will supply you with all that you need. (V.8-11)***

In verse eight there are four “alls”. We are promised: **all** grace, in **all** things, at **all** times, having **all** (everything) that we need. (V. 8) Wouldn’t you agree that God has promised you all you need for yourself and for others? The law of the harvest is a law of plenty. The plenty is enough to always meet our own needs and help meet the needs of others.

##### ***You are to keep the store open for others. (V.8-11)***

It is obvious that the focus of the law of the harvest is on reaping so you can supply the needs of others. You are to give, not so you will have more for yourself, but so that you will have more to give away. This Scripture says that God will increase and enlarge your store of resources so that you will become rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion. (V.10-11) You are to keep the store of God’s resources open twenty-four seven. The law of the harvest assures you that God’s business will be booming!



#### **REFLECT AND RESPOND**

Have you come to a place in your spiritual life where you believe and practice the law of the harvest? What has been your experience? What would it take for you to stake your life on this truth?

## 5. If we put first things first, all else will follow

There is a final but essential truth. God tells us to put first things first and all else will follow. After Jesus' lengthy teaching on laying up treasures in heaven and trusting God to meet basic needs, He concludes the lesson with this important condition:

Matthew 6:33-34

<sup>33</sup>*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

<sup>34</sup>*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

### **Put God first**

This final truth ties all five truths together. The other truths will not impact our lives unless we learn to put first things first. The promise Jesus makes in this passage has a condition. He says, but seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (V.33) You are to first focus on God's rule in your life and your basic needs will be met as well. When you diligently pursue God's purpose for your life, the other things that you worry about will be taken care of. Now I want to make it clear I am not saying you will have a problem-free, pain-free, tranquil life at all times. That is certainly not what the Bible teaches. What it does teach is that when we put God first, He will take care of our basic needs and cause even the difficult circumstances to work out for our good. Scripture promises,

Romans 8:28

<sup>28</sup>*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

### **Put giving first**

If we put God first we will also put giving first. What we give will come off the top and not the bottom! Many years ago, Janet and I, after some inconsistent giving, made a decision that the first check that we would write each payday would be our tithe. It is amazing that when we are faithful in putting first things first how God blesses the rest of our money. The Bible always asks us to give the first and the best of everything to our faithful heavenly Father. Proverbs says,

Proverbs 3:9

<sup>9</sup>*Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops;*

Under the Old Covenant God's people were required to give a tithe (ten percent) of everything they earned. God's law given in Leviticus says,

Leviticus 27:30

<sup>30</sup>*A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.*

They were to give to God first. They took the first and best of everything they harvested and gave a tithe or tenth of it to God. I want to be clear that under grace in the New Covenant (New Testament) tithing does not seem to be required.

However the principle of first fruits was certainly known by the Apostle Paul and the Hebrew Christian. Believers were also taught to give of their best to God. Under grace they gave beyond the tithe. There are many examples of people selling their possessions and giving sacrificially to others (*Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35*). Paul holds up this kind of sacrificial giving as an example for other Christians. To the Christians at Corinth he writes,

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

<sup>1</sup>And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches.

<sup>2</sup>Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. <sup>3</sup>For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own,

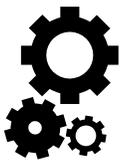
<sup>4</sup>they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

<sup>5</sup>And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.

Notice that what enabled the Christians in Macedonia to give beyond their ability was that they gave themselves to God first. They were a prime example of first things first. When we make the decision to give ourselves to God first, the decision to give the first of our resources to God will follow.

I suggest that you start by giving a full tithe to the Lord. Make that ten percent the first check that you write. You may look at your already overextended finances and think, "There is no possible way we can give ten percent when we don't have enough to pay our bills right now." Let me give you a challenge to trust God for the law of the harvest. See if God does not make the rest of your money go farther. God's math is not like our math. He makes what seems impossible to us possible when we faithfully obey Him in all things.

To put financial margin back in your life, some will have to make adjustments in the way they use their money. I would suggest enrolling in a financially based money management course such as is offered by Ron Blue and Crown Ministries or David Ramsey. Check with your church to see if they offer such a course. If not visit your local bookstore or go on line to find some good resources.



**REFLECT AND RESPOND**

Are you ready to put first things first? Is your financial house in order? How would you describe it: orderly, messy, out of control, a disaster? Are you ready to clean up your financial house and put first things first? Explain

Are you willing to trust the law of the harvest and make the first check you write each payday, a tithe check to the Lord? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_



## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *1 Peter 2:9*. Write it in the space below.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Memorize the five principles of a trustee.
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  - I\_\_\_\_\_ it all for God
  - Believe and practice the l\_\_\_\_ o\_\_ t\_\_\_\_ h\_\_\_\_\_
  - Keep an e\_\_\_\_\_ p\_\_\_\_\_

# DAY 5: PRACTICING THE NEW PRIORITIES OF TIME AND TALENT

I hope by now the following five general principles of being a trustee of God's resources are beginning to be part of how you think about treasure. These principles will all apply to your new priorities of time and talent.

- God owns it all
- God has made us trustees of it all
- We are to invest it all for God
- We must believe and practice the law of the harvest
- We must keep an eternal perspective

## THE PROBLEM OF MARGIN

One of the main problems most people face when they first become Christians is how to make time for practicing spiritual disciplines and serving God with their talents. There is a major obstacle of margin that will face you as a new believer. The problem most people face in our culture is that their lives are already overloaded so that there is no more room to add anything else, no matter how important it might be. I want to give you a quote from an excellent book on this subject—a book I believe everyone should read.

### What is margin?

According to Richard A Swenson in his book *Margin*,

*"Margin is the amount allowed beyond that which is needed. It is something held in reserve for contingencies or unanticipated situations. Margin is the gap between rest and exhaustion, the space between breathing feely and suffocating. It is the leeway we once had between ourselves and our limits. Margin is the opposite of overload."* (*Margin*, Richard A Swenson, M.D., NAVPRESS, pp. 91-92)

### How do we lose margin?

As the author infers, most of us have no leeway when it comes to our emotional, physical, financial and time resources. We live beyond our limits in all of these areas. We have come to believe that the normal and preferred life is an overextended life. Too many of us have bought into our cultural norm that crowded schedules, too many activities to pack into a day, and life on the run is unavoidable and actually preferred. We come to believe the lie that an overfilled life is a fulfilled life. The Psalmist talks about the futility of such a life.

#### Psalm 39:4-7

<sup>4</sup>"Show me, O LORD, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life. <sup>5</sup>You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath. <sup>6</sup>Man is a mere phantom as he goes to and fro: He bustles about, but only in vain; he heaps up wealth, not knowing who will get it. <sup>7</sup>"But now, Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in you.



## STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD

Look up *Psalm 39:4-7* in your own Bible. Underline each word that points to how we lose margin in our lives. What word or phrase is most relevant to you right now and why?

This Psalm of David written thousands of years ago could have been written to the issue of margin in our culture today. I guess some things never change. They “...*bustled about but only in vain*” in ancient Israel as well as today. People tend to lose their margin as they fill their lives with things that have little value for today and no value for eternity.

We lose margin when we allow our culture to squeeze us into its mold and dictate how we use our time and talent and treasure. Stewardship of time is very much like our finances. We realize that if we spend more money than we take in we will end up in debt. Obviously there is no financial margin when one spends more than he makes. The person has gone over his limit. When it comes to time, we can also exceed our limit. We accrue the debt of feeling overextended, stressed, anxious, and out of control. As you can imagine it will be difficult to be a faithful steward of our talents if there is little time to seek God and to serve Him.

### What happens when we lose margin

Without margin we are unable to become faithful stewards. We can only invest the assets God has entrusted to us if we still have those assets to invest. It makes sense that if we have no margin we have nothing to invest. Following are some things that happen when we lose our margin:

- **We lose our focus**

We can be faithful trustees only when we are able to focus on investing our time, talent, and treasure for God. Loss of margin means loss of focus. We cannot bustle about and focus on our investments for God at the same time. The Apostle Paul told Timothy

2 Timothy 2:3-4

<sup>3</sup>*Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup>No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer.*

A good soldier never loses his focus. He does not lose his margin. He keeps his life free from things that would distract him from his primary mission of pleasing his commanding officer. He is, in fact, an example of a faithful steward.

- **We lose our effectiveness**

When we lose our ability to focus we also lose our effectiveness. Effective investors are focused investors. When we are preoccupied with how to survive because of our own diminishing physical, emotional, financial, and time reserves, we cannot be effective trustees. Paul reminds of this of this important point.

2 Corinthians 9:6

<sup>6</sup>*Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.*

- **We lose our joy**

There is no greater joy than to join God in what He is doing. There is no greater joy than to hear our heavenly Father say to us,

Matthew 25:23

*23“... ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’”*

If we have no margin, it will be impossible to be a faithful servant and share in our master’s happiness.

- **We lose our resources**

When we do not invest our time and talent for God’s kingdom, we will not be given greater resources to invest. In fact, even the resources that have been entrusted to us will be taken away. In the parable of the talents, the unfaithful servant who had not invested God’s resources heard some bad news.

Matthew 25:29

*29For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.*



### **REFLECT AND RESPOND**

What is margin like in your life? To what degree do you have reserves (emotional, physical, financial and time) to accomplish God’s purposes for your life? Explain.

## **HOW TO RESTORE MARGIN**

I’m sure most of you can relate to the problems of margin, but the question is what to do about it. How can margin be restored to our lives in a culture that promotes living beyond our limits? There are no easy answers but it is possible to restore margin if we take small, important steps, one at a time. Here are some suggestions for restoring margin.

### **1. Remember your purpose in life**

Without a well-defined purpose in life it will be difficult to restore margin so you will have spiritual, physical, emotional and financial room for the things God has planned for you. Remembering daily that your purpose in life is to glorify God in all that you do will give you a firm foundation and a guiding force to help you restore margin. This will cause you to ask before you make decisions, “Will this choice glorify God?”

### **2. Affirm your values in life**

Remembering your purpose gives you a focused direction for your life. Your values will support that focus and move you to take certain actions. There are five core values that should shape the priorities and decisions of every Christians. These are:

- **Seek and glorify God**

Seeking and glorifying God must be at the top of your list of Godly values. This will be the value that will be your spiritual compass and keep you moving towards true north in your spiritual maturity.

- **Become Christlike**

The second of the five values is to become Christlike. For this to happen you must have the margin of time so that you can have a daily appointment with God in prayer and the Word. There also must be time to be equipped by leaders in your church so that you will be grounded in sound doctrine, holiness, and service.

- **Be a faithful trustee**

This week you have learned what it means to be a faithful trustee of all the resources God has entrusted to you. Being a faithful, humble servant is a value that will help you make wise choices about how you will use your time and talents.

- **Love others as God loves you**

The primary purpose of restoring margin is to give us time and energy to develop a loving relationship with God and others. To love God is to obey Him and to love others as He loves us. This, of course, takes time and energy.

- **Accomplish God's mission for your life**

God wants you to be part of His mission to reconcile a lost world to Himself. He has a place for you in His plan to strengthen believers. You are a very special piece of His "million piece puzzle" that includes all people, plans and purposes. You have been called to be part of God's mission. He has specific tasks for you to accomplish. You will need to have margin in your life so that you have time and energy to complete the tasks God has designed for you.

### 3. **Make the hard decisions**

When you focus on your mission and affirm your values on a daily basis you will be able to make the hard decisions that you will constantly face. Remember that to restore and maintain margin means you will always be going against the flow of culture. Eliminating things that do not support your mission and values will not be easy. This means that you will have to make hard decisions and eliminate things that might be good, but not the best. God asks us to be very careful how we live.

*Ephesians 5:15-17*

*<sup>15</sup>Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup>making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup>Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.*

### **TIME AND TALENT PROJECT**

We need to be very careful how we live and be wise in structuring our lives in such a way that we have time for spending with God and in service to others. This means a careful allocation of your time and talent. God has given you some unique abilities to use for his service. He has given you natural abilities and a spiritual gift or gifts to use to accomplish His purposes for your life. As you have seen, to invest these abilities and gifts wisely you must have margin.



### 3. Allocate "What does God want (me) us to do with our margin?"

Now that you have decided what stays and what can go, you are ready to allocate the time you have freed up to accomplish God's purposes and plans for your life. Consider adding:

- Time for spiritual development: (Classes, groups, relationships, etc.)
- Time alone with God: (Regular appointments with God in the Word and prayer)
- Time to use my talents: (service, outreach)

## CONCLUSION

I know this has been a very demanding lesson. I realize that in one day you will not be able to make all the decisions necessary to immediately restore margin to your life. Today is designed to get you started thinking in terms of margin and priorities. The three-step process will take time and will need to be repeated many times as margin has a way of eroding, even after it has been restored.



## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

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  - Keep an e\_\_\_\_\_ p\_\_\_\_\_



## TEARS AND CHEERS

At the beginning of each weeks group session you will be an opportunity to share what is going on in your life. This is voluntary and you will never be pressured to share if you choose not to. Your group leader will give you the opportunity to share the following:

- **Tears**

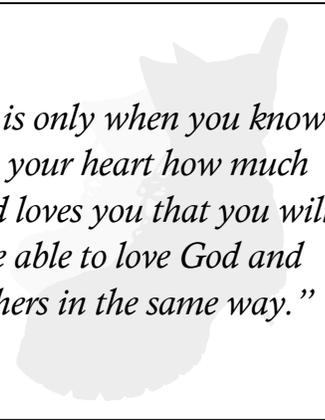
“Tears” represents the burdens, disappointments and other issues you are facing. This will enable you to work through issues with the support of the group and receive encouragement and prayer

- **Cheers**

“Cheers” is the blessing, joys and spiritual progress for which you are thankful. Verbalizing these blessing strengthen you and encourage others.

# WEEK 9

## PART OF THE FAMILY OF GOD



*“It is only when you know  
in your heart how much  
God loves you that you will  
be able to love God and  
others in the same way.”*

### INTRODUCTION

Being a functioning part of God’s family is an essential part of your path of spiritual growth. You were adopted into God’s family so that you could grow up into a fully mature, devoted follower of Jesus. This will be virtually impossible to do outside the family of God. You were created to be part of God’s family, growing together with other brothers and sisters in Christ. You are to be equipped by leaders who have the responsibility of teaching you how to live exemplary lives, glorifying God in all that you are and all that you do.

This week you will learn what it means to be part of the Family of God and how to grow with others. You will begin to discover how you are uniquely gifted for a special place in the family. You will also learn God’s standards for relationships with His family. By the end of this week’s session I hope you will be excited about what God has in store for you in His family.

### WEEK 9 STUDY

DAY 1: Part of One Another

DAY 2: Growing Together

DAY 3: Relationships in the Family of God

DAY 4: The Four Pillars of Marriage

DAY 5: Relationships with the Lost

### WEEK 9 ASSIGNMENTS:

- Memorize and meditate on *Romans 12:5*

*Romans 12:5*

*<sup>5</sup>...so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

- Memorize the four pillars of marriage/relationships (*Philippians 2:1-11*).
  - Be one
  - Be selfless
  - Be humble
  - Be a servant
- Review all previous memory work assignments on your index cards.
- Prepare your memory/review index card. Write your memory verse on one side and the four pillars of marriage/relationships on the other.

# DAY 1: PART OF ONE ANOTHER

When the heavenly Father adopted you, you instantly became a member of a huge extended family. You became part of the Family of God that includes every person who ever has and ever will receive Christ. You have millions of brothers and sisters in Christ who you will be reunited with on the day that Jesus returns for His children. As you can imagine that will be quite a reunion!

Of course this means that you were born into a large family that includes people of faith in Jesus Christ from many different denominations. In addition to this worldwide family of God your heavenly Father also wants you be a vital part of a smaller family where you can be cared for and learn to care for others. Because of this it is crucial that you become part of a local Church where you can learn, grow and serve. If you are not connected to a church I want to encourage you to find one soon. It is a critical part of God's plan for your spiritual growth.

## CHRIST IS THE HEAD

In the Bible the Church is referred to as the body of Christ. The head of the body is Christ. The Apostle Paul says,

*Ephesians 1:22-23*

*<sup>22</sup>And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,*

*<sup>23</sup>which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*

God's plan from the beginning of time was that His Son would be the head of the Church. As the head of the church Jesus Christ gives direction to every part of the body. It is through the direction and power of Jesus that the church carries out the purposes and plans of the heavenly Father. The pattern for the church comes directly from God's Word and is governed by the Son.

It was also God's plan that we would be a part of that body. It is important to realize that when we become a member or a part of a church that we are not merely joining an organization. We become part of a living organism. Organizations are man-made and have a beginning and an end. An organism is created by God and in the case of the church will live forever.

## WE ARE THE PARTS

In addition to the head there are many parts of the physical body. The body was created by God to function as a whole. When each part of the body is working as it was designed to, the body is healthy and functions as it should. It enables a person to carry out the tasks of life. When one part ceases to function it affects the entire body.

In very much the same way, the body of Christ is made up of various parts, each of which is vital to the healthy functioning of the body as a whole. Paul explains,

*Romans 12:4-5*

*<sup>4</sup>Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

Each one of us is a member of the body of Christ and as a result everyone is a part of all other members in the body. Each has a vital role in completing the body of Christ. We all have different functions within the body, so that the body works efficiently. As a member of the body of Christ, the Holy Spirit has given you a spiritual gift so that you will be able to fulfill your responsibilities. Paul continues,

Romans 12:6

*“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us...”*

In the original Greek language the word for grace is *charismata*, referring to special gifts of grace given by the Holy Spirit to each person who receives Christ. It is not a natural strength or talent but a supernatural ability given to a person to meet the needs of the body. Since the Holy Spirit has personally given you a gift, it is important that you discover, develop and deploy that gift. Following are a list of 18 gifts of the Spirit that are listed in *1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4*. As you read through these gifts see which ones seem to fit you.

## GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

The gifts I will list first are general spiritual gifts which God distributes as He chooses to all members of the body. Look up each reference in your Bible as you learn about the following gifts.

### General gifts

- **The gift of wisdom** (*1 Corinthians 12:8*)  
Wisdom is the gift that enables a person look at a situation or problem and see God’s point of view. This person is able to give clear Biblical counsel and direction to a person or persons.
- **The gift of knowledge** (*1 Corinthians 12:8*)  
People with the gift of knowledge have a deep and clear view of the doctrines of Scripture and the ability to communicate this knowledge to others.
- **The gift of faith** (*1 Corinthians 12:9*)  
Some people are gifted to have absolute faith in the promises of God. These people believe that nothing is impossible with God and that He will move mountains through the power of prayer.
- **The gift of healing** (*1 Corinthians 12:9*)  
There are people who are called and specially gifted in praying for the sick. They have deep compassion for those with physical and emotional ailments. (*James 5:13-18*)
- **The gift of miracles** (*1 Corinthians 12:10*)  
Miracles are a supernatural act of God intended as evidence of the power and purposes of God. Anyone can pray for the miracles of God, but some are specially gifted for this ministry of prayer.
- **The gift of prophecy** (*1 Corinthians 12:10*)  
Prophecy is the gift of discerning the mind of God and effectively communicating it to others. This can be a discernment of the will of God in a special circumstance or in some cases predicting the future.

- **The gift of discernment** (*1 Corinthians 12:10*)  
Discernment is the gift of distinguishing spirits. People with this gift have the ability to look beyond the surface and discern the truth from error in people and in beliefs.
- **The gift of tongues** (*1 Corinthians 12:10*)  
The Greek word for tongues denotes languages or dialects such as were spoken on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:4, 6, 11) This term may refer to both human languages and heavenly languages of praise and prayer. (*1 Corinthians 13:1; 14:2, 10*)
- **The gift of interpretation** (*1 Corinthians 12:10*)  
Spiritual gifts are for the edification of the church and therefore must be understood by all. Some people have the gift of understanding tongues and translating the language for others to understand.
- **The gift of administration** (*1 Corinthians 12:28*)  
People with the gift of administration have the ability to plan and organize in detail and to carry out those plans through people.
- **The gift of serving** (*Romans 12:7*)  
People who continually look for ways to help others often have the gift of serving. They find great joy in serving others and are generally in supportive roles.
- **The gift of teaching** (*Romans 12:7*)  
People with the gift of teaching love to study the Scriptures in detail, using Bible study tools to analyze passages. They are gifted in discovering truths effectively and clearly teaching those truths to others.
- **The gift of encouraging** (*Romans 12:8*)  
Those with the gift of encouragement have the ability to exhort or encourage others to grow spiritually, persevere in times of trouble, and hold out hope in all circumstances.
- **The gift of giving** (*Romans 12:8*)  
God has gifted certain individuals with a deep desire to give unselfishly to meet the needs of others. These people are faithful trustees of the financial resources God makes available to them.
- **The gift of leadership** (*Romans 12:8*)  
God gives certain individuals unusual abilities to lead others. These people are often visionary people who are able to cut through complex issues and make decisions quickly. They are God's "Generals" who know how to get things done through people.
- **The gift of mercy** (*Romans 12:8*)  
God gives some people a heart of deep compassion for those who are hurting. These are usually accepting, gentle people who love to help the emotionally, physically and spiritually sick.

### **Leadership gifts**

In the book of Ephesians Paul lists four leadership gifts for the body of Christ. These are sometimes called equipping gifts. God has given certain people leadership gifts for specific responsibilities to build up the body so that each person becomes mature and does his part in the family of God. Paul says,

### Ephesians 4:11

<sup>11</sup>*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers...*

- **Apostles** (*Ephesians 4:11*)  
The Apostles were a select group, chosen to establish the early church. They were eyewitnesses of Jesus and were gifted for a specific time and a specific purpose. They included the twelve disciples and Paul.
- **Prophets** (*Ephesians 4:11*)  
Prophets were people to whom God gave a special message for people in special circumstances at certain times.
- **Evangelists** (*Ephesians 4:11*)  
Evangelists are mentioned only here in the Bible. We can conclude that their primary giftedness was a passion for presenting the gospel and encouraging others to do the same.
- **Pastor/Teachers** (*Ephesians 4:11*)  
The final leadership gift is Pastor/Teacher. God gives these people a special gift for the pastoral care of the church. This shepherding would include the supervision and feeding (teaching) of the flock.



### **REFLECT AND RESPOND**

This is a very brief introduction to spiritual gifts. I would suggest that you take a more in-depth course on spiritual gifts when you have the opportunity. Today's lesson was designed to give you an overview of spiritual gifts and encourage you to start the process of discovering your own spiritual gifts. What do you think your spiritual gift or gifts might be? Review the definitions of spiritual gifts and chose three that you believe may be your gifts. First list the gift you think is most likely to be your spiritual gift. Only the gift of Apostleship does not apply today.

- Gift #1
- Gift #2
- Gift #3
- Give some reasons why you chose gift number one.

### **THE PREPARATION**

You have seen that we are all uniquely gifted by the Spirit of God to become contributing members of the body of Christ. However, to say we have received a spiritual gift is not to say we are ready to use it effectively. Gifts must first be discovered, then developed and deployed. This involves a process of preparation during which we are equipped to use our gifts. The Apostle Paul explains how people with the leadership gifts are to prepare people in the body to use their gifts. The leadership gifts, Paul says, are to,

Ephesians 4:11-16

<sup>12</sup>... prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup>until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup>Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup>Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup>From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

We are to be prepared by leaders in the church for "...works of service..." (Eph. 4:12) We are to be equipped so that we "...attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ..." (Eph. 4:13) As we grow towards the goal of being like Christ, we will be part of the "...supporting ligaments..." that enable the body to "...build itself up in love, as each part does its work..." (Eph. 4:16).

You have a responsibility to take advantage of the equipping opportunities that your church offers. As a new believer you will need to take the initiative to become part of the training classes that your church offers. Check out opportunities to join a discipleship group. Be committed from the very beginning to ongoing spiritual growth.

### THE WORK

Spiritual gifts are often discovered, as people get involved in various ministries of the church. We are all called to be servants, no matter what our area of giftedness. As you serve you may find great joy in certain tasks. These tasks may involve one of the spiritual gifts you have learned about today. You may find your spiritual gift in this way as you serve. This gift, of course, is to be used to serve others. Peter says,

1 Peter 4:10

<sup>10</sup>Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.



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## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Romans 12:5*. Write it in the space below.
  
- Memorize the four pillars of marriage/relationships
  1. Be o\_\_\_\_\_
  2. Be s\_\_\_\_\_
  3. Be h\_\_\_\_\_
  4. Be a s\_\_\_\_\_

## DAY 2: GROWING TOGETHER

Because we are a part of one another we are to grow together. Just as a child develops because he is part of a family, so we grow with our spiritual mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. There is a saying that, "It takes a village to raise a child". Just as surely, it takes the family of God to raise a spiritual child. You will find it virtually impossible to sustain real spiritual growth on your own. God has placed you in a family where you can grow with others. Within this family you will be fed, trained, loved, encouraged and held accountable. People will serve you with their spiritual gifts and you will serve others with your spiritual gifts. You learned in yesterday's lesson how you are to grow up within the family.

### Ephesians 4:15-16

*<sup>15</sup>Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup>From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

### HOW THE BODY FUNCTIONS

What does it look like when the whole body grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work? We have a beautiful picture of this body early in the book of Acts. The church had its beginning on the day of Pentecost, an important Jewish religious festival. The church grew dramatically in those first few months. In fact, three thousand people repented and were baptized that very first day (Acts 2:38-41). These new believers started meeting in two places. They met as a large group in the temple courts and in smaller groups in homes.

The following Scripture gives us the first view of how the new family of God functioned. The people were devoted to six primary functions that bound them together.

### Acts 2:42-47

*<sup>42</sup>They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup>Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup>All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup>Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. <sup>46</sup>Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup>praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

#### 1. Devoted to the Word

First we see that the new believers were devoted to the Word. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42). I do not believe it is an accident that devotion to the Word of God is mentioned first, for this was the authority for all that was said and done. The pattern for the Church came from the heart of God. The apostles' teaching included all that Jesus himself had taught. It would also have included the teaching of the Old Testament. Today the apostles' teaching is included in the books of the New Testament and therefore is "God breathed" or divinely inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16). The apostles taught the new Christians what they were to believe about God, how they were to function in the body of Christ and how they were to conduct themselves toward one another and those outside the faith. In short, they were taught how to live as children of God.

### **Your devotion to the Word**

It is just as important now as it was then that you become devoted to the Word of God. It is through a growing knowledge of the Word of God that your mind will be renewed and your life transformed. To be truly devoted means that you will make a priority out of reading, studying and memorizing the Word of God.

### **Growing together**

It is obvious from this and other passages of Scripture that people grew as they studied the Word together. While it is important to have time alone in the Word it is also important to study and share insights together. When we study the Word of God with others in a small group, we not only receive Biblical insights from one another but encouragement to obey Scripture. Paul tells how this is to be done.

#### Colossians 3:16

*<sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*



### **REFLECT AND RESPOND**

What in your life indicates that you are devoted to the Word? What steps of growth do you need to make in this area?

## **2. Devoted to Fellowship**

The new believers were also devoted to “...*the fellowship...*” (Acts 2:42). What is referred to here is a certain kind of fellowship. It is not just hanging out with people with whom we have things in common and whom we enjoy. The Greek word for fellowship is Koinonia, which means association for religious or spiritual purposes. This kind of fellowship was for the specific purpose of growing together in the Lord. While it was based on things in common, what united them was a devotion to Jesus Christ. From this devotion to Jesus came: a common love for God, a common hate of sin, a common love of the Word, a common hope and a common love for one another. The list could go on but I know you get the idea.

As part of their Koinonia the Christians had meals together. They were devoted to the “...*breaking of bread...*” (Acts 2:42) This phrase is commonly used to indicate an ordinary meal. However the Lord’s Supper or communion seems to be indicated here. Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper with His disciples during His final weeks on earth. Here is what Jesus said:

#### Luke 22:19-20

*<sup>19</sup>And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” <sup>20</sup>In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.*

Jesus instituted communion so that all believers would remember His death and resurrection. The bread was a symbol of his body and the cup containing wine was a symbol of the blood that He shed for the forgiveness of our sins. Communion is a time to examine your life, confess your sins, and be thankful for what Jesus did for you (1 Corinthians 11:26-29). Communion is for all Christians and should be taken as

often as possible. Some churches have weekly communion while others offer communion once a month or even less frequently. Communion can be taken in either a small group or in the larger worship setting.

The believers also “...broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts...” (Acts 2:46). Here the breaking of bread takes place within a home where it probably indicates an ordinary meal. In both the case of communion and a common meal, fellowship includes the sharing of food.

### **Your devotion to fellowship**

It is vital to your spiritual growth that you develop a close fellowship with other believers in a small group. I don't mean to diminish the fellowship that happens when you meet for worship with a larger group, but a smaller group gives you the opportunity for close, intimate fellowship and accountability.

### **Growing together in fellowship**

It is when people know you intimately and you know them intimately that real fellowship occurs. It is then that we can encourage one another. Make a commitment now to always be part of a small group for mutual encouragement and growth. The writer of Hebrews says,

*Hebrews 10:24-25*

*<sup>24</sup>And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. <sup>25</sup>Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*



### **REFLECT AND RESPOND**

What in your life indicates that you are devoted to fellowship? What steps of growth do you need to make in this area?

## **3. Devoted to Prayer**

A third function of the early church was prayer. Luke, the writer of Acts reports that the believers “... devoted themselves...to prayer.” (Acts 2:42) It is obvious by reading the book of Acts and the letters written by the Apostles, that prayer was one of the church's most important functions. The believers seemed to be constantly in prayer. They obviously believed that prayer was essential to their own spiritual growth and to the growth of the Church.

Why did these early leaders believe that prayer was so essential? It was because they had been with Jesus and He believed that prayer was essential. The apostles were taught that through prayer they demonstrated their dependence on God. Through prayer they developed intimacy with God. And through prayer, they observed from Jesus, that they could release the power of God. Is it any wonder that the new believers learned from the apostles to become devoted to prayer?

### **Your devotion to prayer**

Prayer and the Word are two disciplines that connect you to the heart of God. They are the foundation of your daily appointments with God. For you to become spiritually mature, you must grow in your

devotion to prayer. You will demonstrate your devotion to prayer when you reserve a time each day for prayer and you take every opportunity you can to pray with others,

### **Growing together in prayer**

When you pray with and for other people in the body of Christ, you will experience a closeness with others deep within your spirit. The Spirit of God invades our prayers and draws believers close together. I also believe there is a direct correlation between praying with others and spiritual growth. You will grow closer to God and one another as you pray together. Praising God and praying for His purposes builds spiritual growth and unity.



### **REFLECT AND RESPOND**

What in your life indicates that you are devoted to prayer? What steps of growth do you need to make in this area?

## **4. Devoted to Sacrifice**

A devotion to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship and prayer, resulted in people being willing and eager to share all they had with one another. An incredible spirit of sacrificial giving was a mark of these Christians. Luke reports that:

*Acts 2:44, 45*

*<sup>44</sup>All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup>Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.*



### **STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD**

Look up *Acts 2:44-45* in your own Bible and underline the words that show that the believers were devoted to one another in sacrificial love. What, in your opinion could have caused these people to sell what they had and give it to others?

The believers were so devoted to God and one another that they were willing to sell their own possessions so that they could meet the needs of others. That, my friend, is a true sign of devotion. This sacrificial giving was one of the clearest indications that the new believers had been transformed by the gift of grace. Because they had received so much from God in the sacrifice of His Son, they could give sacrificially to others.

### **Your devotion to sacrifice**

These new believers provide us with a standard for our giving. They have set the bar high! But this is no surprise because the bar is set high for sacrificial giving throughout the Bible. The proof of your love of God is your obedience to Him. (*John 14:21*) The proof of your obedience is your willingness to sacrificially lay down your life for others. It is through meeting the needs of others that you show your true devotion to God. (*John 15:9-14; 1 John 3:16-18*)

### **Growing together in sacrifice**

One of the best places to discover the needs of others is in a small group. I believe that it was probably within the intimacy of a home that the believers found out about the needs of their brothers and sisters and gave sacrificially. When you are involved in a small group, look for ways that you can sacrificially meet the needs of others. (*Acts 4:32-5*)



#### **REFLECT AND RESPOND**

What in your life indicates that you are devoted to sacrifice? What steps of growth do you need to make in this area?

## **5. Devoted to Worship**

The fifth function of the new church was worship. The believers were devoted to praising God for who He is and what He had done and was doing. Luke paints a picture of Christians worshipping God.

*Acts 2:46-47*

*<sup>46</sup>Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup>praising God...*

Worship is gladly reflecting back to God the radiance of His worth. Worship should always be a part of our personal prayer time but we are also to worship God together with the body of Christ. This passage of Scripture shows that worship can take place in temple courts, (equivalent to our large group church services), or in homes (equivalent to our small groups). We know that the early church worshiped God in prayer and in song (*Acts 4:23-31; Colossians 3:16*).

#### **Your devotion to worship**

Your devotion to worship starts with your personal relationship with Christ. It starts in your heart, not in corporate worship. In the Lord's Prayer you learned how to worship God. This should continue to be a priority. You then bring that worshipful spirit into the corporate worship time with other believers.

#### **Growing together in worship**

One of the great joys of being in the family of God is worshipping with brothers and sisters in Christ. Praising God with others, whether it is in large group gatherings or in the intimacy of a small group, should cause us to be filled with joy. It is for the very purpose of worship that we were created. Worship should always be our number one priority. Take every opportunity to praise God individually and with others. This will result in intimacy with God and others.



#### **REFLECT AND RESPOND**

What in your life indicates that you are devoted to worship? What steps of growth do you need to make in this area?

## 6. Devoted to Outreach

The final function of the church was outreach. Notice that it was a result of being devoted to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, prayer, sacrificial giving and worship. The devotion to these functions produced in these new believers a beauty of character that was obvious to non-believers. All of this resulted in the believers:

Acts 2:47

*47... enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

This radical way of living caused people to take notice. They enjoyed the favor of all the people. People were drawn to the believers because their lives had been transformed. Their purity of life, joy, and love for others caused others to want to be like them.

### Your devotion to outreach

God has transformed your life and will continue to sanctify you (empower you to grow in holiness). People will see the difference in you and will be drawn to Jesus because of what God has done in your life. Your responsibility is to be devoted to the functions we have discussed so that God can produce His character in you. You will then be given opportunities to answer questions about the hope that is within you and watch the Lord add to your number those who are "...being saved" (Acts 2:47).

### Growing together in outreach

A group of transformed people can make a tremendous impact in a community. It is when the body of Christ is devoted to God and to one another that a watching world is caused to take notice and ask questions. Your church and your small group should expect outreach to occur! You should expect people to notice the difference and ask questions about the hope that you possess. You should expect your church and group to grow as God adds those who are being saved. Always be devoted to outreach.



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

What in your life indicates that you are devoted to outreach? What steps of growth do you need to make in this area?

## TWO WINGS OF THE CHURCH

For a moment I would like you to think of the church as a bird with two wings. One wing represents the church when it meets in a large group for corporate worship. This would be like when the early church met in the temple courts because there were no buildings large enough to accommodate their numbers. The other wing represents the small group that meets in the home. Just like a bird, each wing is essential if the church is going to function as intended.

If a bird had only one wing it would flap helplessly as it flew, flapping about in circles. With two wings it would soar as was intended. In much the same way the church must function with two wings if it is to be healthy and soar as God designed it to soar. As we have seen, there are things that are better suited to the

large group than the small group. Likewise there are certain activities that are better suited to the small group. I want to encourage you to always fly with both wings! If you attend only large group worship, you will be missing out on rich opportunities to become spiritually mature. If you attend only a small group and neglect corporate worship you will be missing unique opportunities that meeting with the entire body for teaching and worship provides. Decide now to always fly with both wings.



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## WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Romans 12:5*. Write it in the space below.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Memorize the four pillars of marriage/relationships
  1. Be o\_\_\_\_\_
  2. Be s\_\_\_\_\_
  3. Be h\_\_\_\_\_
  4. Be a s\_\_\_\_\_

## DAY 3: RELATIONSHIPS IN THE FAMILY OF GOD

In yesterday's lesson we saw how the new believers were devoted to six basic functions of the church. It is obvious that these functions were anchored by the love of God. It was their sacrificial love for one another that set them apart from the rest of the world like no other characteristic. This love was no accident, it was a foundation of the Apostles' teaching. Today we will look at how Christians loved one another so that you can learn how to love one another in the same way.

### BE DEVOTED TO ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE

First you must make a decision to be devoted to your brothers and sisters in love. This will not happen automatically. It takes a decision to learn how to love and a commitment to love in a practical way as God loves us. Paul tells the believers in Rome,

Romans 12:10

*<sup>10</sup>Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.*

### Love God first

The Bible tells us that we are first to love God with all of our hearts. Until we understand how to love God we will never be able to love others as He desires. When Jesus was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" He answered,

Matthew 22:37-38

*<sup>37</sup>... "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." <sup>38</sup>This is the first and greatest commandment."*

It is only when you know in your heart how much God loves you that you will be able to love God and others in the same way. That is because God's love is a supernatural love that comes from above. You can only learn to love others when you experience God's love. The Apostle John says,

1 John 4:10

*<sup>10</sup>This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

The source of all love is God. It is through His love for us shown by the sacrifice of His Son that we really know how to love. When Jesus said that we are to love God with all of our heart, soul and mind, He was asking us to focus on the source of all love. There will be enough love for us and for everyone else.

### Love others second

The next highest priority after loving God is to love your neighbor as yourself. That, Jesus said, was the second greatest commandment and closely connected to the first.

Matthew 22:39-40

*<sup>39</sup>And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' <sup>40</sup>All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*

You see the two commandments are inseparable. When we love God we must also love our neighbor. To love God is to love others as He loves us. This is the proof that we really love God. John made this clear when he said,

1 John 4:19-21

*<sup>19</sup>We love because he first loved us. <sup>20</sup>If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. <sup>21</sup>And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.*

Because God first loved you, you are to love your brothers and sisters. This can be difficult at times because some people are hard to love. It is for this very reason that you must understand that love for others is not something you can manufacture on your own. You must allow God's supernatural love to flow through you to others.

**Love flows through**

The love that God desires for us to demonstrate is not of this world. It flows from God to us and then overflows through us to others. Paul prayed for the believers in Thessalonica,

1 Thessalonians 3:12

*<sup>12</sup>May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.*

When you make a priority of loving God with all your heart, soul and mind, and loving others as yourself, you open your life to the flow of God's love to others. This requires you to make a conscious decision.



**REFLECT AND RESPOND**

Have you made a priority to love God with all your heart, soul and mind and love your neighbor as yourself? To what degree are you allowing God's love to flow through you to others?

**PURSUE PEACE WITH ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE**

One way we are to demonstrate our love for one another is to live in peace with one another. To live in peace with one another requires us to resolve differences so that they do not interfere with our relationships.

**Let Christ rule in your heart**

Since Jesus has made peace with you, you are called to make peace with others. Paul says,

Colossians 3:15

*<sup>15</sup>Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

You will only be willing to live at peace with your brothers and sisters in the body when you let the peace of Christ rule in your heart. Christ's attitude of peace with its foundation of love must take the place of selfish,

judgmental attitudes that produce bitterness and division. For the peace of Christ to rule you must allow God to reign as king of your heart. For Him to rule means to follow His rules for peace as follows:

### **Take the initiative in pursuing peace**

Many people do not live at peace with others because no one takes the first step to initiate a “peace treaty”. Scripture makes it clear that it is your responsibility to initiate peace. The writer of Hebrews says,

#### Hebrews 12:14-15

<sup>14</sup>*Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*

<sup>15</sup>*See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.*

You are to “...make every effort...” to live in peace (*Hebrews 12:14*). It is a part of your call to live a holy life. You should not rest until every effort is made to restore peace with those with whom you have issues. If they are not willing to restore the relationship then you still will have done your part, which is all that is asked of you. Paul says,

#### Romans 12:18

<sup>18</sup>*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

If you do not resolve conflict with your brothers and sisters, the issue will eventually turn into a bitter root that will in turn cause trouble. When you do not take the initiative to resolve conflict and restore peace you will miss the “...grace of God” (*Hebrews 12:15*). This means that by failing to demonstrate love by pursuing peace you are ignoring the fact that Jesus Christ restored peace with you by laying down His life for your sins.



### **REFLECT AND RESPOND**

Is there someone with whom you need to pursue peace? Is there some issue that is keeping you separated from a brother or sister in Christ? Are you willing to take the initiative to pursue peace and resolve the issue? Explain.

### **SHOW COMPASSION TO ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE**

An important dimension of love is to develop a heart of compassion. Without a heart of compassion it will be difficult to pursue peace and offer forgiveness to others. To develop a heart of compassion we must learn to appreciate the compassion that God has for us. The Psalmist speaks of this compassion of God.

#### Psalm 103:13-14

<sup>13</sup>*As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; <sup>14</sup>for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.*

### **God has compassion on you**

God has compassion on us in spite of our imperfections. He created us and is well aware of our weaknesses. And He still loves and accepts us with compassion. Compassion is not merely sympathizing with someone

but also the desire to help that person with their weaknesses. As God has compassion on us we are told to have compassion on others. Paul says,

Colossians 3:12

*<sup>12</sup>Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

### **Show God's compassion to others**

It is because you are "...God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved..." that you are to clothe yourself with that same compassion and kindness for others. You are to learn to have compassion for the weaknesses of your brothers and sisters in Christ and encourage them. Remember that you have your own weaknesses and God shows compassion to you. We all need encouragement—especially when we are down.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

*<sup>11</sup>Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*



### **REFLECT AND RESPOND**

How would you rate yourself in terms of showing compassion for others? What do you need to learn about God's compassion that will help you grow in this area?

## **OFFER FORGIVENESS TO ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE**

### **God has forgiven you**

This final dimension of love is also the most difficult to put into practice. We are to forgive others as God has forgiven us in Christ. And how did God forgive us? Even though we did nothing to deserve it, He forgave every sin we ever committed. Even though we were still sinners Christ died for us and forgave us (*Romans 5:6-8*). Because of God's love and forgiveness we are to forgive others.

Colossians 3:13-14

*<sup>13</sup>Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup>And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*



### **STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD**

Read *Colossians 3:13-14* in your own bible. Underline the words and phrases that and show why and how you are to forgive others. Then answer the following questions:

- What are you to do with grievances you may have against someone else?
- How are you to forgive someone?

- What binds all these virtues together?

### Forgive others as God has forgiven you

You did not deserve God’s forgiveness and the person you forgive may well not deserve your forgiveness. However this has nothing to do with your responsibility to forgive your brother. You are to “...bear with...” and to “...forgive...” these grievances (*Colossians 3:13*). You are to forgive as God forgave you. It is His love from above that binds all these virtues together. This means that despite the fact that someone may have intentionally harmed you, you still must forgive him or her. When you forgive someone it means that you cancel the debt of what they may have done to you. You are marking it “paid in full”. This is exactly what God did for you when He canceled the debt of your sins.

Remember that forgiveness is motivated by God’s grace. When we offer forgiveness to someone we are offering him or her God’s grace as well. We forgive because we have been forgiven and we recognize that others need to be forgiven as well. The Word of God reminds us,

*Ephesians 4:32*

*<sup>32</sup>Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*



### REFLECT AND RESPOND

How difficult is it for you to forgive others? Is there a grievance you are holding against someone? Is there someone to whom you need to offer forgiveness? Write down what that grievance is and how you will forgive them.




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### WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week’s assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week’s memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Romans 12:5*. Write it in the space below.

- Memorize the four pillars of marriage/relationships

1. Be o\_\_\_\_\_
2. Be s\_\_\_\_\_
3. Be h\_\_\_\_\_
4. Be a s\_\_\_\_\_

# DAY 4: THE FOUR PILLARS OF MARRIAGE

When you become a new believer there is not only a new standard of love for relationships within the family of God but also a new standard of love for your own family as well. While the Bible does not include a book titled "Relationships in the Family", it does contain very important scriptures on marriage and family relationships. Today I want you to look at some of the Scriptures and apply the principles to your marriage and other family relationships. If you are not married this lesson should still be helpful to you in your relationships. The four pillars we will look at can be applied to all relationships.

## A PLACE TO GROW

It is often within the family that relationships are most challenging. In the family there is no place to run and hide. We must face our issues with one another. The only question is how we will face them. Since we are all imperfect, those imperfections become very evident at home. Because we are not intent on impressing one another, our true selves are on display for everyone in the family to see.

It is also within the family that we have the greatest opportunity to grow in spiritual maturity. God will use family relationships to shape our character. If we are willing we will become aware of the attitudes and actions that need to be changed. If we cooperate with God He will transform us. God wants to use our marriage and family relationships to shape us into the image of His Son. Therefore we can look at family differences, issues, and conflicts as a way to grow.

## THE FOUR PILLARS OF MARRIAGE/RELATIONSHIPS

God desires to use your marriage to refine you into the man or woman He wants you to become. We all come into marriage with issues. As much as we would like to think we are spiritually and emotionally healthy, most of us are not. The refining process starts when we bump up against one another with our weaknesses and cause pain. That pain calls for change. The problem is that we usually think it is the other person who needs to change. We put pressure on them to change and, of course, the opposite occurs. God has a better idea. He wants us to focus on ourselves and allow Him to change us. God wants us to leave the responsibility of changing our mates up to Him.

The Apostle Paul gave the christians at Philippi four pillars of loving relationships that I want us to apply to marriage and other relationships today. I believe that this is the most powerful section of scripture in the Bible on how to have successful relationships. I truly believe that if you will memorize these principles and apply them consistently you will have an excellent marriage.

### Philippians 2:1-8

*<sup>1</sup>If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, <sup>2</sup>then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. <sup>3</sup>Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup>Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup>Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

<sup>8</sup>*And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death- even death on a cross!*

### **Pillar #1: Be one**

When it comes to marriage 1+1=1. The reason God created marriage is so that man and woman would become one flesh and glorify Him. In the first marriage ceremony ever God said to Adam and Eve,

#### Genesis 2:24

<sup>24</sup>*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*

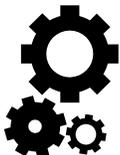
The term “one flesh” is a capsule description of the physical, spiritual, and emotional intimacy that is to define the marriage relationship. Marriage binds the husband and wife together in a special oneness with God that is reserved solely for this relationship. Our passage in Philippians gives us some added insight on how oneness is lived out in relationships. While Paul is speaking to believers in general it also applies to the marriage relationship.

*... make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. (V.2)*

This verse helps us understand that the two are one because they are “like minded”, (have the mind of Christ); “have the same love” (God’s love), “are one in Spirit” (the Holy Spirit), “one in purpose” (to glorify God) *Philippians 2:2*. Here is the powerful principle of this verse as it applies to marriage. When a husband and wife are one in their purpose to glorify God in all they think and all they do, they will not be focused on one another’s differences and perceived weaknesses.

There is an old saying that I think applies here. “**When the fishermen stop fishing, they start fighting!**” The application to marriage and other relationships is obvious. When a husband and wife stop focusing on their purpose in life there is a much greater possibility of them having conflict with one another. God says, “be one” but we often add “which one?” We want our spouse to be one like us. That is a recipe for conflict. We are to be one in Christ.

I know that some of you are married to spouses who are not believers. While there cannot be true spiritual intimacy, it is still possible to have a spirit of oneness in marriage. There still can be physical and emotional intimacy. There still can be an attitude of working together and not against one another. The believing spouse brings the Spirit and mind of Christ into the marriage relationship. Work to enhance other intimacies and never stop praying that you partner will receive Christ and that you can experience spiritual intimacy as well.



### **REFLECT AND RESPOND**

To what degree do you have oneness in your marriage relationship? Read and reflect on *Philippians 2:2* again. What is one way that you need to grow in oneness in your marriage?

- If your spouse is not a believer, think of one way you can enhance the other intimacies in your marriage.

## **Pillar #2: Be selfless**

Paul introduces two relationship destroyers: selfish ambition and vain conceit. He warns:

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit... (V.2)*

After thirty years of counseling my belief is that these two mindsets are the cause of most marital conflict. Either the husband or wife or both want their own way (selfish ambition) or believe they are right and their spouse is wrong (vain conceit). When couples come to me for counseling each usually hopes that I will agree with him or her and help get his or her way. It is amazing how self-righteous we can become. I include myself in this. I know that when Janet and I have had conflict over the years it is because either one or both of us have been selfish and prideful. Usually it is both to some degree. Fortunately Paul gives us the antidote to both of these unhealthy attitudes.

### **The antidote to selfish ambition is to be selfless**

*Philippians 2:4*

*<sup>4</sup>Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

Of course being selfless is easier said than done because if we are honest we would all like to have our own way. It is not easy to focus on the interests of others. Selfishness is a work of the flesh that will always be with us. To be selfless in marriage includes the following:

- I am committed to meeting your needs when I become aware of them.
- I will focus on your interests before my own.
- I will not minimize things that are important to you.
- I will not insist on seeing things or doing things my own way.
- I am committed to learning what makes you feel valued.



### **REFLECT AND RESPOND**

How do you rate in the area of selflessness? Put a plus (+) sign by the statements that are true about you and a minus (-) sign by those that are not true about you. Choose one minus that you are willing to work on in your marriage. Write down what you will do differently.

## **Pillar #3: Be humble**

Most of us would deny that we have a problem with vain conceit, but in reality most of us do. In our secret thoughts we believe we are right. Our attitude is that if others would just learn to think correctly (like us) the world would be a better place. If pride was not such a universal problem the Bible would not spend so much time warning about its dangers. It is the pride of thinking we are right and have an exclusive franchise of truth that is a major cause of conflict and can damage or destroy a marriage.

### **The antidote to vain conceit is humility**

When the Bible confronts us with a problem it always gives us a solution. The solution to vain conceit is to develop an attitude of humility considering others (in this case our spouse) better than ourselves. Paul says,

Philippians 2:3

<sup>3</sup>Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

To be humble in your marriage and consider your spouse better than yourself includes the following:

- Showing respect for your spouse's beliefs and opinions by listening without judging.
- Not always having to be right or to have the last word.
- Not insisting that your spouse do things the way you do them.
- Not trying to change your spouse but letting God do His work in his or her life.
- Accepting the difference in personalities. (How people think, act, and feel)



**REFLECT AND RESPOND**

How do you rate in the area of humility? Put a plus (+) sign by the statements that are true about you and a minus (-) sign by those that are not true about you. Choose one minus that you are willing to work on in your marriage. Write down what you will do differently.

**Pillar #4: Be a servant**

We are all called to be servants of one another in the family of God and in our own families. It is this attitude, above all others, that will make relationships successful. When Jesus wanted to show His disciples the full extent of his love he demonstrated humility. *John 13:1*. He washed His disciples' feet. This was considered a menial task usually performed by lowly servants. After washing His disciples' feet Jesus gave the following important instructions:

John 13:14-15

<sup>14</sup>Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.

<sup>15</sup>I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.



**STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD**

Look up *John 13:14-15* in your Bible. Underline the key words about why you should humbly serve others. How do you measure up in this area?

We are to follow Jesus' example of being a servant in all of our relationships. It is an attitude that will assure successful relationships in the family of God and in your own family. It is the most important pillar of marriage. Paul made that clear.

Philippians 2:5-8

<sup>5</sup>Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup>Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death- even death on a cross!

The attitude of a servant as demonstrated by Jesus that we are to develop consists of four important decisions. We must:

### **Decide to give up personal rights**

Jesus gave up His personal rights to become a servant. He was willing to empty Himself or make himself nothing so He would serve mankind (*Philippians 2:7*). We live in a culture that has made personal rights almost sacred. This mindset has harmed marriages in a great way. People expect so much and when their spouse doesn't deliver they are disappointed. This often results in anger, bitterness and divorce. **Are you willing to make a decision to empty yourself so that you can be full of the Holy Spirit and therefore build a Godly marriage?**

### **Decide to volunteer to be a servant**

Jesus "...took on the very nature of a servant." (*Philippians 2:7*) As you have seen, the nature of a servant is to humbly meet the needs of others. Jesus did this perfectly during His time on earth. He asks us to do the same (*Matthew 20:25-28*). **Are you willing to make a decision to be a servant in your marriage?**

### **Decide to be completely obedient**

Complete obedience is another mark of a servant. Jesus was obedient in all things to His heavenly Father. Paul says, "...He humbled himself and became obedient to death." (*Philippians 2:8*) As a servant we cannot pick and choose what we are going to obey. The Bible must be our only source of authority and our only standard for right and wrong. To be a servant in our marriage requires that we obey God in all things. **Are you willing to make a decision to obey God's Word in all things?**

### **Decide to lay down your life for others**

Obedience often requires sacrifice. Paul says that Jesus "...became obedient to death- even death on a cross!" (*Philippians 2:8*) The attitude of Jesus as a servant culminated in Him laying down His life for you and me. That is the ultimate act of obedience and love. It is the true mark of a servant. You are called to be such a servant in your marriage, family and other relationships. Right now this may seem like an overwhelming, impossible task, but remember this; it is the supernatural power of God's love that will flow through you making sacrificial love in your marriage possible. The question for you is, **"Are you willing to make a decision to lay down your life for your spouse?"**



### **REFLECT AND RESPOND**

Which of the four decisions is most important for you to make right now? Write your decision in the space below.



### **WEEKLY MEMORY AND REVIEW**

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Romans 12:5*. Write it in the space below.

- Memorize the four pillars of marriage/relationships

1. Be o\_\_\_\_\_

2. Be s\_\_\_\_\_

3. Be h\_\_\_\_\_

4. Be a s\_\_\_\_\_

# DAY 5: RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE LOST

God wants to enlarge His family. Jesus came to “...seek and save what was lost.” (Luke 19:10) Paul says that “...God our Savior...wants all men to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3). We who have been adopted into God’s family need to constantly remind ourselves that we were once lost and someone within the family of God helped show us the way to the heavenly Father. Now that you have been adopted, you have been given the responsibility to invite others to be part of God’s family. It is never too early to start sharing with others what God has done in your life. Following are some ways you can prepare for this important task.

## PREPARE YOUR HEART

First and most importantly you must prepare your heart. This happens when you learn to love others like God loves you. When you are constantly aware of His grace in your life you will want others to experience that grace.

### Develop a heart of compassion

Ask God to give you a heart of compassion for the lost. This does not come naturally with most of us. Jesus had to remind His disciples to have compassion for the lost and to pray for workers to harvest His crop.

Matthew 9:36-38

<sup>36</sup>When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup>Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. <sup>38</sup>Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

### Prayer

Take a moment right now to ask God to give you compassion for the lost. Pray that you will be an effective worker in God’s harvest.

## PREPARE YOUR LIFE

What reason will people have for wanting to be adopted into God’s family? What will cause them to be interested in what you have to say? People will become interested in the gospel and what you have to say when they see something different in you—something that they want. I once had a man with whom I play racquetball say to me, “There is something different about you. I want what you have.” This gave me an opportunity to present the gospel to my friend. I was thrilled that my friend saw a difference.

### Be an example

We need to think about how we come across to outsiders. Do they really see a difference in us? Do we demonstrate the life of Jesus? We don’t need to try to be perfect because that would turn people off. We should, however, be an example of what it is like to be a member of the family of God. Our character needs to reflect the character of Jesus. Scripture admonishes us to,

1 Peter 2:12

<sup>12</sup>Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

People need to see the difference. They need to observe that our beliefs, values and actions are exemplary and glorify God. We need to think about how we are coming across to people. They are watching us whether we are aware of it or not. Jesus tells us to be an example as salt and light. He said,

Matthew 5:13-16

*<sup>13</sup>“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. <sup>14</sup>“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup>Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*



**REFLECT AND RESPOND**

For a moment try to see yourself through the eyes of outsiders with whom you have a relationship. How do you think they would describe you? Are you salt and light? What is there about you that would cause people to want to know Jesus?

**PREPARE YOUR ANSWERS**

The way you live your life should be different enough that people will be curious about what makes you tick. This will happen when you set apart Christ as Lord.

**First set apart Christ as Lord**

When Christ is firmly seated on the throne of your heart, you will not only have compassion for the lost and set an example, but also be ready to answer questions about your faith. God’s Word says,

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 1 Peter 3:15

**Prepare your answer about hope**

Hope is the confidence that God will bring us through all trials on earth and that He will take us to our home in heaven for all eternity. Outsiders do not have that kind of hope. Most of them have some kind of shaky thoughts that they “hope” they will make it through this world and somehow be good enough to make it to heaven.

The Christian’s hope is anchored in grace. Therefore, the answer for the hope that you have is an explanation of grace. This is a primary reason that one of your assignments for this course was to learn the Acronym **GRACE**. Learning the five parts to the acronym not only gives you a clear understanding of your salvation, but also a tool to use in explaining this hope to outsiders. I know you have memorized this acronym but let’s review it one more time.

**THE ACRONYM OF GRACE**

**GIFT OF GOD**

Grace is the free gift from God of eternal life through Jesus and cannot be earned.

Romans 3:23

*<sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

Romans 6:23

*<sup>23</sup>For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

## RECEIVED THROUGH FAITH

Grace must be received by faith in God and inviting Jesus into your life.

Ephesians 2:8-9

*<sup>8</sup>For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup>not by works, so that no one can boast.*

John 1:12

*<sup>12</sup>Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—*

## ADOPTED BY THE FATHER

When you receive Jesus, you are adopted into the family of God by your heavenly father.

Ephesians 1:4-5

*<sup>4</sup>For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup>he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—*

## CANCELED SINS THROUGH JESUS

The moment we receive Christ, all of our sins, past, present and future, are canceled because Jesus paid the price for our sins on the cross.

1 Peter 2:24

*<sup>24</sup>He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

1 Peter 3:18

*<sup>18</sup>For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.*

## EMPOWERED BY GRACE

When you receive Jesus you receive divine empowerment to make character changes and fulfill God's purposes and plans for your life.

2 Peter 1:3-4

*<sup>3</sup>His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. <sup>4</sup>Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

2 Corinthians 12:9

*<sup>9</sup>But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*

## **PREPARE YOUR ANSWER FOR HOPE**

Prepare a brief, one paragraph answer that you would give an outsider if he or she asked you about the hope that you have. Keep it simple so that they can understand. Use Scripture because the Holy Spirit draws people to Jesus through the Word.

### **My answer of hope**

### **Other questions and answers**

Of course there are many other questions you will be asked about your faith. As you grow in the faith you will need to be prepared to answer these questions. Memorizing and studying Scripture and reading good books on apologetics (understanding and defending Christian beliefs) will help you. As a new Christian it is best to stick with the basics. When you don't know the answer to something, just say "I don't know", but I will find out. Stick with what you do know.

### **Answer with gentleness and respect**

Peter says we are to answer others with gentleness and respect. (1 Peter 3:15) This means we are to be gentle, not harsh or argumentative. Arguing will only cause the outsider to become entrenched in his position and set up a power struggle. We do not have to agree with someone to show respect. We can respectfully disagree without being disagreeable. We do this by respecting a person's right to hold a different view and respecting him or her as a person. We can do this and still express a firm conviction for our beliefs. As the Apostle Paul says, this takes wisdom.

Colossians 4:5-6

*<sup>5</sup>Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. <sup>6</sup>Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

## **PREPARE TO PRESENT THE GOSPEL**

From the very beginning of your new life in Christ you should make a commitment to tell people about what has happened to you. It is never too early to share the basics of the gospel with others. There may be a lot you do not know about the Bible, but what you do know is very important. What you do know is how what your life was like before you received Jesus, how you received Jesus, and what your life is like now that you have received Jesus. This is your personal and powerful testimony. Sharing your testimony is the best place to start in presenting the gospel to someone. It is an effective way of explaining God's grace.

**Prepare your testimony**

To prepare your testimony, complete the “My Testimony” worksheet that follows. You will see that it is divided into three sections. On the top third of the paper write what happened, “Before I became a Christian”, on the second third of the paper detail “How I became a Christian”, and on the bottom third complete your testimony by telling about your life “Now that I have become a Christian”. Review your testimony once a week for two months so that you are thoroughly prepared to share it when you have the opportunity.

**MY TESTIMONY****My Life Before I Became a Christian****How I Became a Christian (Include your understanding of the gospel)****My Life Now That I Have Become a Christian**

### Prepare a prayer list

It is important to pray for those you know who are lost. In the space below make a list of ten unsaved people with whom you have some kind of relationship. Pray that God will open the hearts of these people and that you will have an opportunity to share the gospel with them.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

### PRESENT THE "BRIDGE"

The tool I use most frequently to present the gospel is the bridge. You learned about the bridge in week one's study of grace. The bridge is easy to present and gives you the opportunity to present the gospel in a form that people can visualize and grasp. You will need to practice this presentation until you know well. **Refer to chapter 1** if you need help remembering the details of this presentation. Copy this presentation on several 3X5 index cards so you can review it on a regular basis. Practice this presentation right now.

#### Step 1 - God loves us

Take a sheet of paper and write "US" and "GOD" as shown below.

US

GOD

As you write these two words explain that God loves us and created us to have a relationship with Him. (*Genesis 1:27*)

## Step 2 - We became separated from God

Next draw lines showing how we are separated from God by our sin.

US

GOD

As you draw the lines read or quote *Romans 3:23*, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". Explain that sin is rebelling against God by going our own way. (*Isaiah 53:6*)

## Step 3 - We attempt to get back to God

Draw lines going down as you explain, "Most of us know that we are separated from God and attempt to reconnect with Him by doing good things such as read the Bible, help others and go to church. The Bible tells us that all of these things fall short. Read *Ephesians 2:8-9*

US

GOD

### *Ephesians 2:8-9*

<sup>8</sup>For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-  
<sup>9</sup>not by works, so that no one can boast.

## Step 4 - God provides a way back

Draw a cross in the space between US and GOD as you say, "The good news is that God loves us so much that He has done something we could never do for ourselves. By His death on the cross He has provide a bridge back to Him."

US

GOD

Read *1 Peter 3:18* and *2:24* and write these references next to the cross.

### *1 Peter 3:18*

<sup>18</sup>For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God...

1 Peter 2:24

*<sup>24</sup>He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

### **Step 5 – God invites you to cross the bridge**

Draw a stick figure on both sides of the divide with an arrow pointing to the right. As you do this say, “God is inviting you to cross over the bridge and be reconnected with Him. Where on the line would you say you are right now?” Have the person point to the place where he sees himself at that moment. If he locates himself to the left of the cross say, “You can cross over the bridge by praying to receive Jesus right now. Read *John 1:12*,

John 1:12

*<sup>12</sup>Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-*

Ask, “Are you ready to put your trust in Jesus and cross the bridge?” If the person says, “Yes”, clarify what he is committing to in the following way. Say, “Let me clarify what this involves. Placing your faith in Jesus means that you are trusting in Him alone for your salvation. This involves asking God for forgiveness and repentance (a commitment to turn around in your thoughts and actions and go in a new direction). You are now turning control of your life over to God. Is this your commitment?”

US

GOD

### **Prayer of commitment**

If the person says “yes”, lead them in a prayer of commitment. You could have them pray the following prayer a phrase at a time.

*“Lord Jesus, I invite you into my life right now. I repent asking forgiveness for my sins.*

*I accept you as my own personal Savior.*

*I believe you died for me to pay the penalty for my sins. Help me turn from my sins and obediently follow you. Thank you for giving me eternal life. Amen.”*

### **Baptism**

In the New Testament when people received Jesus they were always baptized. Baptism is a beautiful picture of what happens in a person’s heart when they receive Jesus. (Romans 6:1-5) Read this passage to the person and help him or her see the importance of being obedient in baptism.

### **First steps**

As a new Christian you are well aware of the need to have help taking those first steps as a baby Christian. Most likely someone is leading you through this course. I want to encourage you to do the same for someone else. If you have the joy of helping someone receive Jesus, help that person take his or her first steps. Since

you have been through this course you could take another person through the same material. This would not only help that person become grounded in the faith but would also strengthen your walk with Jesus.



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## FINAL BOOT CAMP REVIEW

This is your final Boot Camp review. Write each week's memory work in the space provided.

### WEEK 9 MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Romans 12:5*. Write it in the space below.
  
- Memorize the four pillars of marriage/relationships
  1. Be o\_\_\_\_\_
  2. Be s\_\_\_\_\_
  3. Be h\_\_\_\_\_
  4. Be a s\_\_\_\_\_

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### WEEK 8 MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *1 Peter 2:9*. Write it in the space below.
  
- Memorize the five principles of a trustee.
  - God o\_\_\_\_\_ it all
  - God has made us t\_\_\_\_\_ of it all
  - I\_\_\_\_\_ it all for God
  - Believe and practice the l\_\_\_\_ o\_\_ t\_\_\_\_ h\_\_\_\_\_
  - Keep an e\_\_\_\_\_ p\_\_\_\_\_

## WEEK 7 MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Ephesians 4:22-24*. Write it in the space below.
  
- Memorize how to change your "CD"

**C**hange your t\_\_\_\_\_

**D**evelop new a\_\_\_\_\_

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## WEEK 6 MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Romans 6:11*. Write it in the space below.
  
- Memorize the three areas of temptation (*1 John 2:15-16*).
  - Lust of the e\_\_\_\_\_
  - Lust of the f\_\_\_\_\_
  - Boastful p\_\_\_\_\_ \_ \_ \_

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## WEEK 5 MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows.

- Memorize and meditate on *Matthew 6:9-13*. Write it in the space below.
  
- Memorize and pray through the five components of the Lord's Prayer.
  1. Enter God's presence as a \_\_\_\_\_ - F \_\_\_\_\_ and  
p\_\_\_\_\_ His n\_\_\_\_\_.

2. Pray for God's k\_\_\_\_\_ and God's w\_\_\_\_\_.
3. Pray for your n\_\_\_\_\_.
4. Pray for s\_\_\_\_\_ c\_\_\_\_\_.
5. Pray for s\_\_\_\_\_ p\_\_\_\_\_.

### WEEK 4 MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on Joshua 1:8. Write it in the space below.
  
- Memorize the three principles of Bible study and write them in the space below. (See day 2)
  1. The principle of O\_\_\_\_\_. What does it s\_\_\_\_\_?
  2. The principle of I\_\_\_\_\_. What does it m\_\_\_\_\_?
  3. The principle of A\_\_\_\_\_. What does it s\_\_\_\_\_ to m\_\_\_\_\_?

### WEEK 3 MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *Hebrews 1:1-2*. Write it in the space below.
  
- Memorize and review the first three eras.
  - The Era of C\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of P\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of E\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of C\_\_\_\_\_
  - The Era of J\_\_\_\_\_

- The Era of K\_\_\_\_\_
- The Era of E\_\_\_\_\_
- The Era of R\_\_\_\_\_
- The Era of S\_\_\_\_\_
- The Era of G\_\_\_\_\_
- The Era of the C\_\_\_\_\_
- The Era of M\_\_\_\_\_

## WEEK 2 MEMORY AND REVIEW

Memorize and review this week's assignment and write it in the space that follows. Review all previous week's memory assignments from your index cards.

- Memorize and meditate on *2 Peter 1:20-21*. Write it in the space below.

- Memorize the acronym DUMPS.

D\_\_\_\_\_

U\_\_\_\_\_

M\_\_\_\_\_

P\_\_\_\_\_

S\_\_\_\_\_

## WEEK 1 MEMORY AND REVIEW

- Memorize and meditate on *Ephesians 2:8, 9*. Write it in the space below.

- Memorize and write the acronym **GRACE**

G

R

A

C

E



## TEARS AND CHEERS

At the beginning of each weeks group time you will be given time to share what is going on in your lives. This is voluntary and you will never be pressured to share if you choose not to. You group leader will give you the opportunity to share the following:

- **Tears**

“Tears” represents the burdens, disappointments and other issues you are facing. This will enable you to work through issues with the support of the group and receive encouragement and prayer

- **Cheers**

“Cheers” is the blessing, joys and spiritual progress for which you are thankful. Verbalizing these blessing strengthen you and encourage others.

# APPENDIX A - LEADER GUIDE

## INTRODUCTION

This study can be used individually, with a mentor or in a small group. If you are going to use this course to mentor an individual or in a small group I suggest that you go through the material yourself first. Read the introduction and complete at least the first session finishing all the assignments. This will help you understand the purpose and goals of the course and how you can best use this study to help new Christians take their first steps.

## ASSIGNMENTS

This course is basic but challenging. Jesus never made it easy for His disciples to follow Him. Their first steps were challenging ones. We don't want to overwhelm new believers but we do want them to get off to a good start with challenging assignments that require thought and discipline. Therefore, this course consists of five days of study to complete the study and prepare for the group or mentoring sessions. Tell people from the beginning that they will need to set aside approximately thirty minutes a day, five days a week to complete the study. There are writing and memory projects. It is very important that participants complete all assignments.

### Writing assignments

Each day's lesson includes several writing assignments. People are asked to respond to the material and apply it to their lives. While these writing assignments may vary, there are two basic kinds.

#### Reflect and respond

People will be asked to think and respond in writing to certain key sections of each day's lesson. These reflect and respond questions will comprise the core of your group or individual discussions. It is at this point that you will find out if people understand the material and what their issues are.

#### Study and apply the Word

Included in most days' sessions there is a study and apply the Word assignment. People are asked to study a verse or passage of Scripture, answer certain questions and apply the Word to their lives.

#### Other writing assignments

There are some other important writing assignments that do not fit under the above two categories. Some of these assignments will also work well for group discussion.

## Memory work assignments

### Scripture memory

There are key verses of Scripture people will memorize and review during this course. Stress from the very beginning how important the memorizing of Scripture is to spiritual growth. Be sure you also have memorized these Scriptures.

### Other memory work

In addition to Scripture memory there is another memory projects for each week. These memory projects will help new believes remember the core content for the week. This will provide them with a tool that

they can refer to for the rest of their lives. These memory projects will give them a solid foundation on which to build their lives.

### **Daily review**

At the end of each day there is a place where people are to memorize current assignments and review past assignments.

## **INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP SESSIONS**

### **The introduction session**

I would suggest getting together with your group or the person you are mentoring to hand out the materials a week before you start the study of *Spiritual Boot Camp*. Give a brief overview of the important points in the Introduction before handing out the manual. Next hand out the manuals and have them turn to the “Launching” section. Explain the assignments with them by looking at each assignment in Week One.

In this way everyone will have a clear understanding of the course and assignments. This is also an excellent time to spend some time getting acquainted. Following are some icebreakers you might want to use:

- ❖ Where were you born and raised?
- ❖ What was your first family car that you can remember?
- ❖ What toy or memento do you still have from your childhood?
- ❖ When and how did you receive Christ?
- ❖ What would you like to receive from this course?

### **The format**

I suggest that you use the following format for you group sessions. Remember that this is only a suggestion and feel free to organize your sessions in any way that fits your personality and your group. Prepare an outline for your group sessions using the following four areas:

#### **Review memory assignment**

After a brief casual time of getting to know one another, start your formal group time with memory review. People generally have a lot of stress when it comes to saying their verses and other memory work out loud in front of a group. It is, however, a very effective way of helping people memorize the Word and overcome fear. This is also the only way you will really know if they are completing their memory assignments. Encourage people to keep trying if they are having difficulty with the memory work. Tell them you are looking for progress not perfection.

#### **Share and prayer**

The share and prayer part of your group session is very important in building a spirit of trust, caring and accountability. You want new believers to learn how to become “part of one another”. This will give them a start.

#### **Prayer**

Have a time of prayer. Remember that these are baby Christians and probably do not have much experience praying out loud. This can be very intimidating so don’t call on people to pray or go around the circle expecting each person to pray. You can ask for prayer requests from people and pray for them yourself. You can also give people who want to pray out loud that opportunity. Ask for

volunteers. Tell them they can just pray sentence prayers if they wish. Your group will grow in this area as they become more comfortable with one another and practice praying out loud.

### **Individual or group discussion**

The majority of your time should be spent in discussion. I suggest having hour and a half sessions. Of that time devote an hour to group discussion. It is very important to hear what people have written in their responses to the material. Discussion should come from people as they share what they have written in the Reflect and Respond and Study and Apply the Word sections. You will not be able to have everyone comment on all of each day's questions. That would take all night. As you review each day's discussions sections, use a highlighter to indicate the ones that you think will be most helpful to discuss in group sessions.

From peoples' responses and discussion will come other questions and issues that you might need to clarify. However do be careful not to spend too much time on issues not related to the week's material. It is easy to get sidetracked with new believers because they have so many questions. Just try to maintain a balance of answering questions and still covering the material. Following are some brief comments on sessions one through six.

## **PREPARE AN OUTLINE**

To prepare for your group sessions I suggest a simple outline with the following things to cover during group time.

### **Share and Prayer**

Use the first fifteen minutes as a bonding time to give people an opportunity to express joys, burdens, and prayer requests. Spend some time thinking about how you want to handle prayer time each week.

### **Memory assignments**

Prepare to review all memory assignments for the week and review previous week's memory assignments. You might want to put people in pairs to review their memory assignments. This may be less intimidating than reviewing in front of the entire group.

### **Group discussion**

Review each day's lesson and choose some of the writing assignments to discuss. List the page numbers they are on so your group can find them quickly.

### **Day 1**

### **Day 2**

**Day 3**

**Day 4**

**Day 5**

### **INDIVIDUAL HELP**

People often have individual issues that are too complicated or personal to handle in the group setting. When you see that people have doctrinal, family or personal issues that need further attention, set a time to get together outside of group time. This can be a great opportunity to develop a close relationship with people and help them see how God and His Word have the answer for all of their issues in life.