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# ***Pressing On***

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**Growing in Grace**

**Richard B. Ramsay**



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# **Dedication**

To Angélica, who more than anybody else on earth has encouraged me to become more like Christ.

# Thanks

I would like to thank Sue Yarbrough and Erika O'Shee for most of the drawings used in this booklet. Erika did the line drawings and Sue did the other graphics.

I would also like to thank all of the people who have encouraged me and given me feedback on the lessons over many years. They were first written in Spanish (called *A Su Imagen*), and most of the feedback has come from friends in Chile and Cuba. It is gratifying to hear how these lessons have helped people grow in their spiritual walk. There is an amazing revival occurring in Cuba, and over 20,000 of these booklets, as well as the same number of *Am I Good Enough?* (called *¿Cuán Bueno Debo Ser?* in Spanish) have been printed and used in home cell groups throughout the island. I would like to thank Norberto Quesada for his dedication to this ministry, and for his tireless labor in evangelism and discipleship of the people of his country.

# Preface

“...I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.” (Philippians 2:12)<sup>1</sup>

One of the greatest sources of confusion among Christians today is related to the process of spiritual growth and the work of the Holy Spirit. During the history of the Church there have been periods when important doctrines have been defined, like the Trinity, the canon of the Bible, and justification by faith. Many of the current debates are producing a better understanding of sanctification, the topic of this book.

Some people emphasize human responsibility, and others emphasize the sovereign work of God. This book tries to harmonize the two. Even though all fruit of spiritual growth comes from the Lord, and even though salvation is by faith from beginning to end, man also has a responsibility to use the means of grace given to him. Faith and obedience are inseparable.

The purpose of this book is to guide Christian believers in their process of growth, and encourage them to trust the Lord. The lessons teach how to live the life of faith, using the appropriate tools. They are more practical than doctrinal, although they include biblical principles of sanctification. In this workbook, you will study guidelines for prayer, Bible study, having a devotional time, sharing your faith, discovering your spiritual gifts, and for finding God’s will for your life.

May the Lord bless you abundantly as you study His Word and put it into practice!

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<sup>1</sup> Bible quotes are taken from the *New International Version*.





# **PART 1**

## **YOU ARE A NEW PERSON**

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## INTRODUCTION

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If you sincerely trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have been born again and have a new identity.

*READ JOHN 3:3-6.*

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What must happen before a person can enter the kingdom of God?

When you were born again, the Lord gave you a new heart and you began to trust in Him. Your sins were forgiven and you turned your life over to Him. This was *the beginning of a new life*.

***READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17.***

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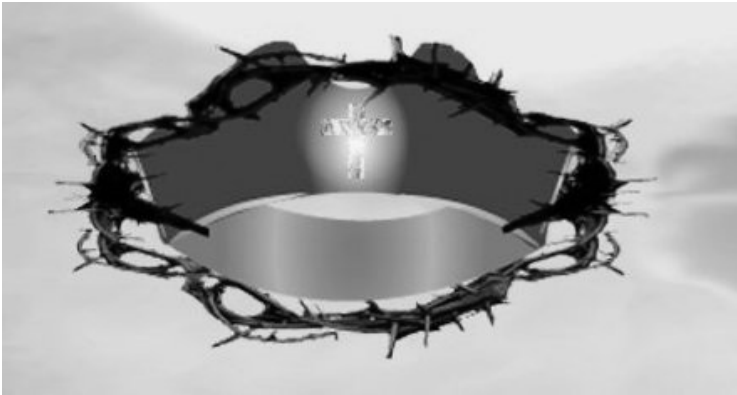
How does this verse describe the believer?

This does not mean that every aspect of your person has been changed. You still have the same physical appearance, for example. (When the Lord returns, you will also have a new body, but not yet!) Nevertheless, there has been a spiritual change so significant that the Bible describes you as a *new person*. In the following lessons, we are going to study the meaning of this change.

# 1

## YOUR NEW POWER

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When you put your faith in Jesus, you gained access to His power over sin in your life. You have a center for decision-making in your heart, and when you were born again, your self-centered *ego* stepped down from the throne and the Lord took over. He is the new king. Jesus directs your life and gives you power to overcome sin.

*READ ROMANS 6:14.*

---

What change has occurred in the life of the Christian with regard to sin?

Sin no longer dominates the believer, because the Holy Spirit is in his heart.

"But sometimes it still seems like sin overcomes me," you say.

### *READ ROMANS 7:15-25.*

---

Can you identify with this struggle that Paul describes? Sometimes even when we know what is right, we do what is wrong! Paul says that something *lives* in him that sometimes keeps him from doing what is right.

What is it that still lives in him? (vv. 17 and 20)

Who can help us overcome this? (vs. 25)

In other words, we must be realistic and admit that we still struggle with sin. It's power still lingers within us. This does not mean that we can excuse our wrong-doing by saying, "I can't help it!", or "The devil made me do it!" The influence of sin is still there, but now we can choose to resist it, and the Lord gives us strength to overcome it. God's grace is always available to us.

Neither are we *spiritual schizophrenics*. That is, we do not have two *personalities* that are battling against each other. Sin is still alive, but it is not a part of our new identity. It no longer *belongs* in us. It is a foreign enemy.

The history of humanity is a spiritual war, in which the victory was declared when Jesus rose from the grave. Yet enemy soldiers are still hiding in the shadows of their demolished headquarters taking shots at us. The same thing happened in

your heart when you let Jesus come in and rule. You have a new spiritual government, but the enemy still attacks. The good news is that our new leader will not let us be destroyed.

This whole book is about how to win the victory in this struggle.

*READ EPHESIANS 4: 22-32.*

---

We should *put off* the \_\_\_\_\_ and *put on* the \_\_\_\_\_.

Again, we see from this text that, while in one sense you are already a new person, in another sense you are going through a long *process* of *putting on* your new nature. This means to abandon sin and develop a wholesome new life.

Mention the things that you should put aside:

We cannot simply stop doing *bad* things, but we must replace them with *good* things.

I knew a young man who had a fervent desire to be good. He decided not to take a bus to work because it always went faster than the speed limit and he felt guilty about it. Then he refused to go to work because another person in his office listened to music that he considered a bad influence. Little by little, he isolated himself from the world to the point of closing himself up in his house. He didn't want to go out into the street because this meant confronting too much temptation. Even though he was thirty years old, he stayed home with his mother who took care of him. Obviously this is not the life style that God wants us to live! To do nothing is also to sin, because there are many good things left undone. How can we love people if we are sitting at home alone, completely out of touch with them?

Mention the good things we should put on in place of the bad things, according to Ephesians 4:22-32.

In some people the Lord makes dramatic changes right away. For example, there are cases of drug addicts and alcoholics who have been freed from their dependence instantly. However, this is not what happens in the majority of Christians. Normally, the changes are gradual. Spiritually, we are like children who grow up, gradually leaving behind self-centered habits, learning to love others. The big difference is that the Holy Spirit lives in our heart and gives us strength to live this new life. Sin is still there, but it is no longer *in control*.



*READ JOHN 15:4-5.*

---

What must we do to bear fruit?

To *remain* in Jesus means to *trust* in Him. Just as a plant receives its nourishment through the roots, we obtain spiritual strength from the Lord.

Sometimes when you read passages such as Ephesians 4:22-32, you may think, "Do I have to change all this? I can't be like that!" However, this way of thinking betrays two problems:

1. In the first place, you are looking too much at yourself. You must look more at the Lord. What we want to show in these lessons is that you are a new person guided by the Spirit of God, and *HE* will help you change. Of course, you have your own responsibility in this process of growth (and we will study that in other lessons), but the power to change comes from the Lord.

2. Secondly, you may not be appreciating how *positive* these changes are. They are not a *burden*. Instead, it is a great *relief* to be able to become more like the person Ephesians 4 describes. You will experience greater peace and joy. The Lord *frees* us from sin.

Now read the following passage in another way. Don't think of what a *heavy burden* you now have as a Christian. Read the passage as a *promise*. Think of it this way: "How wonderful that the Lord will do this in me!"

*READ COLOSSIANS 3:5-17.*

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Write down the things the Lord will take out of your life:

Note the things that the Lord will produce in your life:

**FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION:**

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Reviewing the two lists of sins that we should overcome, which ones cause you special difficulty?

Reviewing the two lists of positive things that the Lord will produce in us, which are the characteristics that you especially desire and need?

## REVIEW

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Explain what it means that you are a *new person* in Christ with regard to the power of sin:

NOTE: You can look at the answers to the review questions at the back of the book if you are not sure of something.

## FOR GROUP DISCUSSION:

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1. Mention some of the positive changes you have seen in your life since you committed it to the Lord:
2. What if it still seems that some sin has power over you? Does that mean that you have not been born again?
3. What would you say to the young man who stayed in his house to avoid temptation?



# 2

## YOUR NEW PURPOSE

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### FOR PREVIOUS REFLECTION:

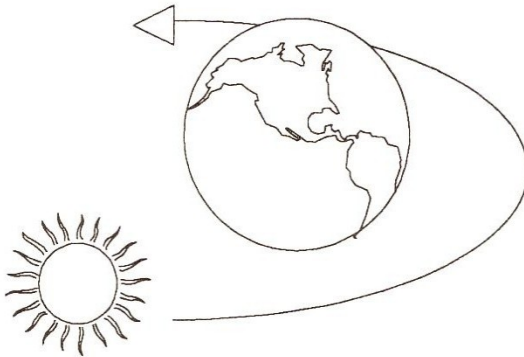
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Can you define the fundamental purpose of your life? What is it? Why?

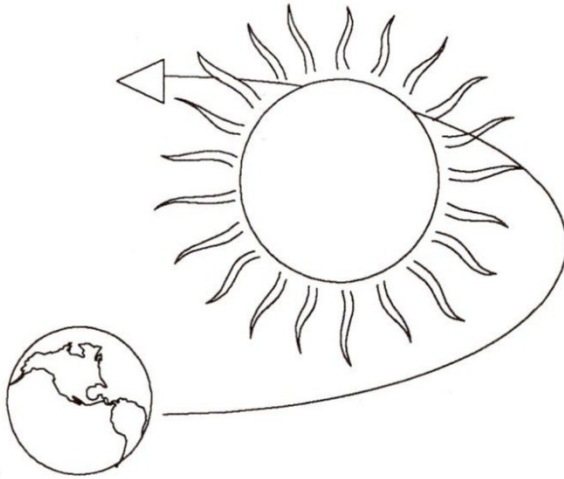
### INTRODUCTION

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A long time ago people thought that the earth was the center of the universe and that the sun revolved around it.



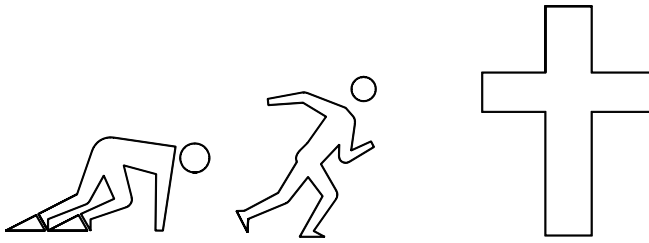
Then they realized that they were wrong; the earth revolves around the sun!



This is the way it is with our lives: Before we are born again as Christians, we try to be the center of our own lives. Then when we believe in Jesus and turn our lives over to Him, He becomes our center. We commit ourselves to be His disciples and to do whatever He asks us.

Hebrews 12:1,2 says, "...Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith."

In order to advance in the Christian life, we need to know where the goal is. We must know the purpose of our life and the goal of our growth.



## THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

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Look up the following verses to see what should be our purpose in life:

*1 PETER 4:11*

*1 CORINTHIANS 6:20*

*ROMANS 15:6*

---

What is your conclusion?

This purpose can be expressed in different ways. For example, Jesus summed up what God expects of us in the following verses:

*READ MATTHEW 22:36-40.*

---

Sum it up in your own words:

Paul says it another way:

***READ ROMANS 14:8.***

---

How would you say this in your own words?

The *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, question #1, says:

"What is the chief end of man?"

Answer: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."

**THE GOAL OF GROWTH IN CHRIST**

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***READ ROMANS 8:29.***

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For what purpose were we predestined?

***READ EPHESIANS 4:11-13.***

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The task of the officials of the Church is to train Christians to build

up the Church, until it becomes mature like \_\_\_\_\_.

What is your conclusion? What is the goal of our growth in Christ?

To summarize:



The *Purpose* of your new life is to  
*GLORIFY GOD,*

and the *Goal* of your growth is to  
*BECOME LIKE JESUS.*

### *READ PHILIPPIANS 3:12.*

---

The Lord has "taken hold" of you to mold you into His own image.

However, you must also \_\_\_\_\_ to "take hold" of this spiritual growth.

This phrase in Philippians has given us the title of this book. We are learning to *press on* toward our goal of being like Christ.

### THE TWO BROTHERS

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There is an evangelistic tract called "The Two Brothers." It tells about a murderer who is sentenced to death. His brother, who was a very good person, loved him so much that he dressed in his clothes and went to die in his place. He left his own clothes with a note for the one who had been condemned to die, that said, "My dear brother, I took your place today. I only ask one thing of you, that you put on my clothes and live the kind of life I was living."

That is what Jesus has done for us: He died in our place, so we are free from condemnation, and have begun a new life.

Now he asks us to put on His character and live our lives the way He would.

What is Jesus like? We would have to study the whole Bible to answer the question, and even then we would not know everything about Him. Nevertheless, we know He is *perfect*. Therefore, as a brief summary of His character, we will look at two passages that tell us about perfect righteousness: one gives a list of the *Fruit of the Spirit*, and the other describes *Love*.

## A. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

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*READ GALATIANS 5:22-23.*

---

List the characteristics of the Fruit of the Spirit:

## B. LOVE

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*READ 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7.*

---

Write the characteristics of love:

*READ JOHN 20:21.*

---

What does this verse tell you with regard to the purpose of your life?

Your "job description" is to continue the kind of life that Jesus Himself lived. Think of it! You are very important! You are like an *angel* sent from God to help needy people and share His Word with them. Of course you cannot die to save people from their sin as Jesus did, but you can continue on with the ministry of Jesus in the sense that you serve God by loving the people around you.

You cannot do this on your own. You must depend on the Holy Spirit to give you strength, and you also depend on the help of other Christians.

Neither can you fully reach the goal in this life. You will not be perfected until the Lord returns and transforms us into His image. In the mean time, you will be growing gradually, just like a child grows into an adult.

## REVIEW

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1. Your new purpose in life is:
2. The goal of your spiritual growth is:
3. Jesus manifests the F \_\_\_\_\_ of the S \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Jesus manifests perfect L \_\_\_\_\_.

## FOR DISCUSSION

---

1. What seems to be the purpose of life for people you know who have not committed their lives to Christ?
2. Explain how your work (or your studies) can glorify God. (Don't think just about how you can talk to others about Christ, but about how your job *itself* makes some contribution to society.) What would happen if you didn't do it? For example, if you work at a typewriter all day, how does this work glorify God? What part does it have in the organization you work for, and how does the organization benefit society? If you are a mechanic, why should you do a good job of fixing cars? What would happen if you didn't? Try to analyze your work in this way and see if you can appreciate the dignity of your day-to-day activities. Everything you do is for the glory of God.

## **PART 2**

# **TAKE A LOOK IN THE MIRROR**

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## INTRODUCTION

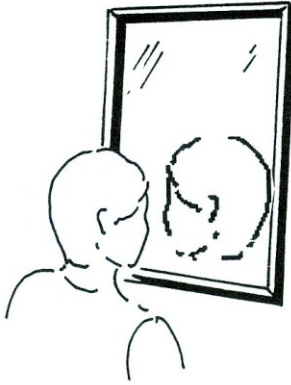
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The first step toward growth is to take an honest look at ourselves. We must recognize the need for change. If we try to hide our weaknesses, we will never overcome them. We have no reason to pretend that we are okay when we are not, since we know that God loves us in spite of our sin, and wants to help us overcome our problems. In Christ, we are free to be authentic. The object of the next two lessons is to help you to *take a look in the mirror*, according to God's Word, to see where you need to change. We will study the Ten Commandments for this purpose.

*READ JAMES 1:22-24.*

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What are we like if we just listen to the Word, but do not practice it?



*READ 1 JOHN 1:8.*

---

What are we doing when we deny our sin?

*READ ROMANS 12:3.*

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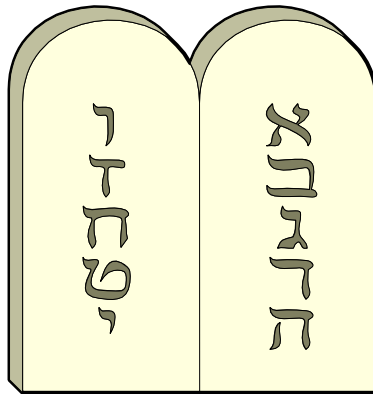
According to this text, how should we think about ourselves?



# 3

## FOUR WAYS TO LOVE GOD

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Sometimes we may think of the Ten Commandments as negative limitations. However, the Lord gave them to us partly for our own benefit. If we live according to His norms, we will live a fuller and more joyful life. We should obey His commandments *primarily* because it pleases *God*, but this in turn will also give *us* joy. The two aspects are inseparable. As the catechism question says, our main purpose is "to glorify God *and* to enjoy Him forever."

When a child gives his father a hug, he wants to please him with his affection, but the gesture also gives him a sense of

joy and comfort. In a similar way, when we please God, we also receive benefits.

God wrote these commandments with His own finger on tablets of stone. They show us something of God's character, and summarize some very important elements of what He expects of us.

Most people are somewhat familiar with the commandments, but have never really analyzed carefully what they mean. Let's take a fresh new look at them!

The first four deal especially with our relationship with God. They show us how to love Him.

*READ EXODUS 20:1-17.*

---

Write the first commandment in your own words (20:3):

This first law is fundamental, because it tells us who God is and that He is the only one we should honor.

Can you think of different ways in which we sometimes break this commandment?

In general, any person, any ideology, any ambition, or any possession, which becomes more important than God Himself, is another *god* to us, and we have broken the first commandment.

Write the second commandment in your own words. (Exodus 20:4-6).

Can you think of ways in which we sometimes break this commandment?

Some people think they can use images to help them think of God, without really *worshipping* them as idols. However, read verses 4-6 of Exodus 20 again carefully. The same commandment has three aspects:

It says we should not \_\_\_\_\_ idols,  
we should not \_\_\_\_\_ to them,  
and we should not \_\_\_\_\_ them.

Some people may think they can bow down before a statue without worshipping it, but they are still violating this commandment.

Why is this so important to God? Partly because anything man can make is a poor representation of God. His glory is beyond our comprehension. Would you like for your friends and family to keep a picture of you that made you look ugly, or which somehow misrepresented you? How would you feel if they stopped talking to you in person and began to speak to that picture?! That's the way God feels when we use statues or other physical objects to communicate with Him.

*READ 1 TIMOTHY 2:5.*

---

According to this verse, who is the only mediator between God and man?

Write the third commandment in your own words (Exodus 20:7).

Can you think of ways in which we sometimes break this commandment?

This commandment includes much more than what we consider *dirty language* or *swearing*. It forbids doing anything that gives God a *bad name*. That may mean, for example, *speaking lightly* of God, it may mean *praying* to Him or *singing* hymns without really being sincere, or it may mean *thinking thoughts* about God that do not honor Him. It could also mean committing some sin that reflects poorly on God. People who see the sin may ridicule God and think, "See, these people who call themselves Christians are hypocrites!" In general, it includes anything that takes away glory from God.

Write the fourth commandment in your own words. (Exodus 20:8).

There are two sides to this:

We must \_\_\_\_\_ during six days, and \_\_\_\_\_ on the seventh day.

Some people are lazy, and must remember that they are supposed to work. On the other hand, and it seems to be more and more common today, many people are turning into *workaholics*. They don't know how to stop. They have no time for their families and they don't have time to go to church. However, man is made with a need to rest, in order to restore himself both physically and spiritually. If he tries to work incessantly without sufficient sleep and without time off, he will eventually break down like machinery that is not properly maintained. Notice that we should also let others rest on the seventh day.

It is interesting to note that after Jesus' resurrection, the disciples changed the day of rest from Saturday to Sunday. They began to worship on the first day of the week instead of the seventh, in order to celebrate the day of His resurrection. However, some people still insist that Saturday must be considered the day of rest.

*READ ROMANS 14:5.*

---

What do you think about the importance of the day of the week, according to these passages?

Although the important thing is not which day is recognized as a day of rest, we still should not forget the main principle, that one day of the week should be dedicated to renew both our physical and our spiritual strength.

## REVIEW

---

Write a phrase to sum up each of the first four commandments:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

## FOR DISCUSSION:

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1. Have any of the first four commandments taken on new meaning for you? Which ones? What have you learned?
2. Is there something you still don't understand about any of them?
3. As you *look in the mirror* and examine yourself according to these four commandments, in what areas do you need to change?

## FOR PRAYER:

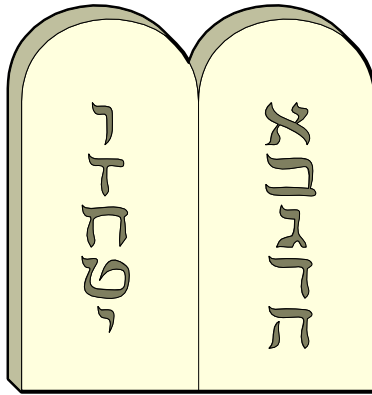
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Ask the Lord to help you grow in the areas where you have found weaknesses.

# 4

## SIX WAYS TO LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

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While the first four commandments deal especially with man's relationship with God, the last six deal especially with man's relationship with other people. Keep in mind, however, that these two aspects are inseparable. That is, if you love God, you will love your neighbor, and if you love your neighbor, you are loving God.

Furthermore, just as we explained that by loving and obeying God, we also receive benefit and joy, the same principle applies to loving others. When we love others, we are also blessed in return. All three dimensions are inseparable: God, others, and ourselves.

*READ MATTHEW 22:36-40.*

---

How does Jesus summarize the law? What are the two main precepts?

It is important to recognize that the commandments talk about *relationships*, both with God and with man. Jesus does not sum up the law by saying simply, "be good," as if we could become righteous in some abstract sense. Rather He tells us to love God and to love others as ourselves. Love is not simply an emotion; love means treating each other the way God says we should.

Notice also that loving ourselves is part of the formula. Jesus is not condoning self-centeredness, but rather a wholesome regard for our own well-being. Despising ourselves, or disregarding ourselves, does not help us love others; on the contrary, it only makes it more difficult.

*READ EXODUS 20:12-17.*

---

Write the fifth commandment in your own words (20:12):

There is a principle of respect for authority here which must be applied not only to the family, but also to other structures of society. Without submission to authority, everything would be in chaos.

Can you mention other ways in which this commandment should be obeyed?



Name the sixth commandment (Exodus 20:13):

*READ MATTHEW 5:21,22.*

---

In what other ways do we sometimes break this commandment?

What is the seventh commandment? (Exodus 20:14)

*READ MATTHEW 5:27-30.*

---

In what ways do we sometimes violate the seventh commandment?

Name the eighth commandment (Exodus 20:15):

Can you think of different ways in which we might sometimes steal?

Write the ninth commandment in your own words (Exodus 20:16):

Mention ways in which we are sometimes dishonest:

*READ JOHN 8:44.*

---

Where do lies originate?

What is the tenth commandment? (Exodus 20:17)

*Covetousness* is an unwholesome desire for something that does not belong to you. Not all desires are wrong, of course. There's nothing wrong with wanting to read a good book, or to eat a good meal, under normal circumstances. Sexual desires are perfectly normal within marriage. On the other hand, some desires are inappropriate: for example, to desire another man's wife, to want a car that is priced beyond your financial capacity, or to have an insatiable appetite for more and more chocolate.

Can you think of things that you sometimes *covet*?

## REVIEW

---

Write all ten commandments in your own words, using a phrase for each one:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

## FOR DISCUSSION:

---

1. How has your understanding of the last six commandments changed?
2. Are there any questions that you have about any of them?
3. With which ones do you struggle most?

## FOR PRAYER

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Ask the Lord to help you grow in your weak areas.



## **PART 3**

### **HOW CAN I CHANGE?**

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## INTRODUCTION

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After looking in the mirror, we realize that we need to change. We are far from being what God expects of us. But *how* do we change? Can you simply decide to be a better person? No! How many times have you been frustrated by attempts to overcome your weaknesses and problems. You need more than good intentions. You need an internal strength that only comes from the Holy Spirit.

### *READ ROMANS 1:17.*

---

From whom does righteousness come?

What do we need to obtain it?

F \_\_\_\_\_

Notice that this righteousness that comes from God is by faith *from first to last*. Our lives are like a bridge that is held up by strong pillars of the grace of God on both ends, and we walk over it by faith, from beginning to end.

### *READ GALATIANS 3:3.*

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Instead of trying to obtain the goal of righteousness by our own human efforts, Paul exhorts us to depend on:

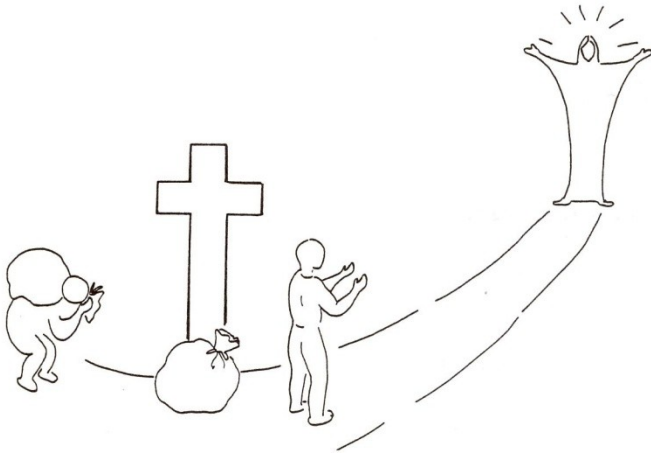




# 5

## THE TOOLS TO GROW

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*READ HEBREWS 12:1-2.*

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To what is life compared here?

To whom should we look as we run?

Why? What does Jesus do for our faith?

Never take your eyes off Jesus! If you do, you will fall, just like a runner who begins to look around at the other athletes, to watch someone in the stands, or to stare at his own feet. To keep your eyes on Jesus is the secret for spiritual growth.

*READ 2 CORINTHIANS 3:16-18.*

---

Into what are we transformed when we look at Jesus?

We are like a child who imitates his father. Since he loves him and is constantly around him, he becomes very much like him. Again, the secret is to keep your attention on Jesus.

But we are not passive in this process of growth. God has given us tools. We call them the *Means of Grace* because they are the means that the Lord uses to communicate His grace to us. Our strength comes from Him, and precisely because of that fact, we must use the tools that He has given us. What are they?

Look up the following passages and try to discover the *Means of Grace* mentioned in each one:

*2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17*

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*EPHESIANS 6:18*

---

*1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-26*

---

*ACTS 8:36-38*

---

We will study three Means of Grace:

The Bible  
Prayer  
The Sacraments

We will study how to use these *Means of Grace* in the following lessons.

NOTE: While theologians have traditionally spoken of three *Means of Grace*, The Word, prayer, and the sacraments, it seems clear that to use these three elements by yourself, without the companionship of other Christians, would seriously impede your growth. Therefore, fellowship could be considered a fourth *Means of Grace*.

*READ HEBREWS 10:25.*

---

What were the believers not to forsake?

## REVIEW

---

1. What is the secret for significant change in your life?
2. Our righteousness comes from God, by F \_\_\_\_\_  
from first to last.
3. Name the three *Means of Grace* mentioned in this lesson.
4. What other aspect could be considered a fourth *Means of Grace*?

## FOR DISCUSSION:

---

1. Which of the *Means of Grace* do you think you have used most? Which have you used least?
2. What do you think happens to a person who is not trusting the Lord to grow, but trying to change himself by his own strength? How can you detect this problem?

## FOR PRAYER

---

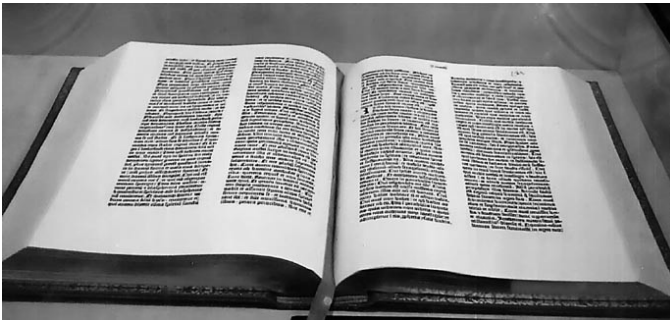
Ask the Lord to teach you how to use the *Means of Grace* to become more like Him. Ask Him to help you be willing to make the necessary changes in your lifestyle in order to make full use of these tools for growth.



# 6

## HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE ON YOUR OWN

---



In the next few lessons, we will look at the *Means of Grace*, one at a time. We'll start with the Word. One of the most significant things you can learn as a Christian is to study the Bible on your own. You can discover profound truths to believe, promises to claim, principles by which to live, and comfort in troubled times. You will no longer have to depend only on the ideas and teachings of other people, but can also study on your own.

***READ ACTS 17:11.***

---

Why were the Bereans considered *more noble*?

*READ JOHN 8:31-32.*

---

According to this passage, why should we study the Word of God?

*READ 2 PETER 1:19-21.*

---

Why is the Bible a special book? Who is the author?

*READ 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17.*

---

For what is the Bible useful?

In this lesson we will teach you a method of personal Bible study. It will help you analyze a short passage. Read the following steps carefully, then do the exercise to practice them:

**THREE STEPS OF BIBLE ANALYSIS**

---

I. OBSERVATION (What does the passage say?)

II. INTERPRETATION (What does it mean?)

A. Ask yourself questions.

B. Look for the answers.

1. In the Bible itself

2. In other study aids



III. APPLICATION (What importance does it have for me?)

- A. Promises
- B. Truths
- C. Ethical principles
- D. Examples

Now memorize these steps:  
What are the three main steps?

- O \_\_\_\_\_
- I \_\_\_\_\_
- A \_\_\_\_\_

Which of the three steps:

- a. ...looks for the details of the passage?
- b. ...looks for the meaning of the passage?
- c. ...looks for the importance of the passage in your life?

What are the two subdivisions of *Interpretation*?

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_

What are the two sources for finding answers?

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_

Note the four possible kinds of application:

A. \_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_

C. \_\_\_\_\_

D. \_\_\_\_\_

## EXERCISE

---

Practice the steps of Bible Analysis with John 3:16. It's a well-known verse, but you will be amazed at how many new things you may discover!

First, pray that the Lord will open up new things to you and teach you.

### I. OBSERVATION

After reading it carefully, write the verse *in your own words*:

### II. INTERPRETATION

A. Write down questions you have about the verse. This is very important as you begin your analysis, because these questions will guide the rest of your study.

Suggestions:

What does "world" mean in this verse?

What does "perish" mean?

What is "eternal life?"

B. Look for answers to your questions:

Depending on the question, you may do one or more of the following procedures:

1. Read the passages surrounding this verse.
2. Use a concordance or the references in your Bible to look up other passages that may help.
3. Look up words in a dictionary or Bible Dictionary. You can use the concordance to look up words like "world" to see how they are used in the Bible.
4. Read what others say in commentaries, or in the notes your Bible may have. Talk with your pastor to see what books he recommends.

Write down the answers you are finding:

### III. APPLICATION

After meditating on the needs in your own life, in your family, in your church, and in the rest of society, look for one or more of the following:

- A. A promise
- B. A truth
- C. An ethical principle
- D. An example to follow

Write down applications. Hopefully, there are several. Make them concrete and specific, not vague and general. For example, do not write simply, "God is loving," but in what way God is loving, and what difference that makes to you.

Good! You probably found much more in this verse than you had anticipated. Now, take a moment to pray. Ask the Lord to help you put into practice what you have learned.

## REVIEW

---

Write the steps for Bible Analysis:

- I.
- II.
  - A.
  - B.
    - 1.
    - 2.
- III.
  - A.
  - B.
  - C.
  - D.

## FOR DISCUSSION:

---

1. Share what you discovered in your study of John 3:16.
2. Share what you learned about Bible analysis.



# 7

## HOW TO PRAY MORE EFFECTIVELY

---



Prayer is simply talking to God. It can include the following elements:

- Praise
- Thanksgiving
- Confession of sin
- Requests

*READ MATTHEW 6:5-15.*

---

In verses 5-7, Jesus mentions two problems that the hypocrites have regarding prayer.

What are they?

According to verse 8, why do we not need to use many words?

Notice that the Lord's Prayer is totally centered on God. For example, we should pray that *His* name be "hallowed" (or "glorified"), that *His* kingdom come, that *His* will be done.

Analyze the prayer, writing down your understanding of each phrase:

- a. "Our Father in heaven,"
- b. "hallowed be your name,"
- c. "your kingdom come,"
- d. "your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."
- e. "Give us this day our daily bread."



f. "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors."

g. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

According to verses 14 and 15, what happens if we do not forgive others who sin against us?

This could mean that when someone has so much bitterness in his heart that he simply cannot forgive others, it shows that he has never understood God's forgiveness, and that he has never accepted His forgiveness in Christ. However, it may also refer to something that can happen even to believers. When a Christian refuses to forgive someone, this puts a barrier between himself and God, temporarily impeding the benefits of forgiveness that he normally experiences in his daily walk with Christ. This fellowship will be restored when he comes to the point of forgiving the person who has offended him.

*READ JOHN 14:13-14.*

---

In whose name should we pray?

To pray *in the name of Jesus* does not mean simply to use a phrase, "In Jesus' name, amen," at the end of our prayer, as if this phrase were *magic* (although there is certainly nothing wrong with saying this phrase at the end of the prayer, if we mean it sincerely.) Rather, it means to pray with the *attitude* of seeking His honor and submitting to His authority. It means that the motive of our prayer is to see that *His* will be done.

To ask something *in Jesus name* is to ask something *for Him* and *with His authorization*.

Sometimes a "power of attorney" is given so that one person can make a legal transaction on behalf of another person. The one who presents the document carries out the business according to the will of the first party, not according to his own will. He seeks the other person's honor and submits to his authority. When we pray "in Jesus' name," we are doing something similar.

### *READ 1 JOHN 5:14.*

---

How can we be sure we are asking something "according to His will?" That is, where do we find His will written down for us?

We should study the Bible to find His will. If we find that our request is in agreement with what the Scripture teaches, then we know that we are praying *in Jesus' name* and that God the Father will answer.

### *READ HEBREWS 10:19-22.*

---

In the Old Testament, the *Most Holy Place* was the inner chamber of the temple, beyond the *Holy Place*, where only the high priest could enter after ceremonial cleansing and sacrifices. When Jesus died on the cross, the curtain between the *Holy Place* and the *Most Holy Place* was torn (see Matthew 27:51), symbolizing the fact that anyone who has been cleansed of his sin can now enter directly into the presence of God. This is what we do when we pray.

Why can we pray with confidence?

The Lord does not grant our petitions because we deserve it, but only because of Jesus. We are forgiven and washed with His blood, so we can enter the presence of God at any moment, in any place, with a clear conscience. We need no other mediator, and can talk directly with Him.

*READ 2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-10.*

---

What problem did Paul have?

NOTE: Most commentators think this was some kind of physical problem, possibly a defect in his eyes.

How many times did Paul ask the Lord to take away this "thorn in the flesh?"

What was the Lord's answer?

What is your conclusion? Does the Lord always give us what we ask?

Sometimes He does not grant our request because it would not be the best thing for us. On the other hand, it may not be the right time yet.

*READ MATTHEW 26:39-42.*

---

What did Jesus pray?

What phrase did He add after his petition every time?

We should always pray with this attitude, that the Lord's will be done. Trust Him to do what is best!

## REVIEW

---

1. What does it mean to ask something *in Jesus' name*?
2. How can we be sure we are praying *in Jesus' name*?
3. Why does the Lord sometimes *not* grant our requests?

## FOR DISCUSSION

---

Have you learned something new about prayer? What?

## IMPORTANT EXERCISE

---

Prepare a request for your prayer time, using biblical passages as a basis.

First, write what you would like to ask:

Now, using a concordance, look up passages that support this petition.

Are there any promises? Write them down.

Can you think of any of God's characteristics that give you confidence that He will grant your request?

Try to think of any other biblical truths, or some historical example, or anything that gives you reason to think that the Lord will want to do what you are asking:

Now you can pray with a solid basis and really trust the Lord to answer! You know that you are praying *in the name of Jesus!*

It is possible that, as you studied to prepare this prayer request, you realized that you were going to ask something that was not in accord with God's will or with biblical truths.

In that case, it's a good thing you found out and did not ask for it! You learned something very important!

Also, be careful not to try to *manipulate* God. He is free to grant our requests or *not*. We may easily be confused about what we think is best, but He will never make a mistake, and He will always work things out for our good. (Romans 8:28). He is free to choose the *timing* He considers best, and the *way* He considers best. This exercise is to learn to make our prayers more biblical, more effective, and more God-centered. Nevertheless, God is not our employee that we can boss around, or some kind of spiritual machine that we can control. He is the owner of the universe, and He can do what He wants!

## ANOTHER EXERCISE

---

If you would like to analyze other prayers in the Bible, to see how requests are presented, you can look at the following passages:

Genesis 18:16-33

Numbers 14:1-19

Psalms 25

Philippians 1:3-11

Colossians 1:3-14

# 8

## THE MEANING OF THE SACRAMENTS

---



The sacraments are ceremonies instituted by Christ to teach the spiritual truths of the gospel by means of material symbols. Protestants celebrate only two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which replace circumcision and the Passover of the Old Testament.

## I. CIRCUMCISION

---

*READ GENESIS 17:10-14.*

---

To circumcise means to cut the foreskin of the male sexual organ.

Who had to be circumcised? (verse 10)

At what age?

This ritual was a sign of what? (verse 11)

In the Bible, *covenants* were agreements between God and His people. Since God is the sovereign king, and since the two parties are not equal in power, biblical covenants take the form of authoritative promises and demands. In this case, God promised Abraham several things: a. a *place*; Palestine, b. a *people*; a great number of descendants, c. *power*; their country was going to be strong, and d. His *presence*; God was going to be with them (see also Genesis 12:1-3). To receive these blessings, God demanded faith and obedience. To circumcise someone meant that they belonged to God's family, that they promised to trust Him and obey Him, and that they claimed the benefits of the covenant. When parents had their children circumcised, they were expressing their promise to do God's will in raising their children and their trust that God would also bestow on them the blessings of the covenant.



## II. THE PASSOVER

---

*READ EXODUS 12:1-14.*

---

The word *Passover* comes literally from the verb meaning to *pass over*, and has its origin in the events related to the Exodus from Egypt. In order to force Pharaoh to let His people go, God sent ten plagues. The last one was the death of all the first-born children. But the Lord wanted to save the Hebrews from this plague, so He gave them the instructions for the *Passover*.

What did they have to kill? (verse 3)

What did they do with the blood? (verse 7)

What did they do with the meat? (verse 8)

What happened where there was blood on the door? (verses 12 and 13)

Israel was supposed to celebrate the Passover every year. The ceremony reminded them of how death had *passed over* them, and how the Lord had saved their children.

### III. BAPTISM

---

*READ MATTHEW 28:18-20.*

---

According to this passage, what ceremony should be performed on Jesus' disciples?

NOTE: This also includes women. While in the Old Testament, only the men could be circumcised, as representatives of their families, now women also receive the sign of the covenant.

*READ ROMANS 6:1-4.*

---

According to these verses, what does baptism symbolize?

*READ GALATIANS 3:27.*

---

What does baptism symbolize, according to this passage?

### SUMMARY OF THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

---

Baptism does not guarantee the salvation of the person baptized, as if it were a magical ceremony, rather it is a symbolic representation of the gospel. It uses a public

ceremony to act out the benefits of salvation. It symbolizes the promises of the covenant: cleansing from sin, new life in Christ, and receiving the Holy Spirit. Therefore baptism does not represent the faith of the person baptized, but rather the faithfulness of God. The special emphasis of this sacrament is on being received publicly into the Christian family. When you are baptized, it indicates that you have been included in God's people, with all the benefits of the covenant, just as circumcision did in the Old Testament.

#### IV. THE LORD'S SUPPER

---

*READ MATTHEW 26:26-29.*

---

What does the bread represent?

What does the wine represent?

*READ 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-34.*

---

What should each one do before participating? (verse 28)

What should each one recognize as he partakes? (verse 29)

#### SUMMARY OF THE MEANING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

---

The Lord's Supper symbolizes many aspects of salvation at the same time: Christ's death for our sins, the unity of all

believers, our dependence on the Lord, His living in us, and the future banquet we will celebrate with Him. The special emphasis of this sacrament is to remember Jesus' death for us.

The Catholic Church teaches that the bread and the wine actually are transformed into the body and blood of Jesus, as they are consumed. Protestants believe that they are only symbols, but that they are very special symbols. They were chosen by the Lord Himself to communicate spiritual truths.

It is like the Bible. The Bible contains *words*, which are only symbols. However, the words were chosen in a special way by God so that they communicate His thoughts. Thus they are not just any words, but *divine* words. In a similar way, God chose the symbols of the sacraments to communicate His promises, making the symbols very special. The sacraments teach us the truths of the gospel with tangible and visible symbols.

We say that the sacraments *are signs and seals* of God's Grace because they *symbolize* the promises of salvation and because they have the *official seal* (like the wax seal of a king on his letter in the middle ages) of God Himself. Also, the Holy Spirit is present during the sacraments, to cause the blessings to be received by the believers.

## REVIEW

---

1. What is a *sacrament*?
2. What does baptism symbolize? (Mention the special emphasis.)
3. What ceremony of the Old Testament is replaced by baptism?
4. What does The Lord's Supper symbolize? (Mention the special emphasis.)
5. What ceremony in the Old Testament is replaced by the Lord's Supper?

## FOR DISCUSSION:

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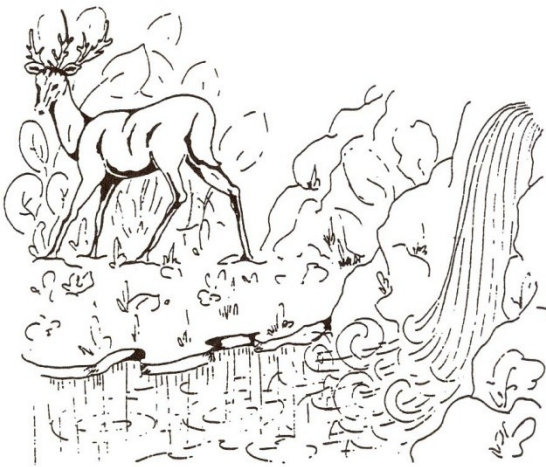
1. In what way does the Lord's Supper represent the same thing as the Passover?
2. In what way does baptism represent the same thing as circumcision?



# 9

## HOW TO HAVE A DAILY QUIET TIME

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*As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? (Psalm 42:1-2)*

The fact that two people are with each other during the whole day does not necessarily mean that they are communicating well. Sometimes you have to lay aside your normal activities to have a quiet talk. It's the same way in our relationship with the Lord. He is always with us, but we need to set aside some time every day to give Him our special

attention. We need to develop the habit of seeking God, dedicating time to dialogue with Him. In this lesson you will learn how to have a *Daily Quiet Time*. Study the steps in order to practice them afterwards.

## THE PLACE

---

Find a private place where there will be no interruptions or distractions, where you sense the presence of God. Use the same place every day, if possible.

A QUIET TIME CONSISTS BASICALLY OF TWO STEPS:

1. READING THE BIBLE
2. PRAYING

1. *READ* a paragraph or a chapter of the Bible, observing the details carefully. It's best to follow through a whole book of the Bible. For example, you may want to start in the *Gospel According to Matthew* and continue through the whole New Testament.

Take time to relax and think about the things you have observed in the passage. Ask yourself what the Lord is telling you today.

Write down in a notebook what you are learning. This notebook will be your *SPIRITUAL DIARY*.

2. *PRAY* about the things the Lord has been teaching you. Write down your prayer requests and motives for giving thanks in the same notebook.



NOTE: You may want to follow the three steps of *Bible Analysis* that you learned previously. However, you may not have time to do all these steps carefully every day. You may also want to study the same passage over and over every for several days. Remember the steps for a more careful analysis:

A. OBSERVATION

Read carefully, noticing the details.

B. INVESTIGATION

1. Ask yourself questions about the passage.
2. Look for the answers in the same chapter, in other parts of the Bible, or in Bible commentaries.

C. APPLICATION

1. A promise,
2. A new truth,
3. An ethical principle, or
4. An example.

## FORMING A HABIT

---

Make this exercise a daily habit. It's more important than eating! You will soon realize that it is one of the most important decisions that you have ever made. Plan your daily schedule to include this *Quiet Time*. If possible, do it in the morning before going to work. The Lord will change your life as you study His Word and pray. You will begin each day ready to confront problems, and you will feel much closer to the Lord.



*Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. (Psalm 1:1-3)*

## REVIEW

---

Write the steps for a *Daily Quiet Time*:

## FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION:

---

1. Do you already have a habit of a *Daily Quiet Time*?
2. If not, are you willing to start one?

## FOR DISCUSSION

---

Do you have any other suggestions for a good *Daily Quiet Time*?

## IMPORTANT EXERCISE

---

Practice the steps for a *Daily Quiet Time* with some passage in the Bible. We recommend the *Gospel of John*, studying the first paragraph.



## **PART 4**

# **HOW CAN I HELP OTHERS GROW?**

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## INTRODUCTION

---

In previous lessons we have studied several aspects of personal growth. The goal is to be like Jesus. To grow closer to Him, we use the *Means of Grace*: The Word, prayer, and the sacraments.

However, true growth also prepares us to help *others* grow. Our sanctification is not only filling our own individual *spiritual tank*, but also learning to minister to others. Every believer is a *minister*, in that sense. In the following lessons, we will study different aspects of the ministry. We want to become like Jesus, not only in His character, but also in His work.

### *READ MATTHEW 28:19-20.*

---

We should go and make \_\_\_\_\_.

What should we teach them?

### *READ 2 TIMOTHY 2:2*

---

What does Paul ask Timothy to do?

Notice that this means *four generations* of teaching. Jesus taught Paul, Paul taught Timothy, Timothy teaches others, and these in turn teach still others! This is how it should be! It's a process of multiplication.





# 10

## THE MINISTRY OF EVERY BELIEVER

---



*READ JOHN 20:21.*

---

According to this verse, we are sent into the world to be like whom?

Our *job description* is to continue the work of Jesus. Of course, we cannot die for the sins of other people, but we can love them in many ways, just like Jesus.

Let's look at the different elements of Jesus' ministry:

Look up the following passages and note which aspect is mentioned:

*MATTHEW 9:35*

---

What three things did Jesus do?

*MATTHEW 11:25*

---

Jesus says, "I P \_\_\_\_\_ you, father."

*MARK 1:35*

---

Jesus went off to a solitary place to P \_\_\_\_\_.

## *MATTHEW 26:20*

---

What did Jesus do with the disciples?

We could summarize the ministry of Jesus in the following six terms:

1. WORSHIP (He praised God the Father.)
2. PRAYER
3. TEACHING
4. SERVICE (He healed the sick.)
5. EVANGELISM (He “preached the good news of the Kingdom.”)
6. FELLOWSHIP (He spent time with the disciples, eating and sharing.)

It is interesting to see how the disciples also did the same six things:

## *READ ACTS 2:42-47 AND ACTS 4:31-35.*

---

Write the phrase or the verse reference that suggests the corresponding ministry:

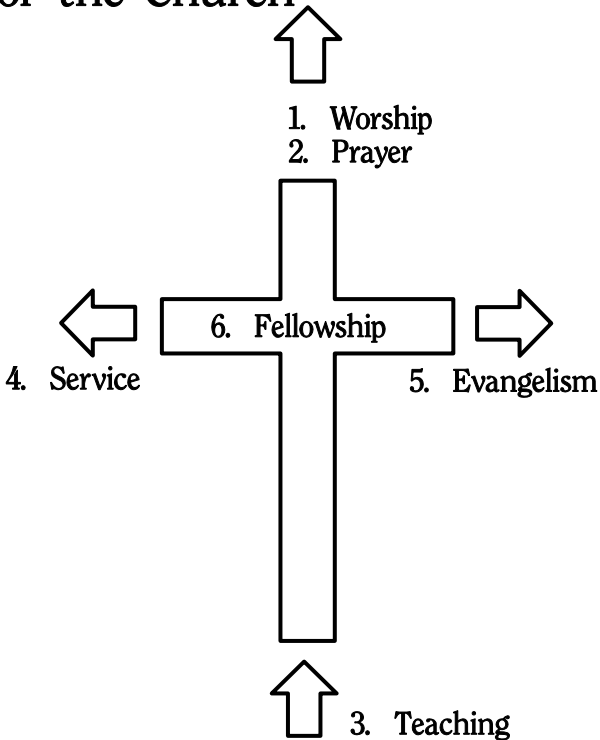
- a. Prayer
- b. Worship
- c. Teaching
- d. Service (helping the needy)

e. Evangelism

f. Fellowship (being together)

The following drawing of a cross illustrates these six aspects of the ministry, symbolizing the fact that Jesus dwells in us and carries out His ministry through us.

## The Ministry of the Church



The arrows indicate the objects of the respective ministries. Worship and prayer are at the head of the cross, looking up to *God*. Teaching is at the base, aimed at strengthening and building up *the church*, giving it a firm foundation. Service and evangelism are the arms that extend into *the world*. In the middle, we get together to have fellowship, cooperating in these tasks and encouraging one another as *fellow Christians*.

If any aspect of the ministry of a believer is missing, it is incomplete. The ministry of every believer should be *integral*. Just like whole grain bread is healthier because it has all the vitamins, an *integral* ministry is healthier, too.

## REVIEW

---

Make the drawing of the cross with the six elements of an integral ministry.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

---

1. Which aspects of the ministry are stronger in your own life?
2. Which are weaker?
3. Which ones are stronger in your local church?
4. Which ones are weaker?
5. What can you do to have a more integral ministry in your life?
6. What can you do to have a more integral ministry in your church?

# 11

## WHY SHOULD I GO TO CHURCH?

---



In the following lessons we are going to study the six aspects of the ministry of the church and of every believer. We will begin with worship.

We go to church to receive the blessings of the preaching and the sacraments, and also to share with other believers. However, there is an even more important reason to go to church: TO WORSHIP GOD.

When we think of the *ministry*, we usually think only of how we can minister to other people, but in a sense, our worship

is a way of ministering to God. He does not *need* our ministry in the same way people do, but He *enjoys* our worship.

*READ JOHN 4:23-24.*

---

What kind of worshipers does God seek?

To worship *in spirit* means to worship with your heart, sincerely, not just with your mouth. To worship *in truth* means to worship with your mind, using true concepts, not just with emotion.

On the one hand, it is not sufficient to sing a hymn with good words if you do not feel it in your heart. On the other hand it is not right to sing a hymn with all your heart if the words are not biblical. Our praise must be both sincere and based on the Word of God.

*READ EXODUS 5:1.*

---

God told Pharaoh to let His people go so that they could do what in the desert?

After the Israelites were delivered from Egypt, they celebrated by *praising and worshipping* God. Then God gave them the law on Mount Sinai and told them to build a tabernacle where they would *worship* Him. (The tabernacle was a portable tent where the Lord manifested His presence.) Salvation leads to worship.



*READ MATTHEW 2:2.*

---

What did the wise men want to do when they found the baby Jesus?

*READ REVELATION 4:11.*

---

Why is the Lord worthy of praise?

*READ REVELATION 15:4.*

---

Why do the nations worship the Lord?

*READ REVELATION 19:1-2.*

---

What are other reasons to worship the Lord, according to these verses?

From beginning to end, the Bible tells us that man should worship God because of who He is and what He has done.

The word *worship* comes from a Greek word that literally means to fall down and kiss the feet of someone. This shows the attitude of worship. To prostrate before someone shows honor and submission. To kiss his feet shows gratitude. When we meet together in a worship service, we are saying to the Lord, "We love you and honor you!"

Praise does not have to be *singing*, necessarily. We can praise God in prayer, too. It basically means telling God how wonderful He is.

Worship can be public or private, too. The worship service on Sundays is the most important activity of the *week* because it is the time when we meet with other members of God's family to worship Him. In the same way, our daily Quiet Time is the most important activity of the *day*.

We must clarify three points:

1. First, all of our life should be an act of worship in the sense that it should bring honor to God.
2. Secondly, if we are living a sinful life, even our acts of worship do not please God. (See Isaiah 1:1-20.)
3. Thirdly, even if our private individual worship pleases the Lord, it cannot replace the Sunday Worship Service, where the whole church meets together. All parents know how special it is to have all the members of the family together. In a similar way, God is especially pleased by the public worship service.

## REVIEW

---

1. What is the most important reason to go to church?
2. What does it mean, literally, to *worship*?
3. What does it mean to worship *in spirit and in truth*?

## FOR DISCUSSION

---

1. What priority do you think *praise* should have in the worship service? Do you sometimes sense that the first part of the service seems like only preparation to hear the sermon? Do you think that is the right way to look at it?
2. What should our criteria be for selecting songs to sing in the worship service?

## EXERCISE

---

Go somewhere to be alone with the Lord and dedicate fifteen or twenty minutes to do nothing but praise Him. Open your Bible to Psalm 103 (or some other passage if you want, such as other Psalms, or verses from Revelation) to help you think of motives for praising Him. Try not to *ask* God for anything during this time, but just express *praise* to Him.



# 12

## YOUR SECRET WEAPON

---



Because of the secular influence in our society, we are accustomed to interpreting almost everything that happens to us from a material perspective, forgetting the *spiritual* dimension. For example, when we get sick, we tend to analyze the biological aspects: What virus do I have? How did I get it? What medicine should I take? These are all valid questions. However, there is also a spiritual dimension to everything. We are in spiritual warfare.

*READ EPHESIANS 6:10-20.*

---

According to verse 12, what are our real enemies?

Since the creation of the world, Satan has been trying to destroy the human race. Still, God is stronger, and He is always fighting against the influence of evil, causing all things to work out for our salvation.

If you are sick, you should use the physical means God has given you to treat your condition. For example, many times you need to see a doctor and take the medicine he prescribes. Nevertheless, do not forget that you should also pray, because the sickness is part of a spiritual battle.

Write down the parts of your spiritual armor, according to Ephesians 6:14-18:

Prayer is our *secret weapon* against the enemy, because our battle is spiritual. Prayer is our direct communication with the Lord, who directs all the heavenly armies against evil.

According to verse 18. ...

How should we pray?

When should we pray?

For whom should we pray?

There are good spirits and evil spirits. In human events, Satan and his demons are acting to do us harm, but at the same moment, God and His angels are acting for our good. If you brake your arm, Satan desires it for evil, but the Lord will turn it into something good.

*READ ROMANS 8:28-31.*

---

In how many things does God work for good?

Why? What does God want to do in us? He predestined us to be similiar to whom?

*READ GENESIS 50:20.*

---

Joseph's brothers had betrayed him. They had sold him as a slave to the Egyptians. But while in Egypt, he had risen to a high place in the government and was able to store wheat and help all his family when there was a famine.

How did Joseph interpret the fact that his brothers had betrayed him?

In the same event, Satan meant evil, but God meant it for good.

What Satan especially wants is for us to sin. That's why prayer is so important, to ask the Lord to free us from the power of sin.

*READ MATTHEW 6:13.*

---

What should we pray, according to Jesus?

*READ HEBREWS 4:14-16.*

---

In how many ways was Jesus tempted?

How many times did He sin?

That's why He can understand us and help us when we are tempted.

What should we do when we are tempted, according to verse 16?

*READ 1 JOHN 4:4 AND 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13.*

---

How do these verses encourage you in your spiritual struggle?



## REVIEW

---

Why is prayer so important, according to this lesson?

## FOR DISCUSSION

---

1. What would you say to a woman who has just lost a baby and asks if it was God who made the baby die?
2. What would you say to a person when he sins and says as an excuse, "The devil made me do it!"

## EXERCISE

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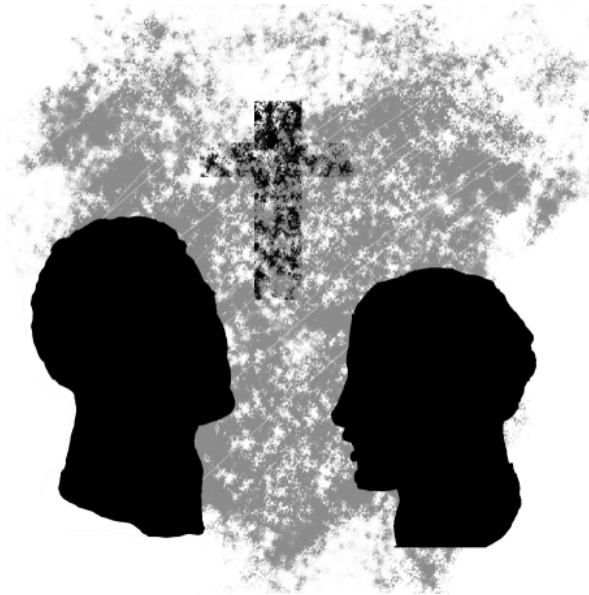
Think about some problem in your life and write down several things you can do to work toward victory over the enemy:



# 13

## HOW CAN I SHARE MY FAITH WITH OTHERS?

---



Suppose you were the only Christian in the world. If during one year one person came to know the Lord because you shared your faith with him, then the following year each one of you led another person to the Lord, and you continued to double like this in numbers every year, how many years do you think it would take before everybody in the world became a Christian?

Two hundred years? One hundred? No....  
Only thirty three years!

This encourages you, doesn't it? It means that the task of evangelizing the world is not impossible. If every believer would do his part, praying that the Lord give him one person every year with whom you could share the gospel, we could grow to become millions of Christians and the world would be transformed! Our churches could double in members every year!

Maybe you would like to share your faith, but you need help in learning how. This lesson gives you a simple outline to present the gospel. This is a guideline that will give you more confidence. After learning this presentation you may want to modify it. Each person is different, and we should adapt our message to make it clear to everyone. The truths remain the same, but we can explain them in different ways.

Read the contents of the following tract called *A New Harmony*, and answer the review questions in order to help you memorize it.

# A NEW HARMONY



Have you every asked yourself, "Why does the world seem so out of tune?" "Why are there so many problems?"

There is war, violence, sickness, hunger, poverty, injustice, fear, divorce, terrorism, unemployment and insecurity. Where do these problems come from? You may also ask, "What is the solution? How can we obtain a peaceful world?"

The Bible gives the explanation and the solution: There are three things you should *know* and three things you should *do* in order to help in the process of transforming the world into a new society of harmony and peace. The process starts with you!

## THREE THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

### 1. CREATION

In the beginning God created everything in perfect harmony.



*And God saw all He had made, and it was very good. (Genesis 1:31)*

## **2. CORRUPTION**

Nevertheless, man disobeyed God, and as a result, the harmony was turned into conflict. Adam represented all humanity, and he failed. Now all people are sinners and we deserve eternal condemnation. The relations were broken between:

Man and God,  
Man and his neighbor,  
Man and nature, and  
Man and his own soul.



*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. (Romans 5:12)*

### **3. CHRIST**

This is why Jesus came into the world. He lived a perfect life, without sin. He died on the cross, suffering the punishment for sin in our place. He rose from the dead, winning the victory over sin, over Satan, and over death. Thus Christ earned man's reconciliation with God, and began to restore the relationships that were broken by sin.



*For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Colossians 1:19,20)*

YOU can participate in the process of making a peaceful world. First, you yourself must be reconciled to God, because your sin has also separated you from Him. Then you can help others experience the same peace.

### **THREE THINGS YOU SHOULD DO**

#### **1. RECEIVE**

Receive forgiveness for your sins. God's pardon is free, because Jesus already took the punishment we deserved. You just need to sincerely ask for forgiveness. Doing this, you will be reconciled with Him and experience healing peace.

You may not consider yourself such a bad person compared to others, but you must admit that you have done things that



have offended God and brought conflict into the world. Besides, God looks at the heart and knows that our motives are not pure.

*...There is no one righteous, not even one! (Romans 3:10)*

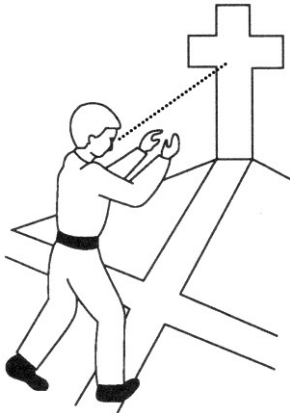
*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)*

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

*Therefore since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1)*

## **2. RELINQUISH**

You need to relinquish the control of your life, turning it over to the Lord. Make the decision to become His disciple and follow Him. Trust Him to guide you and always do what is best for you. Then you will begin to experience a new life of joy, living more and more in harmony with others.



*If we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.*  
(Romans 14:8)

*Submit yourselves, then, to God.* (James 4:7)

You can take these two steps in the form of a prayer. God loves you and He will hear you. Ask forgiveness, and turn your life over to Him.

### **3. REPEAT**

*Repeat* this same message to others, so the process of reconciliation can be *repeated* in them. Thus the world can be transformed little by little, one person at a time, beginning from within peoples' hearts! It's the beginning of a *NEW HARMONY!*

*Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations....*  
(Matthew 28:19)

*You are the salt of the earth.... You are the light of the world.*  
(Matthew 5:13,14)

## Review

---

Now you can learn to present the gospel, using the outline of the tract above.

First, write the introductory questions:

*Why \_\_\_\_\_?*

*What is the \_\_\_\_\_?*

The basic outline is simple:

*There are three things you should \_\_\_\_\_.*

*There are three things you should \_\_\_\_\_.*

There are three "C's" and three "R's":

Three things you should know:

C \_\_\_\_\_

C \_\_\_\_\_

C \_\_\_\_\_

Three things you should do:

R \_\_\_\_\_

R \_\_\_\_\_

R \_\_\_\_\_

Now let's explain the points:

In the first points, we explain where all problems come from. God didn't make the world that way, and He is not to blame. Man destroyed everything with sin.

*1. Creation:*

*God made everything in perfect \_\_\_\_\_.*

*2. Corruption:*

*Man D \_\_\_\_\_ God and all harmony turned into conflict.*

*Because of sin, the relationships were broken between:*

*Man and \_\_\_\_\_,*

*Man and \_\_\_\_\_,*

*Man and \_\_\_\_\_, and*

*Man and \_\_\_\_\_.*

In the third point, we explain the solution that God provided in Christ. This is the heart of the gospel. There are three aspects: His perfect life, His death on the cross, and His resurrection.

*3. Christ:*

*Jesus lived a P \_\_\_\_\_ life.*

*He died on the cross, suffering the punishment  
for our \_\_\_\_\_.*

*He was raised from the dead, winning the  
victory over S \_\_\_\_\_,  
over S \_\_\_\_\_, and over  
D \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Thus Jesus restores everything that was  
corrupted by S \_\_\_\_\_.*

Now we need to relate these historical facts to the person with whom we are sharing the gospel. The person needs to see that the process of changing the world begins in his own heart.

*There are three things you need to do:*

*1. Receive:*

*You need to ask F \_\_\_\_\_ for your sins.*

*Jesus already took the P \_\_\_\_\_ that we deserve.*

*If you do this, you will be R \_\_\_\_\_*

*with Him and experience healing P \_\_\_\_\_.*

*2. Relinquish*

*You need to relinquish the C \_\_\_\_\_ of  
your life.*

*Decide to be His D \_\_\_\_\_ and follow him.*

*Trust Him to guide you and to always do*

*what is B \_\_\_\_\_ for you.*

### *3. Repeat*

*You should R \_\_\_\_\_ the same*

*M \_\_\_\_\_ to others*

*so the process of reconciliation can be*

*R \_\_\_\_\_ in them.*

Now you can ask the person if he has understood you what have explained. Ask if he or she agrees. Take time to talk about his relationship with God. Ask about his spiritual background. For example, did his family go to church? Does he? Has he ever read at least parts of the Bible? Does he believe in God? If he shows interest and understanding, you may ask if he wants to take the three steps of commitment: Receive, Relinquish, and Repeat. Do not pressure him. When he is ready for a commitment, you can help him say a prayer, but it should be in his own words. It may take days, weeks, months, or even years!

If he makes a decision, you can assure him that he has eternal life and that he will be an instrument of peace and harmony in the world.

Now, review the Bible verses so that you can quote them. Try to memorize them. If you don't memorize them exactly, at least learn to say them in your own words.

Genesis 1:31

Romans 5:12

Colossians 1:19, 20

Romans 3:10

Romans 6:23

1 John 1:9

Romans 5:1

Romans 14:8

James 4:7

Matthew 28:19

Matthew 5:13,14

## EXERCISE

---

Practice the presentation of the gospel out loud with another friend until you can do it correctly, without help. This will make you feel more sure of yourself when the Lord gives you the opportunity to share your faith with someone.



# 14

## HOW CAN I HELP CHANGE THE WORLD?

---



As mentioned in the presentation of the gospel in the previous lesson, when we give our lives over to the Lord, He begins to transform our hearts and we become *the salt of the earth* and *the light of the world*. We bring peace into the world and begin to transform the rest of society.

How does this process work? It starts with a loving attitude of *service*. In this lesson, we will look at this important aspect of the ministry of every believer.

*READ JOHN 13:1-5.*

---

What did Jesus want to show his disciples?

*READ MARK 9:33-35.*

---

What were the disciples arguing about on the road?

How did Jesus answer their question?

*READ MATTHEW 25:31-40.*

---

Write down the different ways in which you can serve your neighbor, according to this passage:

According to Matthew 25:40, whom are we helping when we help a brother?

*READ 1 JOHN 4:7-21.*

---

If we do not love our brother, neither do we love \_\_\_\_\_.

Who is the source of love?

*READ 1 JOHN 3:16-18.*

---

Who is the greatest example of love?

We should love, not only with our words, but also with

our \_\_\_\_\_.

*READ JAMES 2:14-17.*

---

True faith must manifest itself in \_\_\_\_\_.

God's love fills our hearts and flows out from us toward our neighbor. Faith is expressed in obedience. This has an impact on all of society. We are transformed as individuals, the church is also transformed, and the influence continues extending out into all areas of society.

*READ MATTHEW 5:13-14.*

---

What are we, according to Jesus?

*READ MATTHEW 13:31-33.*

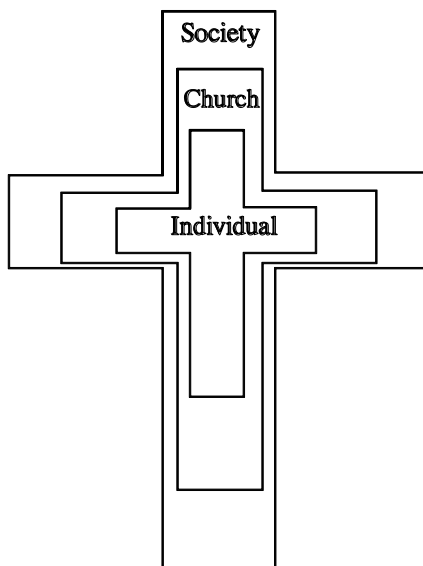
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Explain how you understand the first parable. What does it teach us about our influence in the world?

Explain how you understand the second parable. What does it teach us about our influence in the world?

These two parables suggest that the Kingdom of God grows and changes all of society. We could illustrate this with the figure of a cross that expands outward. First, the Lord changes the individual, then He changes His community of people, the Church, then finally He changes the world, the rest of society, through us. The influence of the Kingdom is like the concentric circles formed when you throw a rock in a lake. As the church fulfills its integral ministry, the Lord's arms are extended into the world, giving testimony to His love. The church becomes a model for the world as a community of people being transformed into the image of Christ.

***THE IMPACT OF THE GOSPEL ON ALL OF  
SOCIETY***



## REVIEW

---

1. Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of God?

He who S \_\_\_\_\_ the others.

2. We are the S \_\_\_\_\_ of the earth and the

L \_\_\_\_\_ of the world.

3. True faith expresses itself in Good

W \_\_\_\_\_.

5. When we serve a brother, we are serving

\_\_\_\_\_.

5. Draw the illustration of how the gospel makes an impact on all of society.

## FOR DISCUSSION

---

Think of several new concrete ways in which you and your local church can serve your neighbor and help change the world. Share your ideas.





# 15

## HOW CAN I LEAD A BIBLE STUDY?

---



In a previous lesson, we studied how to do an analysis of a Bible passage, thinking especially about your own personal study. Now we are going to look at some guidelines for teaching others what you learn from your own Bible study. First, we will look at some principles about Christian education.

*READ EPHESIANS 4:11-13.*

---

According to this passage, what is the purpose of education in the church? What do we want to accomplish?

This gives us a lot to think about! On the one hand, some people seem to teach only information and abstract doctrine,

without practical application. On the other hand, some people tend to emphasize practical things, but do not use the Bible as a basis for their teaching, and it doesn't lead to real changes either. What we want is solid Bible teaching that leads to practical changes in our lives.

*READ 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17.*

---

For what are the Scriptures useful?

*READ LUKE 20:20-26.*

---

Write down the question Jesus asks in this passage:

A good teacher does not only *teach*, but helps the students *learn*. A good way to help somebody learn is to ask questions. Sometimes a teacher thinks only about what he is saying, and not about what the students are learning. If he has good ideas, he thinks he is doing a good job. However, it is possible that they don't understand, or that they are not as interested in his ideas as he assumes. A good teacher knows how to put himself in the student's place and help him see clearly what he wants to get across. A good teacher helps the students participate. We retain little of what we *hear*, more of what we *experience* for ourselves, and even more of what we *discover* for ourselves. If you are leading a Bible study, let the others discover the truth for themselves in the Word, and let them talk. They will learn more if they are actively involved.

## READ JOHN 15:1-7.

---

What illustration does Jesus use?

A good teacher also uses illustrations. Jesus always talked of concrete things from daily life that everyone could understand.

There are many forms of teaching: a class at church, a Bible Study at home, preaching a sermon, or even informal conversation. We will give some suggestions for leading a home Bible Study and for teaching a class.

## HOME BIBLE STUDY

---

You could use some Bible Study booklet with prepared lessons (such as this very book you are studying). But you can also prepare your own lesson. We recommend that you prepare the content of your study using the method of *Bible Analysis* that you learned in a previous lesson in this book. Then you can use the same three steps to ask questions to the group.

For example, you studied John 3:16 in the lesson on *Bible Analysis*. The following questions are examples of what you could use for a home study:

### OBSERVATION

Ask the group:

1. Who are the persons mentioned in the verse?
2. What are the verbs (action words)?
3. What did God do?
4. What motivated Him to do it?

## INTERPRETATION

Ask:

1. Is there some word you don't understand?
2. Is there some phrase that is not clear?
3. Is there some concept that needs explanation?

Ask the people to look for answers within the same passage, or chapter, or within the same book of the Bible. If necessary, use a dictionary for words, or a concordance.

Other possible questions:

1. What does the word *world* mean here?
2. What does it mean that Jesus was the *only begotten* son?
3. In what way did God *give* His son?
4. What does it mean to *believe* in Jesus?
5. What does it mean to have *eternal life*?

## APPLICATION

Ask:

1. What does this verse have to do with our lives?
2. Do you find in the verse:
  - a. a promise?
  - b. an example?
  - c. a truth?
  - d. a moral principle?
3. What changes should we make in our lives in order to make applications of this verse?

## A CLASS

---

Again, you can prepare your own class, using what you learned from the *Bible Analysis* that you did of some passage. A class is different from a Home Bible Study because you may be more limited for time, and the number of people may make it hard for everyone to participate. You may have to talk more. We suggest the following plan for a one-hour class *with young people or adults*:

Prayer	2 minutes
Introduction	5 minutes

This should be something to get their attention and show the importance of what you are going to study. You may want to ask a question for reflection.

Bible Lesson	15 minutes
--------------	------------

This should be a summary of what you learned in your Bible Analysis. It should be brief, to the point, and practical. It's best to make one main point clear, rather than confusing them with many ideas. Explain your point briefly, then use illustrations to make it clear.

Dialogue	20 minutes
----------	------------

Let them ask questions and make comments.

Conclusion	10 minutes
------------	------------

Draw conclusions and make practical applications.

Prayer	8 minutes
--------	-----------

60 minutes Total

## EXERCISE

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Select a Bible text and prepare a Home Bible Study or a class for church, following the steps suggested above.

## Review

---

1. What is the purpose of education in the church?
2. The important thing is not so much what the teacher *teaches* but what the student \_\_\_\_\_.
3. It helps to use good I \_\_\_\_\_.

# 16

## HOW CAN WE ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER?

---



One of the greatest benefits of being a Christian is the fellowship we have with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are members of one body, and each one needs the other, especially for encouragement. We will make a brief study in this lesson of how we can encourage one another and keep good relationships.

*READ HEBREWS 10:24-25.*

---

What should we encourage one another to do, according to this passage?

What should we not stop doing?

*READ 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-7.*

---

According to this text, in what way should we encourage one another?

What kind of experience helps us comfort others who are suffering?

*READ EPHESIANS 4:15.*

---

We should speak the *truth* in L \_\_\_\_\_.

Neither one is sufficient by itself. To speak the truth without love can be cruel. To speak with supposed "love," but without the truth, is dishonest and hypocritical.

*READ EPHESIANS 4:29.*

---

What should our words do, according to this passage?



*READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-7.*

---

According to verse seven, why does the Spirit give us gifts?

*READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:21-26.*

---

According to verse twenty-six, why does every Christian need his brothers and sisters in Christ?

**RESOLVING CONFLICTS**

---

We should use our tongues to encourage and build up, but unfortunately sometimes this is not the case, and there are resulting conflicts between brethren. What should we do to resolve these problems? We are going to look at a very important passage that helps us keep good relationships within the church.

*READ MATTHEW 18:15-17.*

---

What is the first step to take when someone offends you?

According to this, is it correct to go to a third person to complain about what someone else did to you?

If the person who offended you does not listen to you, what is the second step?

If he still does not listen, what is the third step?

Note: This third step means that the authorities of the church take disciplinary measures with the offending person, taking away his privileges as a member. The purpose is to bring him back to the Lord.

*READ MATTHEW 18:21-35.*

---

If a brother who has offended us asks for forgiveness, then offends us again, how many times should we forgive him?

(This is a way of saying as many times as he asks for forgiveness.)

How much did the first servant owe the king?

Did the king forgive the debt?

How much did the other servant owe the first servant?

Did the first servant forgive him?

Note: Ten thousand talents would be millions of dollars, an enormous amount, practically impossible to pay. On the

other hand, one hundred denarii would be only a few dollars, easy to pay.

What happened to the first servant for not forgiving the second one?

What is the point that Jesus is making with this story?

To *forgive* means to decide not to make the other person pay for what he has done. That is, even though he has not repaired the damage he has made (and sometimes it *cannot* be repaired), you can treat the other person as if he had not hurt you. Maybe you cannot completely forget what he has done, but you can decide not to punish him for it. You may even still feel bad about it, but you can leave the whole problem with the Lord and let Him take care of it.

In this lesson we have studied some basic principles about maintaining good relationships. If these guidelines are not followed, the whole church will suffer and may even be divided. If they are followed, you can avoid letting conflicts become serious.

## REVIEW

---

1. We should use our tongues to E \_\_\_\_\_ others.
2. If someone offends us, we should follow the three steps for reconciliation:
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
3. If a brother offends us, and asks forgiveness, we should \_\_\_\_\_ him.
4. What does it mean to *forgive* him?

## FOR DISCUSSION

---

1. What do you think is the cause of the majority of conflicts between people?
2. Have you learned something new about resolving conflicts? Explain.
3. If someone has difficulty in forgiving an offense, what would you say to him?

# 17

## WHAT ARE MY GIFTS?

---



Even though all believers should exercise all aspects of the integral ministry (worship, prayer, teaching, evangelism, service, and fellowship), each individual has special gifts that he can use to help the church grow. Just like a doctor has been prepared to confront all kinds of medical needs, but also has an area of specialization, the Holy Spirit equips you for many kinds of ministry, but gives you a special area where you can make a unique contribution. It is a wonderful blessing

to discover your gifts so you can use them to their maximum potential.

*READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-7.*

---

Do all the brothers and sisters in Christ have some gift?

*READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:7.*

---

For what purpose should the gifts be used?

*READ 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-3.*

---

The gifts are good for nothing without \_\_\_\_\_.

*READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:14-20 AND 12:6.*

---

Do all people have the same gifts?

Write the gifts mentioned in this chapter:

*READ ROMANS 12:6-8.*

---

Write down the gifts mentioned in this passage:

Do you think you have some of these gifts? Which ones?

These lists of gifts are not meant to be complete. Maybe you can think of other gifts that are not mentioned in these passages. It should be something that the Lord uses to help others grow in Christ.

Write down your ideas:

Maybe you do not know exactly what your gifts are, but you think you can minister best in one or two of the six areas of the integral ministry. Try to put these areas in order. Put a "1" beside the area in which you feel strongest, a number "2" beside the second strongest, and so on.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Worship
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prayer
- \_\_\_\_\_ Evangelism
- \_\_\_\_\_ Service
- \_\_\_\_\_ Teaching
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fellowship

You may ask, "What is the difference between a *talent* and a *spiritual gift*?" A gift is used to build up the church, whereas a talent may not necessarily bring spiritual benefits. For example, if someone can sing well, but does not sing to God's glory, and his singing does not bring spiritual blessings to others, it is simply a talent. (We could still call it a *gift* in a broader sense, or a *natural gift*, but not a *spiritual gift*.) However, a talent may *become* a spiritual gift if it is used for building up people in the church.

The church is one body with different members, united but diverse. If we work together, we can accomplish great things! Each one has his place and nobody should look down on the gifts of others. On the contrary, we should encourage one another to use our gifts to help others.

If you have been able to identify some of your gifts, think of how you can use them to serve the Lord. Write down your ideas:



## REVIEW

---

1. For what should the spiritual gifts be used?
2. Write down some of the spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12.
3. Explain in your own words the difference between a *spiritual gift* and a *talent*:

## EXERCISE

---

After identifying what you think some of your gifts are, ask several friends from the church to write down on a piece of paper a few of the gifts they see in you. If what they say coincides with what you thought, you were probably right. If it is not the same, don't worry about it, because they may be wrong. Wait several months to see if the Lord confirms your gifts. See in what ways you are helping others grow. Then check again with your friends to see if they agree with your own personal evaluation.

## FOR DISCUSSION

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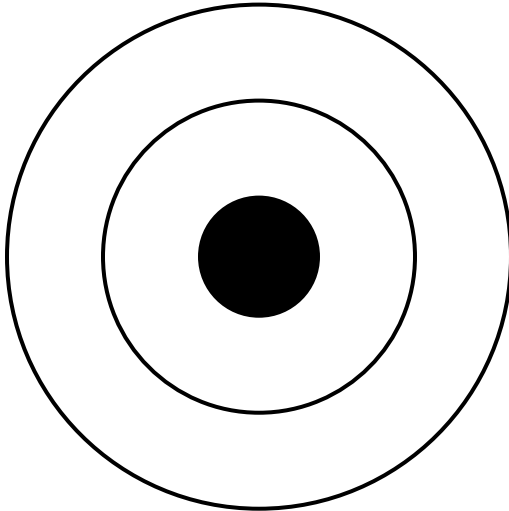
1. What would you say to someone who thinks he has no gifts?
2. Why is it hard for some people to recognize their gifts?
3. How can we know if our gifts are bearing fruit in the lives of others?



# 18

## HOW CAN I KNOW GOD'S WILL?

---



People often become confused about the way God guides us to know His will. For example, a young Christian man might fall in love with a young woman who does not share the same faith. He thinks the Lord has guided him to know her and love her, so he decides to marry her. He may think she will become a Christian later. But he is making a mistake, due to the fact that he isn't following God's guidance correctly. We are going to study a few principles for knowing God's will, in order to avoid making such mistakes.

We could explain the principles with the illustration of concentric circles:

## A. THE FIRST CIRCLE

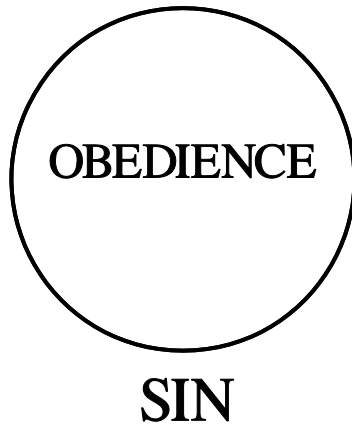
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*READ 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17 AND PSALM 119:9-11.*

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How does the Lord guide us, according to these passages?

The first circle is the most important one, because it draws the borderline between sin and obedience. Inside the circle is what God has commanded in His Word. If we follow these biblical norms of right and wrong, then we are doing what is correct.



For example, the Bible teaches clearly that a Christian should marry someone who shares his faith in Jesus.

*READ 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-15.*

---

Why shouldn't a Christian marry an unbeliever, according to this passage?

To know God's will, the first step to *study His Word*. You should obey the biblical norms first. Doing this, you will be within the first circle.

## B. THE SECOND CIRCLE

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However, the Bible gives general guidelines, without telling us exactly what to do in every situation. For example, it is clear that we should marry a Christian, but the Bible does not tell us which one! It tells us we should take care of our bodies, but it doesn't tell us what to eat for lunch today. There are important questions, like "Which career should I choose?", that the Bible does not answer specifically, and sometimes we are uncertain what God's will is.

*READ PHILIPPIANS 1:9-11.*

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In verse 10, it says that we should learn to discern what is

\_\_\_\_\_.

*READ 1 CORINTHIANS 6:12.*

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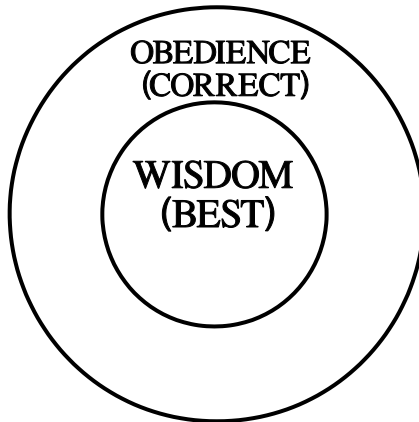
What distinction is made in this text?

**READ JAMES 1:5.**

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What can we ask of God to help us make decisions?

As our loving heavenly Father, He helps us make the decision that is *best* for us. It may be the best alternative among several that are *permitted*. This is the second circle within the bigger one. In the first one, the Lord guides us (He commands us!) to do what is in agreement with His *biblical norms*. In the second one, He guides us to do the wise thing. If we do not obey His *rules*, we are sinning. However, if we do not do what is *best*, we may not necessarily be sinning, but we are losing the benefits of using good judgment.



The second circle defines what is B \_\_\_\_\_.

If you are not in the second circle, you are not necessarily

sinning, but you are not using W \_\_\_\_\_.

For example, speaking of marriage again, you are *permitted* to marry any Christian, in one sense. However, you do not

*want* to marry just *any* Christian, but someone who is appropriate for you. You want to be wise about it. Here you enter the second circle.

How does the Lord guide you here? We will look at four ways. Look up the passages and write down the different elements God uses:

***READ JAMES 1:5.***

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What should we do to obtain wisdom?

***READ PSALM 119:105.***

---

What does God use to guide us?

When we talked about the first circle, we recommended using the Bible to look for God's ethical norms. Now you can read the Scriptures to find principles of *wisdom* as well. For example, the person you marry should not only be a Christian, but someone with good character, who can encourage you spiritually. You might read Proverbs, for example, to find passages regarding good character.

***READ PROVERBS 11:14.***

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Write the third way God guides us to make a wise decision:

Ask for advice from friends and family, especially from mature Christians. They may realize whether the person you

want to marry is a good person for you or not. They could be wrong, of course, but their opinion can help you make a decision.

*READ PHILIPPIANS 1:9-11.*

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In order to discern what is best and be filled with righteousness,

our love needs to abound in \_\_\_\_\_.

Think about this: You need to *know* about the situation and the people involved in order to make a wise decision. For example, to help decide on a career, you need to consider your gifts and capacities and compare them with the requirements of the career. To choose a life companion, you should think about factors such as the interests you have in common, your ages, how well you communicate, your temperaments, your education, and your backgrounds. If two people want to get married, but have no income, maybe they should wait. To make a wise decision, you need to examine the details surrounding the situation. You can't examine everything, of course, and you should avoid getting bogged down in details that are not important. Nevertheless, you need to take some time to think seriously about big decisions.

In summary, there are four ways the Lord leads you to a *wise* decision:

- a. Prayer,
- b. The Word,
- c. Advice from others, and
- d. Knowledge of the situation.



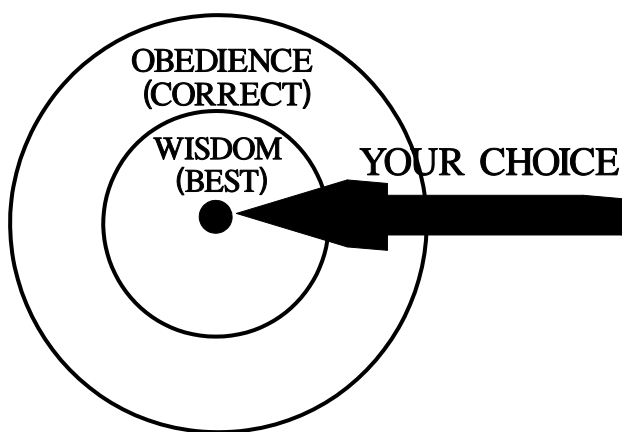
## C. THE POINT

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Finally, there may be several "correct" decisions within the first circle, and there may be more than one "wise" alternative within the second circle. That is, even though it may sound strange, the Lord sometimes leaves you with several choices that are equally good. Suppose, for example, that you have a hard time deciding between two careers. You have prayed, you have studied the Scriptures, you have asked for counsel, and you have considered the details of the situation, but still you are left with two or three possibilities. In this case, you have freedom to choose one of these *according to your own preference*.

The same may be true in looking for a husband or wife. Normally, of course, a person first senses a special attraction for one person, and then asks himself if the Lord approves of their getting married. In this case, he needs to see if it is correct and wise, following the guidelines above.

However, in some cases, there might be several possible "candidates" that are attractive to him, that are Christians, and that seem to be within the boundaries of a wise decision. This might be the case early in the process, when he is just beginning to get acquainted with them. If so, he is free to choose which one to get better acquainted with and seek to develop a more serious relationship that person, according to his preference. In other words, if he decides to date one instead of the other, both being within the second circle, he doesn't have to agonize, wondering if he might have made a mistake and has lost God's blessing! Sometimes there are several choices that are equally pleasing to the Lord, and He simply lets you decide.



This may not sound very *spiritual*, but it is important to explain this, because sometimes people become paralyzed in the process of making a decision. They reach this stage in the process and cannot go beyond it, because they are expecting the Lord to clearly show them the *point* in every decision. The Lord *may* guide you to the point, in fact He might show you in some special way. But that is not the way He *normally* guides us. In the majority of simple daily decisions, He simply leads us to the inner circle of wisdom, and if there are several possibilities, He lets us make the choice according to our own preference. He treats us like responsible adults. For example, you don't have to fret about which kind of toothpaste you buy. If there are several brands that are good for your health, and maybe even the same price, choose the one that you like best!

To summarize the last principle, if the Lord does not lead you specifically to the exact decision, He is probably letting you decide within wisdom according to your own

P \_\_\_\_\_.

With this, we have not said everything about how the Lord guides us. The most important thing to remember is that the Lord never guides you to do anything against the principles of morality and wisdom in His Word.

## REVIEW

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1. The Lord guides us in two senses:

a. He shows us moral principles to

O \_\_\_\_\_ so we can do what is

C \_\_\_\_\_.

b. He shows us what is W \_\_\_\_\_ so we can

do what is B \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Write down four ways in which God guides you to make a wise decision (within the second circle):

a.

b.

c.

d.

3. Once we are obeying God's commands and using wisdom, the Lord often lets us make a decision among several valid alternatives, according to our own personal

P \_\_\_\_\_.

## FOR DISCUSSION:

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1. What do you think of the explanation given in this lesson about how the Lord guides us? Do you agree? Is it helpful for you?
2. Share with the others about some difficult decision you have made, and how the Lord guided you.
3. Do you agree that sometimes the Lord does not show us clearly the *point*, but shows us different alternatives within the circle of wisdom?

# 19

## HOW CAN I BE FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

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Most people have a lot of questions about the Holy Spirit and His work. Without entering into all of the points of debate, this lesson gives some basic guidelines about what it means to be *full of the Holy Spirit*.

*READ ROMANS 8:9 AND 1 CORINTHIANS 12:13.*

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According to these passages, do all believers have the Holy Spirit?

However, not all believers are *full* of the Spirit. What does this phrase mean? Obviously it doesn't mean that you can first have a part of the Spirit, and then later receive the rest of Him!

The *fullness* of the Holy Spirit can be understood in two senses: as a *characteristic* of a person, and as an *experience*. In Greek, the first use is expressed in the form of an adjective ("He is *full* of the Spirit."), and the second sense is expressed in the form of a verb in passive voice ("He was *filled* with the Spirit.")

Let's look at some examples:

## A. AS A CHARACTERISTIC

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*READ ACTS 6:3.*

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The deacons were to be men \_\_\_\_\_ of the Spirit.

*READ ACTS 11:24.*

---

B \_\_\_\_\_ was also a man full of the Spirit.

In these two cases, to be full of the Spirit means spiritual maturity. These men showed the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control). Notice that this description was not something just for the moment, but it was a lasting characteristic.

In these cases, the word in Greek, *full*, is an adjective. Just as a person can be *tall*, *pretty*, or *friendly*, for example, a person can also be *full of the Spirit*.

To sum up the first meaning of the *fullness of the Spirit*:

The term can be used as an adjective to describe a

C \_\_\_\_\_ of a person.

It means he is spiritually

M \_\_\_\_\_.

How can you be full of the Spirit in this sense? By using the means of growth that we have been studying in this book: the Word, Prayer, and the Sacraments (also Fellowship).

### C. AS AN EXPERIENCE

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The fullness of the Spirit can also refer to an experience in which the Lord *equips a person for a certain specific ministry*. In these cases, it would be more accurately translated *filled with the Spirit*. (Unfortunately, some translations do not communicate this idea clearly.)

Read the following passages and identify what kind of ministry resulted from a person being filled with the Spirit:

#### *EXODUS 31:3*

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Person:

Ministry:

#### *MICAH 3:8*

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Person:

Ministry:

*LUKE 1:11-17*

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Person:

Ministry:

*LUKE 1:67*

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Person:

Ministry:

*ACTS 2:4*

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Person:

Ministry:

*ACTS 4:8*

---

Person:

Ministry:



*ACTS 4:31*

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Person:

Ministry:

*ACTS 9:17*

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Person:

Ministry:

*ACTS 13:9*

---

Person:

Ministry:

Notice that the same person can be filled repeatedly for different tasks. For example, Paul was filled with the Spirit in Acts 9:17 and again in Acts 13:9. Peter was filled several times (Acts 2:4, 4:8 and 4:31). This experience is for a specific occasion and is not a permanent characteristic.

To sum up the second sense of the *fullness of the Spirit*:

The phrase can be used as a verb to describe

an E \_\_\_\_\_.

It means a person is equipped by the Holy

Spirit for some special M \_\_\_\_\_.

***READ LUKE 11:11-13.***

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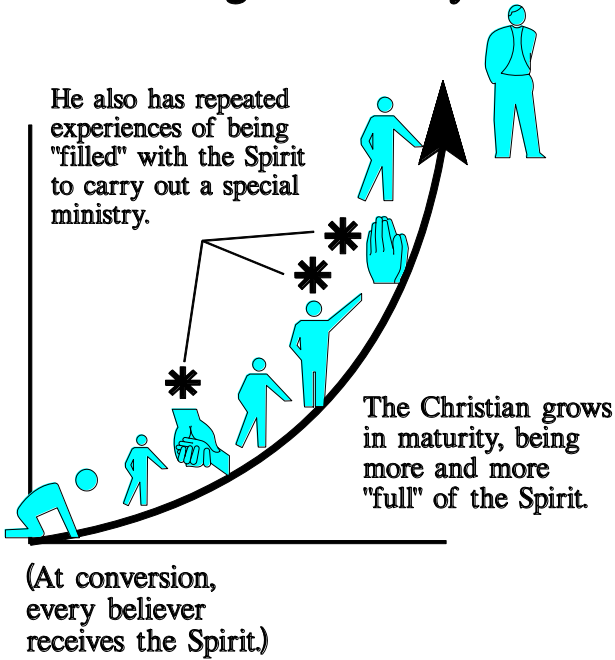
What can you do to be filled with the Spirit in this sense?

The first thing you can do is *pray*. You cannot control this. The Lord fills you with the Spirit for a special task when *He* wants to.

Secondly, you can put yourself in a position to receive this fullness by ministering to other people. As you begin to share your faith and help others grow, there may be moments when you need the special help of the Spirit and will sense His special blessing. For example, you may sense a burden to share the gospel with someone or you may suddenly have a clarity of thought and a capacity to explain the gospel that you had never experienced before. You can sometimes tell that you were filled with the Spirit because of the results of what you have done. Maybe somebody was moved to believe in the Lord or maybe you were able to help somebody overcome a serious problem.

The following drawing summarizes the teachings of this lesson:

## The goal: maturity



First of all, every believer receives the Holy Spirit when he becomes a Christian. Then he begins a process of growth. The curved line represents this growth in fullness of the Spirit, that is, growth in maturity. The figures with asterisks represent the moment when the person is filled with the Holy Spirit for a specific ministry. The two aspects are distinct, and one does not depend on the other. A Christian could be immature and yet be filled with the Spirit for some special task. On the other hand, someone could be very mature and not have these experiences. However, normally a Christian experiences both kinds of fullness; as he grows in maturity, he also experiences special works of the Holy Spirit to help him minister to others.

## REVIEW

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1. Do all Christians have the Holy Spirit?
2. The phrase, *fullness of the Spirit*, can be understood in two senses. Identify the two meanings and explain them:

## FOR DISCUSSION

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1. Have you ever been filled with the Spirit for some special ministry? Tell about your experience.
2. Do you have any doubts about the Holy Spirit and His ministry? Explain them.

ANSWERS TO REVIEW  
QUESTIONS

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**The following are answers to the review questions at the end of each lesson:**

**Lesson 1**

Sin no longer dominates you. (There is still a struggle with the old sinful nature, but sin no longer has control.)

**Lesson 2**

1. Your new purpose in life is to *glorify God*.
2. The goal of your spiritual growth is to *become like Jesus*.
3. Jesus manifests the *Fruit of the Spirit*.
4. Jesus manifests perfect *love*.

**Lesson 3**

1. You shall have no other gods.
2. You shall make no images or bow down to them.
3. You shall not misuse the name of God.
4. Keep the Sabbath day holy.

**Lesson 4**

1. You shall have no other gods.
2. You shall make no images or bow down to them.
3. You shall not misuse the name of God.
4. Keep the Sabbath day holy.
5. You shall honor your father and mother.
6. You shall not kill.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not lie.
10. You shall not covet.

## Lesson 5

1. The secret for significant change in your life is to *keep your eyes on Jesus*.
2. Our righteousness comes from God, by *faith* from first to last.
3. The three Means of Grace are:
  - a. The Word
  - b. Prayer
  - c. The Sacraments
4. The fourth necessary element is *fellowship*.

## Lesson 6

Steps for Bible Analysis:

- I. Observation
- II. Interpretation
  - A. Ask Questions
  - B. Look for Answers
    1. In the Bible
    2. In Other Study Aids
- III. Application
  - A. Promises
  - B. Truths
  - C. Ethical Principles
  - D. Examples

## Lesson 7

1. To ask for something in Jesus' name means to ask for it *to please Him*. (That is, with the motive of seeing His will done and with the attitude of seeking His honor.)
2. We can study the Bible to see if it is according to His will.
3. He may not grant our request because it is not the best thing for us. (Maybe He has something better for us, or maybe it is not the right time.)



## **Lesson 8**

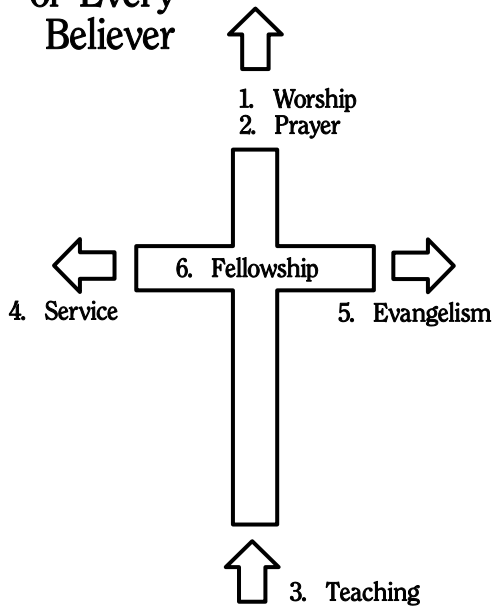
1. A sacrament is a ceremony instituted by Jesus to teach spiritual truths by means of material symbols.
2. Baptism symbolizes cleansing from sin, new life in Christ, and receiving the Holy Spirit. It is used especially to publicly receive believers and their children into the Church.
3. *Circumcision* is replaced by baptism.
4. The Lord's Supper symbolizes Christ's death for our sins, the unity of all believers, our dependence on the Lord, and the future banquet we will celebrate with Him. It is used especially to remember Jesus' death for us.
5. The *Passover* is replaced by the Lord's Supper.

## **Lesson 9**

The two basic steps for a Daily Quiet Time are praying and reading the Bible. It's good to keep a notebook for writing down what you learn.

## Lesson 10

### The Ministry of Every Believer



## Lesson 11

1. The most important reason to go to church is *to worship God*.
2. To worship literally means *to fall down before someone and kiss his feet*.
3. To worship in spirit and in truth means to worship with your heart, sincerely, and with your mind, using true concepts.

## Lesson 12

Prayer is important because it is our secret weapon in our spiritual battle.

## Lesson 13

The basic outline of the gospel presentation:

Three things you should know:

The Creation

The Corruption

Christ

Three things you should do:

Receive forgiveness

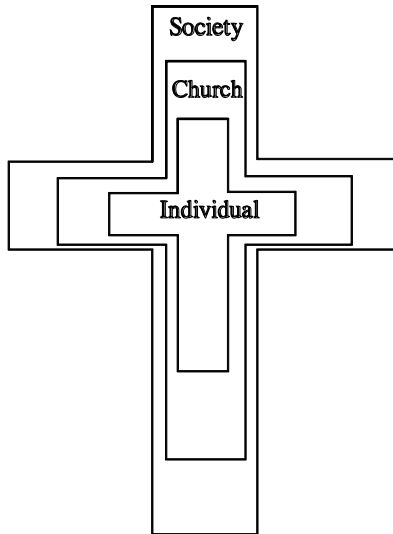
Relinquish the control of your life

Repeat the message to others

## Lesson 14

1. *The one who serves* is the greatest in the kingdom of God.
2. We are the *salt* of the earth and the *light* of the world.
3. True faith expresses itself in *good works*.
4. When we serve a brother, we are serving *Christ*.

5.



### Lesson 15

1. The purpose of education in the church is to help the church and all its members become like Jesus.
2. The important thing is what the student *learns*.
3. It helps to use good *illustrations*.

### Lesson 16

1. We should use our tongues to *encourage* others.
2. The three steps for reconciliation:
  - a. Go and talk to the person who offended you.
  - b. If he doesn't listen, go with one or two witnesses.
  - c. If he still doesn't listen, tell the authorities of the church.
3. If a brother who offends us asks for forgiveness, we should *forgive* him.
4. To forgive means to *decide not to make the other person pay for what he has done*.

## Lesson 17

1. The gifts should be used to *help the church grow*.
2. 1 Cor. 12: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, distinguishing spirits, tongues, interpreting tongues. Rom. 12: service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, mercy.
3. A *talent* does not necessarily bring spiritual blessings and help the church grow, but a *gift* does.

## Lesson 18

1. The Lord guides us in two senses:
  - a. He shows us moral principles to *obey* so we can do what is *correct*.
  - b. He shows us what is *wise* so we can do what is *best*.
2. Four ways in which God guides us to make a wise decision:
  - a. Prayer
  - b. The Word
  - c. Advice from others, and
  - d. Knowledge of the situation
3. Preference.

## Lesson 19

1. Yes, all Christians have the Holy Spirit.
2. Fullness of the Spirit can mean:
  - a. a characteristic, indicating spiritual maturity, or
  - b. an experience, being capacitated for a special ministry.



## CONCLUSION

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I hope the study of these lessons has been an encouragement to you in your process of spiritual growth! Please let me repeat that no human effort will produce real sanctification, unless we are trusting the Lord. Run the race with your eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith!

Now I would like to ask a favor: Share what you have learned with others. Use your gifts and practice what you have learned about ministry. You could teach a Bible study using these same lessons, or think of some other way to begin ministering to others, helping them press on and grow into the image of Christ. May the Lord guide you and bless you with much fruit!