



Living the Christian Life

Bible Study

Presented by

The Way Out Prison Ministry

Teaching Notes

The Way Out Prison Ministry
P. O. Box 5176
Akron, OH 44334
Tel. 330 848-0454
www.thewayoutministry.org

Guidelines used in the Development of “Living the Christian Life” Bible Study

Participant Profile

1. Has little or no church background; what background there is most likely came as a child.
2. Has very little understanding of the Bible, doesn't know how to find various books.
3. Understands that he/she is not able to live life without getting into trouble and recognizes the need for divine help.
4. Has made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ, either in the past and has not been able to live it, or more recently in the current jail experience.
5. Has no more than a High School education, if that.
6. Few will attend for the whole series, most will come and go at any time because of the short duration of their time in the jail.

Objective

1. Help the participant understand the power available from God to live a life that is pleasing to God and satisfying to one's self.
2. To give the participant the foundational building blocks of Biblical knowledge that undergird such a life.
3. To encourage habits of Christian discipline that will help him/her maintain the Christian Life outside of jail.
5. As much as possible, each lesson will have to be a stand-alone unit, not building specifically on the previous lessons, but recognizing that due to the limited Biblical background, some topics will require more than one lesson.

Methodology

1. Have written material for participants that includes:
 - sufficient notes that the participant could do the study without a leader;
 - fill-in blanks format to aid in remembering the lesson;
 - definitions of any new terms.
2. The format of the classes should be interactive, not lecture.
3. Where possible, each lesson should draw primarily from one book of the Bible for the following reasons:
 - minimizes page turning to unfamiliar books;
 - teaches the participant to use the Bible as it was written, not by “proof-texting;”
 - teaches the importance of context;
 - teaches the theme of various Bible books;Where this is not possible, verses will be printed in the lesson material.
4. Teaching should establish the inherent meaning of the text (What does this passage mean?), then seek to apply the meaning to contemporary life (How does this meaning apply to you?); never ask “What does this mean to you?” because this implies that the text can have different meanings for different individuals.
5. The material should teach by precept and by example to provide balance and to accommodate different learning styles.
6. Each lesson should include some extra reading/study material for the participant to do on his own.

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Preface

To The Teacher

It is our desire that these lessons will be used by you under the direction and power of the Holy Spirit to help jail inmates learn to walk with God. While this material is intended primarily for the believer in Jesus Christ, we recognize that not everyone in a Bible Study has come to faith in Him. There are many opportunities throughout these lessons to share the gospel, as noted in the Teacher's Notes. You may give these opportunities more or less emphasis depending on your knowledge of your Bible Study group. However, if your group is largely made up of unbelievers, we recommend that you find material more suited to their needs.

We have prepared separate notes for the Student and the Teacher. The Student's Notes have many blanks to be filled in. The Teacher's notes have all the blanks filled in with suggested answers. In some cases, the student is simply filling in key words from a Bible verse. Where this is the case, the quotations are all from the New International Version of the Bible. Your Teacher's Notes also include some helpful hints on teaching the lesson. All material in the Teacher's Notes which is not in the Student's Notes is printed in **bold face type**. Each lesson is designed to take about one hour to teach it properly. A few lessons have multiple sections (A, B, C) as indicated in the heading. In these cases, each part will require about one hour. In total, the whole book should take about 20 to 24 studies.

A team of Bible Study leaders from The Way Out Prison Ministry has taught through this material several times, and each time we have found improvements that could be made. As you use this material we welcome your comments and suggestions for improvement as together we serve our wonderful Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Please address your comments to The Way Out Prison Ministry, P.O. Box 27086, Akron, OH 44319.

To The Student

One of the greatest needs that has been expressed to us is that you need help in living the Christian life outside of this place. Some of you have been here before, have gotten right with God, then gone out and gotten into trouble again. The purpose of this study is to meet that need in both spiritual and practical terms. But meeting the specific needs of "staying straight" requires building a foundation of Biblical understanding and practice, as Jesus taught in Matt 7:24-27, "*Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.*"

So while not everything we do will seem like it is helping you stay straight, we are laying a foundation that you will be able to build on.

Part of this concept is not only teaching a specific subject each night, but also teaching something about a book of the Bible. So each study will concentrate in one book of the Bible, although we may refer to others. In this way you will learn something about the books of the Bible as well as the particular subjects we will be discussing.

Another aspect of this study is that we have prepared notes for you. The notes will contain some of the information you need, and there will be places for you to fill in answers; all of this is to help you work it into your memory. In addition, most lessons have some questions or examples for you to study on your own, after the class ends. We strongly recommend that you do these sections to further strengthen you in each area of study.

1. Understanding Salvation

1.0 Introduction

This is one of the more difficult lessons in the series, primarily because of the introduction of terminology which may be new. All such terms are explained in boxes at the side of the notes; remember to pay special attention to these terms.

1.1 Introduction to Understanding Salvation

We come to faith in Christ by many roads, and for different reasons; some to go to heaven instead of hell, others to find forgiveness from sin and guilt, still others for the strength to live life. But whatever means the Holy Spirit uses to draw us, we all must come through repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ and his death on the cross as our substitute. But when we come into salvation, we find that God has done a great deal more than we ever expected.

So our study tonight is to gain a greater understanding of our salvation. To do this, we will be using part of the book of Romans. **Note that this study is not primarily evangelistic, although the gospel underlies all we do. This study is primarily intended to help the new believer understand more of what he/she has received.**

1.2 Introduction To Romans

Romans was written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Rome. See Acts 9 for background on Paul [aka Saul], who wrote 13 books of the New Testament. These books were written in the form of letters to churches or individuals. Most of these letters were written to churches he had founded and were written to resolve problems in those churches. Romans, however, was written to a church he had not visited. In this letter Paul lays out most extensively and comprehensively his theology of salvation and sanctification. Salvation is how we come into the family of God; sanctification is how we grow in the family of God. Tonight we will look briefly at the first four chapters of Romans.

1. Understanding Salvation

2.0 Understanding Salvation

2.1 The Need for Salvation

Read Romans 1:16-32

1. (1:16) What is the gospel ? power of God
for the salvation of everyone
who believes.

Gospel - The gospel is literally "good news;" the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The gospel offers salvation from sin on the basis of simple faith in Jesus Christ as our savior.

2. (1:18) Why do we need salvation? The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men.

Salvation - Salvation is being saved from the power and dominion of sin through Jesus Christ. It is freely offered to all persons based upon their repentance and faith in Christ.

His wrath is revealed now as a warning of final judgment

This wrath is revealed generally in the natural consequences of sin, and is revealed specifically in historical judgments on Adam and Eve, the flood, Sodom, Israel's History, and on Christ at the cross.

3. (1:19-20) How do we know about God? from the creation around us
Discuss the idea that nature, general revelation, can show us His power, divine nature, but cannot show His love, our sin, and the need and provision of salvation.
4. (1:21) What has man done with this knowledge? did not recognize (glorify) God or give thanks. Mankind in general, and each of us, turned away from the knowledge that was available. With respect to creation, this meant finding alternate explanations for creation, such as evolution.
5. (1:22) What was the result? *they became* fools. **Historically and individually.**
6. (1:23-28) How did sin progress?
1:23, 25 - idolatry
1:24, 26, 27 - sexual sin
7. (1:24, 26, 28) How did God respond? He gave them over or said "OK, have it your way."
8. (1:29-31) What was the result in mankind? increasing sinfulness. **Don't bother with a detailed description of what these things were, the point is that, left to his own, man progresses downhill in his sin.**
9. (1:32) What is God's righteous decree? *Those who do such things deserve* death.
You might explain that death spiritual (separation from God) as well as physical.

Chapter 2 talks about the difference between Jews and gentiles under God's judgement.

10. (2:12-16) What are the two standards of Judgement? law and conscience.

Explain that judgment is based on conduct relative to the standard we know; that is, a person won't be judged by a law he did not know (verse 12)

1. Understanding Salvation

2.2 The Provision of Salvation

Righteous, righteousness - The state of being pure, holy, and sinless in the eyes of God.

Read Romans 3:9-20

1. (3:10) Who is righteous under the law? *There is no one righteous, not even one.*
2. (3:20) Then what does the law do for us? *Through the law we become conscious of sin.*

Read Romans 3:21-25

3. (3:21) Where, then, does righteousness come from? *A righteousness from God apart from the law has been made known.*
4. (3:22) How is this righteousness obtained? *This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.*

5. (3:24) What happens to all who believe? *They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

Justified - Justified is to be declared righteous by God. A person who has received salvation is justified based on the sacrifice made by Christ.

Use 2 Cor. 5:21 to show justification, Christ took our sinful record, we were given His perfect record

6. (3:25) How does righteousness come through Jesus Christ?

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood. For Old and New Testament views of atonement,

see Lev. 16:15-17; Heb 9:1-14, 24-28

Grace - A characteristic of God by which He gives salvation freely to all who believe, without requiring goodness or works.

Redemption - To be bought back and placed under new ownership. The believer is bought out of the slave market of sin into the family of God. The price is the atoning blood of Christ.

Atonement - Atonement is the covering over of sin, bringing reconciliation between God and man. Atonement was accomplished by Jesus Christ by His sacrificial sufferings and death. All who exercise repentance and faith have their sins covered and obtain peace with God.

1. Understanding Salvation

2.3 The Example of Abraham

read Romans 4:1-8

1. (4:1-3) How was Abraham justified (declared righteous)? Not by works, but

Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.

Verses 4 and 5 show especially that salvation cannot be obtained by our works.

2. Consider Abraham as an example of faith

Talk through these verses, showing that he obeyed God by faith, and that his works were an evidence of his faith.

Genesis 12:1-9	Abraham leaves home by faith.
13:1-4, 14-18	Abraham journeys by faith.
15:1-6	Abraham believed God and was declared righteous.
Hebrews 11:8-12	Summary of Abraham's faith.

2.4 The Chief Result of Salvation

1. (Romans 5:1) What is the result of being justified? *We have peace with God*

through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Note contrast with 1:18, which is being under the wrath of God)

3.0 Thoughts for later meditation

1. (4:23-25) How does Abraham's example apply to me? **Abraham believed what God told him and was justified; we must do the same, believe in the atonement that God has provided through Jesus Christ.**
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2. For a good example of a man saved by faith, see the jailer in Phillipi, Acts 16:22-34
3. For a good example of repentance, see the story of Zacchaeus, Luke 19:1-10
4. For further study on being dead in sin and alive in Christ, see Ephesians 2:1-10.
5. For further study on the law and faith, see Galatians 3:1 to 4:7

2. Gaining Assurance of Salvation

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Introduction To Assurance of Salvation

One of the first questions a growing Christian commonly asks is, “How can I know for sure that I have been saved?” The answer he or she usually receives is “Do you remember the time when and the place where you repented of your sins and accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?” That is not a bad answer, as many people can pinpoint a specific time when they know they did this, and can look back at that as a milestone in their life.

But for many others, the exact moment of salvation was not as memorable. In fact, the moment of the Spirit’s regeneration was simply a point along the way of being drawn to God; yet they are completely sure they are in the family of God. For others, the point is not memorable because they raised their hand, walked an aisle, and said the sinner’s prayer on several occasions, and they aren’t sure that it ever was real.

In the third chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus compared spiritual birth to physical birth, saying “*Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.*” If we carry the illustration a little further and say “How do I know that I was born physically?”, we could answer by saying “I have a birth certificate,” or, “My mother told me so,” but much more likely we would say “I am here aren’t I?” So it is with spiritual birth. The best evidence that a new birth has taken place is the existence of a new life, because **new birth brings new life, every time.**

How does the Bible answer the question “How can I know for sure that I have been born again?” One book of the Bible, 1 John, was written primarily to answer that question, and we will be looking at that book tonight.

In your own preparation, be sure to read the material in Section 3.0 Warnings, and incorporate these thoughts as you teach the lesson.

1.2 Introduction To the Book of I John

The Apostle John wrote five books of our New Testament: The Gospel of John, three epistles (or letters), 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John, and the book of Revelation. In each of his books, John gives a very clear purpose statement. In the Gospel of John, for example, he says in 20:31 “*these [miraculous signs] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*” His purpose in writing this book was so that people would believe in Jesus Christ and so have eternal life.

2. Gaining Assurance of Salvation

1.0 Introduction (cont'd)

1.2 Introduction To 1 John (cont'd)

In 1 John, he defines his purpose in 5:13, *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.* Here he is clearly writing to believers to give them assurance that they do have eternal life. How does John give us this assurance? Not by turning to a birth record, but by turning to the evidences of a new life, because **new birth brings new life, every time.** John defines for us three evidences of salvation:

1. Theological evidence - believing God's truth - change in beliefs
2. Moral evidence - living in Godly obedience - change in conduct
3. Social evidence - living in Godly love - change in relationships

John's writing style is quite different from Paul's. Paul writes by building one logical argument upon another to lead us to the desired conclusion. John tends to cycle through his major points more than one time, bringing a slightly different perspective each time he returns to a point. So our study tonight will follow the three evidences mentioned above, rather than follow the sequence of the book.

2.0 The Assurance of Salvation

1. (1:5-6) What is John's guiding principle in giving assurance of Salvation? *5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is Light in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.*
2. (2:6) More simply stated, the principle is *Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.*

John now proceeds to define in detail what it means to *walk as Jesus did.*

2. Gaining Assurance of Salvation

2.1 Change in Belief

1. (5:1) What new belief should I have? *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God,*

Christ literally means "The Anointed One" and is the Greek language equivalent of the Hebrew language "Messiah." To be the Christ implies fulfilling all the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah.

(4:15) *If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.*

2. (5:11-12) Is there anyone else who can give me eternal life? *And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.* 12*He*

Son of God means to have the same essential nature as God. The Greek word for son used here is *huios*, which indicates similar character. By contrast, the Greek word *teknon* indicates parental relationship. It is usually translated child, and is never used of Jesus Christ in the phrase Son of God

who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

3. (2:22-23) Is there any hope for a person who denies that Jesus is the Christ? *Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the*

Christ. Such a man is the Anti-Christ - he denies the Father and the Son. No one who

Antichrist can mean either "against Christ" or "instead of Christ," or perhaps, combining the two, "one who, assuming the guise of Christ, opposes Christ".

denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

4. Is anything necessary for salvation other than repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ?
NO

2. Gaining Assurance of Salvation

2.2 Change in Conduct

1. (2:3-5) How do my actions give evidence of salvation? *We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. 4The man who says, "I know him," but does not obey what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him.*

2. (3:6-8) What does it mean if I continue in a sinful lifestyle and do not change? *No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. 7Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he (Jesus) is righteous. 8He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. Also read verses 9 and 10.*

3. (1:8) Does this mean that I must become perfect (sinless)? *If we claim to be without sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

4. (1:9) What should I do when I sin? *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

2. Gaining Assurance of Salvation

2.3 Change in Relationships

1. (3:14) How do my relationships with other believers demonstrate my salvation? *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers.*

2. (3:16-18) What does it mean to love my brothers? *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers 17. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? 18. Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

3. (2:10-11) How does John describe a person who hates his brother? _____ in darkness, doesn't know where he is going, is blind

4. (4:7-8) What is the source of true love? God

5. (4:9-10) How did God show His love? he sent His Son into the world to die for us, that we might live through Him

6. (4:11-12) If we love each other, what will people see in us? _____
God living in us

2. Gaining Assurance of Salvation

3.0 Warnings

3.1 For Self, not Others

The purpose of this study is for each of us to know about our own salvation, not to test other people in their faith. Paul says *“let a man examine himself.”*

3.2 Change is a process

These changes do not occur automatically the moment we are saved. Change is a process, one that continues for as long as we live. Sometimes God will take away the desire for certain sinful actions very quickly; other things we may struggle with for a lifetime. God continues to work in us to bring about change, so we should expect to see continual progress, not overnight miracles. We never become sinless, but we do sin less.

It may seem as we grow in Christ that we see ourselves as being more sinful than before and so get discouraged; but that is only an increasing awareness of sin as shown by the contrast as we walk in the light with Christ.

3.3 The Results not the Means of Salvation

In none of this do we confuse changed actions or beliefs with how we are saved - we are saved by repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. John does not change how we are saved, he is only recognizing that when genuine salvation occurs, the results are life changing, because **new birth brings new life, every time.**

2. Gaining Assurance of Salvation

4.0 Further Study

1. How has my life changed morally since I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord?

2. How have my relations with other people changed since I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord? _____

3. How has my understanding of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) changed since I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord? _____

1. To see an example of how the people in one church were changed, read 1 Thessalonians 1.
2. For instructions in moral changes, read Colossians 3.
3. For an illustration of pride contrasted to humble confession, read Luke 18:9-14.
4. To see an example of humble love and its result, read John 13:1-17 and 13:34-35.

3. Developing a Devotional Life

1.0 Introduction

Perhaps the greatest joy of the Christian life is that as children of God, we get to spend time with our heavenly Father. Paul uses the term *abba Father*. Abba is an Aramaic term of endearment and intimacy, much like “daddy” in our culture. In a healthy family setting, one thing small children love to do is be with their father, to follow him as he does his chores, to copy his activities, and best of all, to sit on his lap and have him read a story. While this may not be our personal experience, it is the picture that God uses to teach us about our relationship with Him. We enjoy this kind of relationship with God as we read about His actions in history, seek to imitate His character, and listen to Him speak to us through the Bible. When we truly love someone, we desire to spend time with them.

While it is true that God is never far from us all and should be the foundation of all we think and do throughout the day, we should also spend some part of each day quietly and consciously in His presence. We call this time “devotions” or “quiet time.” Billy Graham once said that he never knew a Christian who amounted to anything for God who did not have a consistent quiet time.

When we really want to get to know someone, there is no substitute for spending quality time together. So it is with our relationship with God, we desire to spend time with Him, as He does with us. Like any other communication, this must be a two way conversation. We speak to Him in prayer and He speaks to us through His Word and His Holy Spirit. In future lessons, we will consider the subjects of prayer and Bible study in greater depth, but for today, let us look at them devotionally.

We will study the Devotional Life by looking at the examples of three men in scripture: Moses, David, and Jesus Christ.

2.0 Moses**2.1 Background (for the sake of time, tell these stories, don't read them, they are long)**

Moses was the man God chose to lead the Children of Israel out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. Moses also spent more time in the immediate presence of God than any other person in the Bible, except for the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. God prepared him by arranging for him to spend the first 40 years of his life in the court of Pharaoh (the ruler of Egypt) learning about government, military operations, and the customs of Egypt (Exodus 2:1-10). Because of a rash act on his part, Moses then spent the next 40 years in the desert as a fugitive from justice, caring for his father-in-law's sheep (Exodus 2:11-22). His later life gives evidence of a close devotional life developed during that time. At the end of that period in his life, God spoke to him from a burning bush, calling him to lead His people out of Egypt (Exodus 3:1 - 4:17).

After a remarkable series of miracles performed by God through Moses, Pharaoh allowed the Children of Israel to leave Egypt (Exodus 4:18 - 12:51). Shortly after they left, however, he changed his mind and sent his army after them. In one of the best known stories of the Bible, the Children of Israel crossed the sea on dry land as God pushed the waters to each side to create a dry path through the sea for them. He then brought the waters back to their place, drowning Pharaoh's pursuing army in the process (Exodus 13:14 - 14:31). Moses then led them through the desert to Mt. Sinai, where God gave them the law (Exodus 15 - 31).

3. Developing a Devotional Life

2.0 Moses (cont'd)

2.1 Background (cont'd)

While Moses was on the mountain receiving the Law, the people sinned by making a golden calf and worshipping it. When Moses returned from the mountain, he was angry with the people, broke the tablets on which the law was written, and destroyed the idol calf (Exodus 32). It is at this point that we will look at his relationship with God, and the conversation in His presence.

In the following questions, emphasize the various aspects of what went on during Moses' times with the Lord; Moses: worshiped God, wanted to know God's ways, received commandments from God, God made a covenant with Moses, and Moses was radiant after the experience (we may not glow, but we should be different)

2.2 Devotional Life

Read Exodus 33:7-11

1. (33:7) Where did Moses meet with God? A "tent of meeting" outside the camp
2. (33:7) Who else could meet with God? anyone who wanted to

Read Exodus 33:12-23

3. (33:13) What did Moses want God to teach him? His ways, what He is like
4. (33:14-15) What did Moses want with him? God's presence and power
5. How would you describe the relationship between Moses and God? Personal, Moses was respectful, desirous of God's presence, God was very good to Moses

Would you like this kind of relationship with God? _____

Read Exodus 34:8-11

6. (34:8) What was Moses' attitude in the presence of God? humble, obedient, worshipful, respectful
7. (34:9) What did Moses ask of God? be with us, forgive us
8. (34:10-11) What did God agree to do?
drive out enemies, make a covenant, do miracles
9. (34:11) What did God require of the people?
Obey His commands

Covenant - A formal contract between two parties, in which each party agrees to fulfill certain conditions and is promised certain advantages. In a covenant with God, He promises blessings in return for man's obedience. Some of God's covenants are unconditional; they have no requirements on man's part.

Read Exodus 34:27-29

10. (34:28) What did God give Moses on the mountain? the Ten Commandments
11. (34:29) What was different about Moses after speaking with the Lord? his face shined

Use only if necessary: Potential hard question - apparent conflict between 33:11 (Lord spoke to Moses face to face) and 33:23 (my face must not be seen). Because God is a spirit, not limited to a physical body, both expressions must be taken as figures of speech, not literally. In the first, "face to face," Moses' personal intimacy with God is emphasized. In the second, "my face must not be seen," the sight of the whole glory of God in all His majesty, as Moses asked to see in verse 18, would be too much for Moses to bear. By seeing God's back, he means the afterglow of His glory passing by.

3. Developing a Devotional Life

3.0 David

3.1 Background

About 500 years after entering and conquering the Promised Land under Joshua, the people demanded from God that they have a king like the other nations around them (1 Samuel 8). God gave them Saul, who utterly failed to carry out the role of king by disobeying God (1 Samuel 9 - 15). God then chose David to be the first king who would reign with God's blessing (1 Samuel 16:1-13). David is credited in scripture as "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14), a phrase that would indicate a devotional life in tune with God. David wrote about half of the 150 psalms that constitute the book of Psalms. These psalms are David pouring out his heart to God, expressing a range of emotions from fear and anger to love and devotion.

As a teenager, David was a shepherd (1 Samuel 16:11; 17:20). Four of his psalms are generally considered to be written during that time. Perhaps the best known of all the psalms, the 23rd, is one of these. We can imagine young David being sent to care for the sheep; a lonely and sometimes dangerous job (1 Samuel 17:34-37). We can almost hear him saying, "Yeah, its fine for me to take care of these sheep in the wilderness by myself, but who is going to take care of little old David? Well, .. maybe .. *The Lord is my shepherd*, and if that is true, then *I shall lack nothing*," and so on. In this we hear David developing the habit of a devotional life that stayed with him through his 40 years as king, uniting Israel's twelve independent tribes into a unified and powerful monarchy.

In answering the following questions, the exact words may vary with each person and the translation they are using. The ideas are more important than the exact words

3.1 Devotional Life

Today we will read Psalm 34, one that expresses something of David's devotion to God and his love for Him. Look for things David said about his relationship with God.

1. (34:1-3) What words did David use to express his praise of God? extol, praise, rejoice glorify
2. (34:4-7) What words did David use to express God's care for him? answered, delivered, saved, heard, angels camp around, never ashamed
3. (34:8-10) How does God care for those who seek Him? they will lack nothing, lack no good thing, provides refuge
4. (34:11-14) How did David say that intimacy with God should affect our conduct? keep our tongue from speaking evil, not lie, turn from evil, do good, seek peace,
5. (34:15-20) What words does David use to show God's closeness to the righteous? eyes are on him, ears are attentive, close to the brokenhearted, close to the crushed, deliver from travail, protect his bones.

3. Developing a Devotional Life

4.0 Jesus Christ

Although Jesus Christ was indeed God Himself come in human form, He was also fully a man, and subject to the same temptations, concerns, and feelings that we are. As we look at His life, we find Him often spending time alone with His Father.

Mark 1:35 *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.*

Matthew 14:22 *Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. 23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray.*

Luke 9:18 *Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him,*

1. What do we learn about Jesus' prayer life from the verses printed above? **it was private, frequent, at difficult times, early morning, after a busy day**

The main idea is that He was alone with God and it was a common occurrence in His life

2. Read Mark 6:30-32 What did Jesus tell the disciples was necessary after a hard time of ministry?

come apart for a while We need times of refreshing alone with God

3. Read Luke 6:12-16 What do you think Jesus was praying about?

Who He should choose as apostles

It is important to pray prior to making a decision (be prepared to explain the difference between a disciple (one who learns from, follows, and emulates a teacher) and an apostle (one specifically chosen to represent another, carrying his message).

4. Read Luke 22:39-46 What was the purpose of Jesus' prayer? **That He would have strength to go to the cross**

He was praying to avoid the temptation of not going through with the cross. We need to pray that we will remain strong in doing God's will in our lives.

5. What lessons can we learn from Jesus devotional life? **If He needed to spend time with His Father, so do we, regularly, alone, before day begins.**

Re-emphasize the characteristics of devotional time: Necessity, frequency, aloneness, refreshing, prayer, Bible study, meditation, etc

At the end of the lesson, you may wish to hand out the small paper "Beginners Bible Reading Plan." The questions on the back may not be meaningful at this time as they form the basis for Lesson 5, "Getting More From Your Bible Reading," but it does offer a good answer to the natural question "Where do I start reading in my Bible?"

4A. Understanding the Bible as God's Word (Part 1 of 2)

•1.0 Introduction

The Bible is our source of knowledge and understanding as we grow in our Christian faith. It tells us about God, ourselves, and our relationship to God; it defines sin and describes its cure; it tells us about heaven and hell, and eternal life; about God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and it provides wisdom for living all aspects of our life. It is the most important book in the world. Rightly understanding the Bible is not only a matter of life and death on this earth, but of eternal life and death. If it is really this important to us, then we should understand its source, how we received it, and how to make the best use of it in our lives.

2.0 The Authorship of the Bible

2 Peter 1:20-21 - *Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

Inspiration is the process God used to communicate His truth to mankind in the Bible. God so inspired men to write that they recorded exactly the words He wanted to say, while still maintaining their personalities and writing styles.

Hebrews 1:1-2 - *In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son,*

2 Timothy 3:16-17 - *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Using the above scriptures, answer the following questions. **Make sure their answers come directly from these scriptures, not their general knowledge, Simple, but a good discipline**

1. Who is the ultimate author of the Bible? God - The Holy spirit
2. What kind of men did He use to write the Bible? Prophets
Note that in the New Testament, this includes Apostles and their close associates
3. Who moved the prophets in their writing? The Holy Spirit
4. In addition to the prophets, how has God spoken to us? Through His Son (as recorded in the Bible)
He has also spoken through creation, although that is not mentioned in these verses
5. What will the Bible do for me? Answer from 2 Tim. 3:16-17. Teach me about God, about myself, sin, right and wrong, how to be saved, how to live a life pleasing to God.

Discuss the process of inspiration using the definition in the box above. It is important to stress the balance between God conveying exactly the message He wanted to communicate with total accuracy, yet without over-riding the personalities and writing styles of the men He used.

Note, for example, differences of style and emphasis between Paul and James, yet in perfect harmony with each other. Additional helpful examples are Luke 1:1-4, where Luke describes his methodology, carefully investigating, etc. and John 20:30-31 to see John's selectivity and purpose. Luke investigated by interviewing people, John was an eyewitness; both wrote under the total control of the Holy Spirit.

4A. Understanding the Bible as God's Word (Part 1 of 2)

3.0 The Characteristics of the Bible

Because the Bible comes from God, we would expect it to reflect His character. In Psalm 19, David writes of the nature of the scriptures:

Ps 19:7-10

7 *The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. **The Word of God is complete for all our needs, has no mistakes, errors, contradictions, will bring us to God***

*The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy making wise the simple. **firmly established and certain, we can rely on its promises, warnings, and prophecies to make us wise***

8 *The precepts of the LORD are right giving joy to the heart. **true and appropriate for our needs***

*The commands of the LORD are radiant giving light to the eyes. **enlightening, eye-opening, shows us divine truth we could learn no other way***

9 *The fear of the LORD is pure enduring forever. **undiluted by evil or falsehood, leads to a reverential awe of God, which will be eternal***

*The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. **unchangeable, built on the sure foundation of God Himself, reflecting His righteous character.***

10 *They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.*

the Psalmist's response, the Word is precious to Him and sweeter than honey.

After they have filled in all the blanks, have someone read just the words they have written and remind them that these words describe the character of God and of His Word.

Inerrant - the Bible, as originally written, is completely true. This means there are no contradictions within the Bible, that it is accurate regarding history, human nature, theology, science (given the limitations of scientific expression when it was written), and its own origins.

Authoritative - The Bible is of ultimate and final authority in our understanding of God, ourselves, the world around us, and our relationship to God. It also defines all matters of sin and ethical living. No other source is to be considered of equal authority.

4.0 The Structure of the Bible

Additional evidence of the divine authorship of the Bible comes from the following facts. The Bible is not just one book, it is a collection of 66 different books. The first five books of the Bible were written by Moses about 1400 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. The oldest book of the Bible, Job, may have been written a few hundred years earlier. The last book of the Bible, Revelation, was written by the apostle John, nearly 100 years after the birth of Jesus. In between, 60 more books were written by about 40 other men. Yet in all 66 books, written over a period of at least 1500 years, there is a total harmony of thought, a complete absence of contradiction, and a divine progress of revelation. This could not have been achieved by any effort of mere men acting on their own.

Many start reading the Bible from the beginning just like any other book, and then get discouraged, particularly when they get to Leviticus and find that it does not read like any other book they have read, such as a novel or a textbook. A primary objective of this lesson is to help the student understand while the Bible is one book, it is also a collection of 66 books,

4.0 The Structure of the Bible (This is still page 2 of the Student Notes)

each with a different purpose, but each firmly grounded in real history and real people. Our objective is to get them to read it, but to do so with understanding.

The books of the Bible are divided into two major groups: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament begins with the creation of the universe by God and ends about 400 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. The New Testament begins with the birth of Jesus Christ and ends with a prophetic look into the future - to the end of the world.

Within each Testament, the books are grouped by type, as shown in the illustration on page 3, which portrays all the books of the Bible in the order they appear in the Bible. In the Old Testament, within each group, the books are generally in chronological order. Putting the entire Old Testament into chronological order is a little more difficult, but is illustrated on page 4. The following is a description of the books on each shelf.

Page 3 starts here in the Student Notes.

Review the bookshelf picture making the following points:

- **the books are all in order as they appear in the Bible**
- **describe each OT shelf, noting that the kind of literature and the chronological relationship of each shelf with respect to the others**

The Books of the Law, written by Moses, begin with creation and tell the history of the Jewish people from God's covenant with Abraham through the giving of the Law, and up to the time they are ready to enter the promise land.

The historical books of Israel tell of their entry into the promised land, their growth into a powerful nation, their defeat, exile, and restoration.

The books in the Poetry section are written in poetical format and include epic poetry, wisdom literature, and prayers. They were written at various times from Genesis to Nehemiah.

The prophets recorded God's messages to the people to return to Him, warnings to other nations, and prophecies of the future. They were written at various times from 1 Samuel through Nehemiah.

- **discuss the tree on Page 4 of the Student Notes (Page 5 in the Teaching Notes).**
- **Describe each NT shelf, noting the type of literature and authorship**

The Gospels are the records of Jesus Christ, including His birth, ministry, teaching, death, burial, and resurrection.

Acts records the first thirty years of the history of the Christian church.

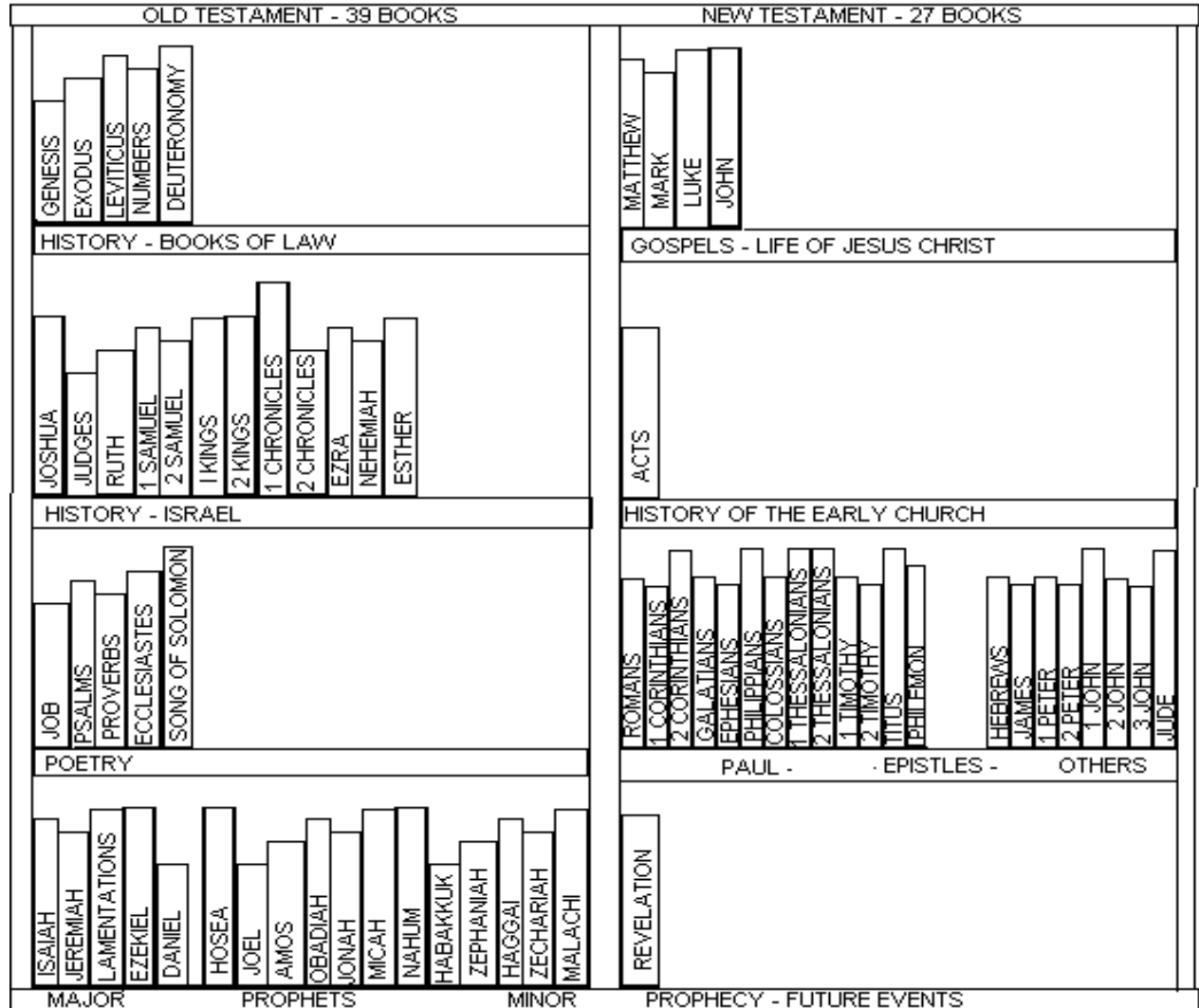
Epistles are letters generally written by Apostles to churches and individuals, each dealing with specific church issues.

Revelation records a vision of the risen Christ given to the Apostle John, seven letters to churches from Christ, followed by a series of apocalyptic visions of the future

At the end of the lesson, hand out the "Summary of the Books of the Bible" for their own personal use. It should not be necessary to teach it; it is self-explanatory.

4A. Understanding the Bible as God's Word (Part 1 of 2)

This figure is on Page 3 of the Student Notes

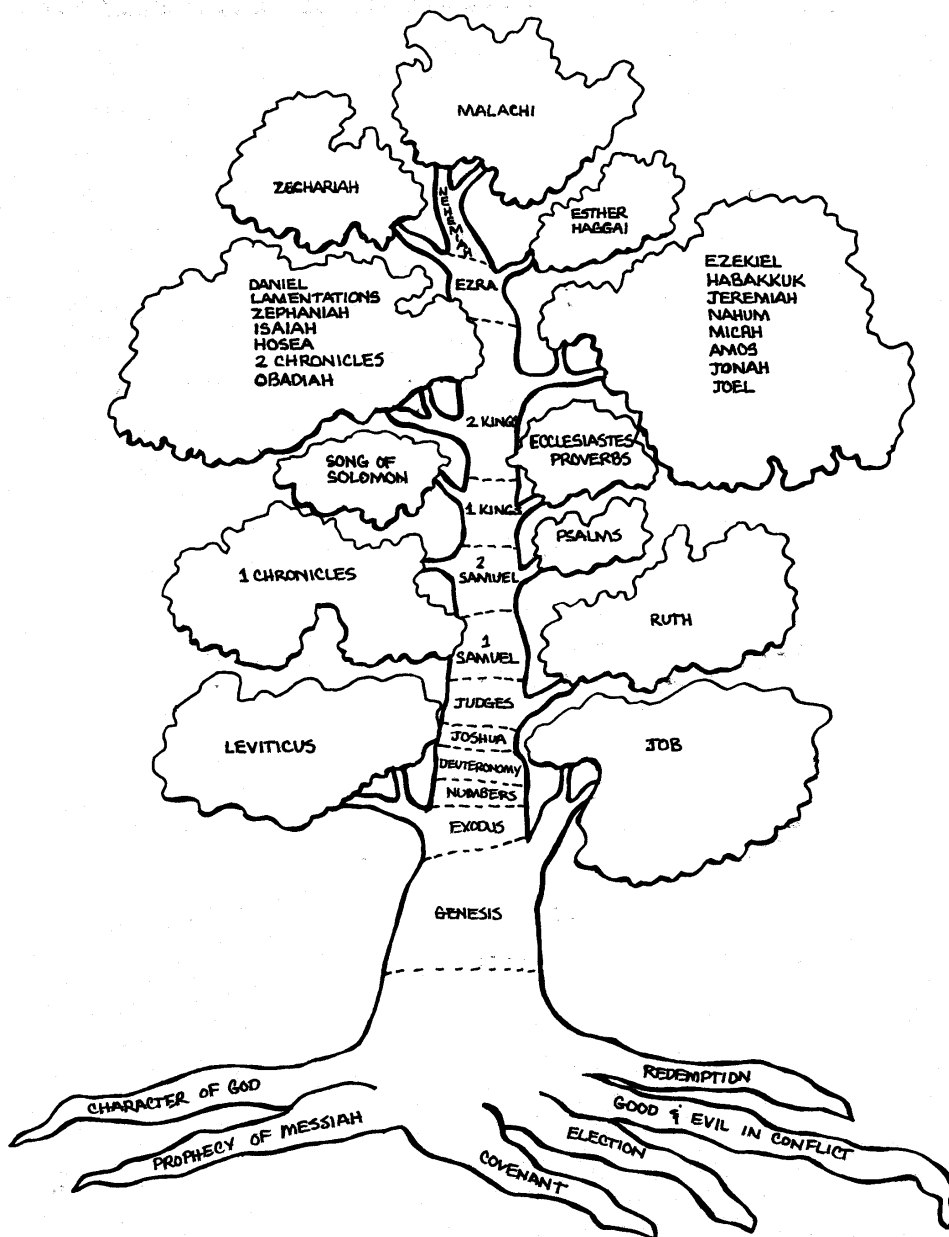


4A. Understanding the Bible as God's Word (Part 1 of 2)

4.0 The Structure of the Bible (cont'd)

This Figure is on Page 4 of the Student Notes

Show that by reading the books that form the trunk of the tree, they will get a complete historical picture of the OT. The branches all fit in at the correct place chronologically, and the roots show ideas that flow throughout the whole OT, like the sap in a tree.



5.0 For Additional Study

1. For a description of how one writer of the Bible got his information, read Luke 1:1-4
2. For an interesting story about how one part of the Bible was written, destroyed, and preserved, read Jeremiah 36.

1.0 Jesus' Use of the Old Testament

1.1 About Himself

At the time that Jesus Christ walked the earth as a man, the Old Testament existed substantially as we know it today, although it differed in the names and order of the books. The books of the Old Testament were divided into three groups: The Law, The Prophets, and The Writings. In His teaching, Jesus made extensive use of the Old Testament. By one scholar's count, one tenth of all the verses spoken by Jesus are either quotations from the Old Testament or very direct allusions to it. By His direct statements and in His constant use of the scriptures, the Lord Jesus Christ affirms their importance and their literal accuracy.

1. Jesus began His ministry by quoting Isaiah 61:1-2 to show who He was. Read Luke 4:16-21 and answer the following question.

Teaching Note: In Questions 1 and 2, the emphasis is not to teach the primary message of each passage, but to show that Jesus' life was guided by scripture from start to finish.

Who sent Jesus on His ministry and defined what that ministry was to be? Holy Spirit

2. At the very end of His life, Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1 from the cross. Read Matthew 27:45-46 and answer the following question. **You may wish to note how graphically the rest of this Psalm describes crucifixion, even though crucifixion was unknown at that time, showing the prophetic accuracy of the Bible**

What words did Jesus quote from Psalm 22:1? My God My God, why have you forsaken me?

3. On the day of His resurrection, Jesus was walking with two of His followers and talking about the resurrection (Luke 24:13-32), but they did not recognize who He was. **Do not take time to read the entire story, simply retell it briefly in your own words.** Before He revealed Himself to them, He taught them for nearly two hours about His resurrection, using the Old Testament as His source. Only after this discourse did He show them that He had risen from the dead. Read Luke 24:25-27 and 32 and answer the following questions.

Teaching Note: The emphasis here is not on the resurrection, but rather that Jesus taught the OT for two hours before revealing Himself; i.e., the importance of the Word over experience.

Who did Jesus say spoke of His suffering and glory? The prophets

How much did He tell the disciples they should believe of the prophets? All

4. Jesus also taught the importance and endurance of the scripture in Matthew 5:17-18.

What did Jesus come to do in respect to the scriptures? fulfill

What did he say he would not do to the scriptures? Abolish (destroy, KJV)

How long did Jesus say the scriptures would last? Until everything is accomplished (or forever)

4B. Understanding the Bible as God's Word (Part 2 of 2)

1.0 Jesus' Use of the Old Testament (cont'd)

1.2 About History

In His selection of Old Testament scriptures, it seems that Jesus often chose to use as examples those incidents that people today frequently question when they try to deny the literal truthfulness of scripture.

1. In response to a question about marriage, Jesus used the creation of Adam and Eve to show God's plan for marriage (Genesis 1:26 - 2:25). Read Genesis 2:21-24 and Matthew 19:4-6 and answer the following questions.

Teaching Note: Again, the point is not to teach each story or its message, but only Jesus' use of the story to demonstrate great truths, His affirmation of the Old Testament, particularly some of the stories that are most criticized by liberal scholars.

Whose idea was it to create both male and female? God's

Whose idea was it to create marriage? God's

Do you think that Jesus would use the creation of Adam and Eve to illustrate such an important truth if they were not real people? No

2. Read Matthew 12:38-41. What Old Testament event does Jesus use to illustrate His own death, burial, and resurrection? **Jonah being swallowed by a huge fish** If the students are unfamiliar with the story, you may have to take the time to read the **Jonah 1-2**.

If the story of Jonah being swallowed by a huge fish was not literally true (Jonah 1-2), do you think Jesus would have used it to illustrate the most important event in the history of the world:

His own death, burial, and resurrection? No

3. Read Luke 17:26-30. In this discussion about His second coming, what two Old Testament Characters did Jesus use for illustration? Noah and Lot

What Old Testament city did Jesus use for an Illustration? Sodom

Do you think Jesus would use these people and events to illustrate His second coming if they were not literally true? No

If the students are totally unfamiliar with these two stories, you may have to review Genesis 6:9 - 8:15 and 18:16 - 19:29 with them.

4B. Understanding the Bible as God's Word (Part 2 of 2)

2.0 Response to the Bible

The Word of God is powerful. In the book of Hebrews it is compared to a sword in its ability to penetrate into the deepest areas of our being, *For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.* (Hebrews 4:12) When we respond properly to the Bible, its effects upon us are life-changing. Consider these examples.

1. Read Acts 8:27-38 and answer the following questions.

(8:30-33) What was the Ethiopian reading? **Isaiah (or the scriptures)**

(8:35) What did Phillip do? **Told him the good news about Jesus**

(8:36-37) What was the response of the Ethiopian? **Believed and was baptized**

Teaching Note: "believed" is implied in the NIV; the KJV includes another verse saying he believed, see the footnote in the NIV

2. When Jerusalem was being rebuilt, the Bible tells us that Ezra read the law to the people, as recorded in Nehemiah 8:1-12

(8:3) What was the people's attitude as he read? **listened attentively**

(8:6) How did the people respond to the reading? **Agreement (amen) and worship**

(8:9) How else did they respond? **Weeping and mourning (indicating repentance)**

(8:12) How else did they respond? **Celebrated with great joy**

(8:12) Why did they respond with such great joy? **They understood**

The Bible is not given to us simply to educate us about Jesus and the people of long ago; it is given to us to change our lives. In order for that to happen, we must respond in obedience to God by changing our thinking and our way of living.

3.0 For Additional Study

1. For an interesting story of one King's reaction to finding a portion of the Bible after it had been lost, read 2 Kings 22-23.
2. For additional responses to the Bible, read Psalm 119. All but two verses of this Psalm mention something about God's word and how we are to respond to it.
3. For an example of the importance of the scriptures over experience, read Luke 16:19-31, especially verse 31.

Summary of the Books of the Bible

2 Timothy - Paul writes a second letter to Timothy how he should personally conduct himself as the leader of a church, particularly in the face of false doctrine. This is Paul's last letter, written from a Roman prison shortly before his martyrdom.

Titus - Paul writes to Titus as a church leader with instructions regarding the establishment of order in the church in Crete.

Philemon - Onesimus was a slave who had run away from Philemon, Paul's coworker and friend. But Onesimus had been won to Christ through Paul while Paul was in jail. Paul sends him back to Philemon with this letter, instructing Philemon to receive Onesimus no longer as a slave, but as a beloved brother.

General Epistles

The books in this group were written by various authors to scattered groups of Christians to encourage them in particular aspects of their faith.

Hebrews - This is the only book in the New Testament with an unknown author. He writes to Christians of Jewish background who are considering returning to their Jewish roots to avoid persecution. He presents Christ as the fulfillment of all the Old Testament pictures and superior to the old ways in every respect.

James - This epistle is written by James to show that good works are a necessary outcome of faith. In so doing, he describes in very practical terms how a Christian lives out his faith.

1 Peter - The Apostle Peter writes to Christians facing persecution, telling them first who they are and what they have in Christ. He then assures them that persecution is an expected part of the Christian life and that their testimony for

Christ under these circumstances is more important than their personal suffering.

2 Peter - After telling his readers to be sure of their own salvation, Peter warns them of false teachers and their destruction. He concludes with a reminder that the Lord will come and justice will be done for all.

1 John - The Apostle John writes his first letter to believers to give them assurance of their salvation by the changes that have occurred in their understanding of God, their moral conduct, and their love for their fellow Christians.

2 John - John's second epistle is a brief letter to an unnamed church, reminding them to love each other and to turn away from false teachers.

3 John - John writes briefly to his friend Gaius, commending him for his faithfulness and love, and warning him of the actions of Diotrophes, who is causing division by his gossip and controlling ways.

Jude - In this last epistle in the New Testament, Jude warns against false teachers and apostates, giving many of their identifiable characteristics.

Revelation - The Apostle John, now an old man and in exile for his faith, receives a vision of the risen Christ, who then dictates letters to each of seven churches commending them for the good in them and warning them of their faults. He then receives many visions of the end times, including the second coming of Christ, the final judgement of unrighteous people, and the eternal state of the believer.

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Summary of the Books of the Bible

The Bible is a truly unique and remarkable book. It begins with the creation of the universe and ends with a series of dramatic visions that carry the reader to the end of time and beyond. Yet it is not one book, but sixty-six books, written by more than forty men over a period of fifteen hundred years. It consists of many different kinds of literature: history, biography, poetry, wise sayings, recorded speeches, and personal letters. But with all this variety, it has one author: God Himself; one theme: the relationship of God and the people He created; and one great hero: Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

This diversity of writers and broad span of time combined with the Bible's singularity of focus and total coherence is at once the greatest testimony to its divine authorship and the greatest hindrance to its understanding. God could have used one person to write a shorter, simpler version of the story, but this would have lacked the richness and depth that His character deserves. He could have made it so complex and mystical as to be totally beyond human understanding, but then it would have been of no benefit to mankind. Instead, He chose to ground it in the reality of historical events, the lives of real people, and His interaction with them, all recorded without contradiction or error.

As you begin to read the Bible, it will be very helpful to understand how these sixty-six books were put together. The Bible is divided into two major sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament, consisting of thirty-nine books, is primarily about the Jewish people and God's covenant with them to be His chosen people. They are the people to whom He gave His great revelations, who recorded and preserved His word, and they are the community into which He sent His Son to be the savior of the world. The Old Testament is still the sacred book of the Jewish faith. This section of the Bible ends about 400 years before the birth of Jesus Christ.

The twenty-seven books of the New Testament record the birth of Jesus Christ, His three years of ministry, His death, burial, resurrection, and His return to heaven. It also records the growth of the early Christian Church and its foundational

theology.

The Old and the New Testaments are further divided into groups of books of similar types. These are explained in the following pages along with a summary of each book of the Bible.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Pentateuch

The first five books of the Bible are known as The Pentateuch, or the books of the law.

They were all written by Moses, approximately 1400 years B.C. (Before Christ). They carry the history of the people of Israel up to the point where they are ready to move into Canaan, the land God has promised to them for their homeland. God also reveals Himself by the name "Yahweh," which is generally indicated in the English Bible as LORD.

Genesis - Genesis begins with God and His acts of creation, tells the history of man's fall and continuance in sin, God's judgement on the world by the flood, and His promises of redemption. The focus then shifts to the patriarchs of Israel and God's covenant relationship with them, from the call of Abraham to Jacob and his family living in Egypt.

Exodus - Jacob's family had grown very large (2 million) and had become slaves in Egypt. By performing a number of miracles through Moses, God brought them out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai, where He gave them His laws for personal conduct, worship, and government.

Leviticus - The priests were to be the intermediaries who presented the people to God. Leviticus provides the priests with the instructions for carrying out this responsibility. In so doing, it emphasizes

Summary of the Books of the Bible

the Holiness of Yahweh by showing what the people must do to approach Him, to obtain forgiveness, and to walk in His favor.

Numbers - As the Israelites prepare to leave Mt. Sinai to journey to the Promised Land, they take a census of the people. Despite various complaints against Moses, the people journey to the southern end of Canaan. They send in twelve spies who report that it is a good land, but will be difficult to conquer. Rather than trusting God to fulfil His promise, as two of the spies recommend, the people turn back. Under God's judgement, they wander for forty years in the wilderness until that generation dies. They then come to the Jordan River and prepare to enter the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy - As the Israelites prepare to enter the promised land, Moses addresses them in a series of six messages, reviewing their history and affirming the LORD's requirements for the future. The people then affirm their covenant relationship to Yahweh. Joshua is appointed successor to Moses, and Moses dies.

The Historical Books

The next twelve books of the Old Testament are historical books. They continue the history of the twelve tribes of Israel from the time they enter the promised land, through their growth into a united and powerful nation, division of the kingdom, defeat and exile, and the restoration and rebuilding of the temple.

Joshua - Joshua leads the Children of Israel across the Jordan River and into the Promised Land. God gives them victory after victory over their enemies, as long as they are faithful to Him. The land is then apportioned among the twelve tribes and settled. In his last days, Joshua reminds the people to be obedient and faithful to Yahweh. Joshua and the people are continually admonished to "be strong," "be of good courage," and "be not afraid."

Judges - After the death of Joshua and those leaders whom he had trained, Israel turned away from the LORD. The book of Judges chronicles a series of cycles in which Israel turns away from the LORD; He judges them with oppression from other nations; they repent and plead for His help; and He sends a deliverer to rescue them. The book illustrates man's continual tendency to sin and God's everlasting patience and forgiveness when man repents. One key to the book is the statement "every man did what was right in his own eyes"

Ruth - Ruth is a Moabitess, and the widow of an Israelite. She accompanies her mother-in-law, Naomi, as she returns to Bethlehem, and marries her husband's kinsman Boaz, according to the law of the Kinsman-redeemer. The story is a beautiful illustration of the LORD's mercy on His people and Christ's redemption of lost sinners.

1 Samuel - This book records the transition from the rule of Israel by the Judges to the Kings. The dominant personality in the book is the prophet Samuel, the last of the judges, and a priest. At the people's request and God's direction, he anoints Saul the first king of Israel. But Saul is disobedient, and God directs Samuel to anoint David as the next king. After his anointing, Saul turns against David, tries to kill him, and pursues him when he flees. The book ends with the death of Saul in battle

2 Samuel - This book is the record of David's life as the king of Israel, the establishing of Israel as a powerful nation and Jerusalem as the center of worship. It also records David's personal life and the LORD's covenant with him establishing his throne forever.

Summary of the Books of the Bible

Romans - Paul had not yet visited the church in Rome when he wrote this epistle, his most comprehensive statement of the gospel. In the first eight chapters he lays out the need, means, and results of justification by faith. In the next three chapters he discusses the past, present, and future relationship of God and Israel. The last five chapters show the outworking of salvation in the lives of believers.

1 Corinthians - The church in Corinth was filled with problems, and turned to their founder to address the issues. Paul responds to their letter and some verbal questions as well. This letter addresses problems of divisions in the church, the importance of the Holy Spirit in understanding spiritual issues, handling sin in the congregation, issues of divorce and singleness, the Lord's Supper, the appropriate use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the significance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians - In this letter Paul responds to criticism of his ministry, with the conclusion that God's grace is sufficient for him to stand strong in all circumstances. It is the most personal of all his church epistles.

Galatians - Paul had founded a number of churches in the province of Galatia. Now Judaizers were following his footsteps, teaching that following Jewish ceremonial laws, including circumcision, was necessary for a right relationship with God. Paul responds that while the law had a purpose in bringing us to Christ, we are fully saved by grace alone.

Ephesians - After spending nearly three years founding the church in Ephesus, Paul later writes to them from prison in Rome to remind them of their glorious position in Christ and their unity in the church. He then shows them what it means to walk

worthy of their calling and to live in the fullness in the Spirit. In the last chapter he describes the weapons the believer has to fight spiritual warfare.

Philippians - To the church in Philippi, Paul writes from a Roman prison about the joy of life in Christ, regardless of the circumstances. Chapter two offers a marvelous statement of the humiliation and exaltation of Christ, and Chapter 3 shows the intensity of Paul's desire to follow Christ.

Colossians - Paul writes to the church in Colosse to warn against some human philosophies creeping into the church. He does this by exalting Jesus Christ as the supreme creator, Savior, and sustainer of the universe, and the total solution for man's needs both for time and eternity. He then urges the believers to set their hearts and minds on heavenly things to guide their lives here on earth.

1 Thessalonians - After commending the young church at Thessalonica for their faith, Paul reminds them of his ministry among them as an example of how they should act, and encourages them by telling them about the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians - Paul again writes to the Thessalonian church to encourage them in the persecution they are experiencing and teach them regarding the Day of the Lord.

1 Timothy - Paul writes to Timothy as the leader of the church in Ephesus, with instructions about church order and discipline and how he must conduct himself as the leader of the church.

Summary of the Books of the Bible

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Gospels

The New Testament begins with four books about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Each is written to a different audience and for a different purpose, but all glorify Him as the unique Son of God, come into the world to save sinners. Each was written by the man whose name it bears.

The first three gospels are called the synoptic gospels because they often report the same events. The Gospel of John seems to record events ignored by the other three writers.

Matthew - Matthew was one of the twelve disciples and wrote primarily to a Jewish audience to prove that Jesus Christ was indeed their promised Messiah and king.

The key word is “fulfilled” as he shows how Jesus fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies. Matthew emphasizes the sermons of Jesus. His record of the birth of Jesus appears to be more through the eyes of Joseph.

Mark - This writer was an early follower of Jesus, though not one of the twelve disciples. He was a close associate of the Apostle Peter, who is the primary source of Mark’s information.

The Gospel of Mark is written for the Roman mind; it emphasizes Jesus actions and miracles more than His dialog, showing Him as the faithful servant of God. The key word is “immediately.”

Luke - Luke is the only gentile (non-Jew) to write a book of the Bible. He was a close associate of Paul who “carefully investigated” all the stories of Jesus and wrote an “orderly account” (Luke 1:3).

Luke addressed his gospel primarily to the Greek mind, presenting Jesus as the Son of Man, with emphasis on His parables and His compassion, contacts with gentiles, women, the poor and the outcast. Luke’s birth narrative appears to be from Mary’s viewpoint.

John - The writer of this gospel account is the Apostle John, one of Jesus inner circle of three disciples. He emphasized Jesus as the Son of God, writing with the purpose that the reader “may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”

The stories in John are generally longer, emphasize Jesus teachings and the opposition of the Jewish religious leaders. The key word is “believe,” as after each story he gives an assessment of who believed in Jesus.

Acts - The Book of the Acts of the Apostles is the second book written by Luke, and is in a category by itself in the New Testament as a book of history.

Acts begins with the ascension of Jesus Christ to heaven forty days after His resurrection, and records events in the history of the early church for the following thirty years as it expanded from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth, as Jesus commanded in Acts 1:12. The book ends with the Apostle Paul in prison in Rome.

The Pauline Epistles

The next thirteen books are all letters (epistles) written by the Apostle Paul. Most of them were written to the church in a particular city, as indicated by the name; for example, Romans was written to the church in Rome. A few of his epistles were written to individual men who were church leaders.

These letters were generally written in response to problems or questions from a church. So each letter addresses a limited area of Christian theology; but because they are written to real churches, they also show how the theology is lived out in the real world.

Summary of the Books of the Bible

1 Kings - This book begins with the death of David and the reign of his son Solomon.

After Solomon, the kingdom is divided into Judah and Israel. The remainder of the book records the apostate condition of most of the succeeding kings of Judah and Israel. God sends Elijah and other prophets to warn the kings of the error of their ways.

2 Kings - In the first seventeen chapters, this book records the history of Israel and Judah as two separate, often warring, nations. The ministries of the prophets Elijah and Elisha predominate in the first eight chapters. The history of the kings is one of continual disobedience to the prophets' voices until Israel is finally defeated and carried away captive by Assyria.

The remainder of the book tells the history of Judah until the time they are defeated and taken into captivity by Babylon. Two kings, Hezekiah and Josiah, initiate reforms and bring God's blessing on the people; unfortunately, they are both followed by evil kings, and the revival and blessing are lost.

1 Chronicles - This book was written after the Babylonian captivity, when the Jews returned to rebuild Jerusalem, to give them a true sense of their spiritual history as Yahweh's covenant people. It reviews the history of Israel up to David in the form of genealogies, which also show that their God is the true creator of all mankind. The story of King David's reign, including the organization of his government and the temple worship, is described in detail to show the legitimacy of their government and its basis in Yahweh's covenant.

2 Chronicles - This book reviews the splendor of Solomon's reign, particularly the Temple, followed by the sad history of his successor kings and their decline into idolatry. This serves to explain the captivity in Babylon as God's just judgement, while giving them a valid basis for the restoration of the kingdom.

Ezra - The book of Ezra records the return of the exiles under Zerubbabel, their rebuilding of the temple, and his own return eighty years later to teach obedience to the law of God.

Nehemiah - Shortly after the events in Ezra, Nehemiah leaves his position in the court of Persia to return to Jerusalem as governor and to rebuild the walls of the city and to restore the people to obedience to God's law.

Esther - The events in the book of Esther occur during the early years of the return from exile, fitting between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra. It tells the story of a faithful Jewish girl in a heathen court who, by her bravery, saves many of her people from execution.

The Poetical Books

The next five books are written in the form of Hebrew poetry, and include epic poems, wisdom literature, and prayers.

Job - In the prologue, Job, who is a righteous man, is afflicted with the loss of his possessions, his family, and his health. Unknown to him is the fact that these losses are brought about by Satan with God's permission. Then follows a series of dialogues with four friends, and then with God Himself. In the epilogue, Job is restored and blessed more abundantly than at the beginning.

Psalms - The Psalms were written at various times throughout the history of Israel, from Moses to Nehemiah. Many of the Psalms can be related to specific historical events and people, others are unknown in their origin. The Psalms record the thoughts and emotions of the Old Testament believers in their spiritual conflicts, their triumphs and failures, their joys and their sorrows.

Summary of the Books of the Bible

Proverbs - Most of Proverbs is contemporary with the early chapters of 1 Kings, and were written or collected by King Solomon. Proverbs is a series of discourses and succinct sayings that translate divine wisdom into human practice.

Ecclesiastes was written by King Solomon in the latter part of his reign. Ecclesiastes is a series of discourses showing the folly of man trying to achieve happiness by pursuing it in his own ways. It is only through acknowledging God as sovereign and submitting to Him that a person can be truly content with life.

Song of Solomon - This book is a series of love poems showing the beauty of a pure love. It tells of the love of Solomon for a Shulamite woman, their courtship and subsequent marriage.

The Major Prophets

The next five books were written by the major prophets of Israel. Prophets were men to whom God gave His revelations directly. Their messages include calls to the people to return to their God, warnings to other nations, and prophecies of the future of the nation of Israel and their coming Messiah.

Isaiah - Isaiah prophesied primarily in Judah during and after the time that Israel was taken captive, warning of a similar fate for Judah. He also spoke of the comfort that The LORD would be to Judah after their captivity. He was the first prophet to provide detail of the coming Messiah and his reign.

Jeremiah - This book describes the last days of Judah. Jeremiah's prophecies and warnings, and his own struggles with his mission. For over forty years of ministry he lived a life of total devotion to duty and left a record, in human terms, of complete failure. All his warnings and teachings were continually rejected, and he finally died at the hands of the people he had served so faithfully.

Lamentations - The book was written by Jeremiah immediately after the fall of Jerusalem. It consists of five poems lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the people.

Ezekiel - The prophet Ezekiel began his ministry seven years before the final destruction of Jerusalem. Ezekiel teaches the people in Babylonia about the reasons for their captivity and reminds them that The LORD is still sovereign over the nations. He also reminds them of God's standards of obedience, and prophecies of the great future yet in store for Israel.

Daniel - The prophet Daniel was a young prince of the Israelites and was one of the captives who was carried to Babylon. He rose in power and influence in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, and retained his position through the reign of Belshazzar and then under Darius the Mede as he conquered Babylon. This book shows God's sovereign rule over both Israel and the Gentile nations. It also provides much practical description of the behavior of a Godly man in an ungodly society. Daniel also contains some vivid end-time prophecies.

The Minor Prophets

The contents of the next twelve books are similar to the Major Prophets. The only difference is the books are shorter.

Hosea - The prophecies of Hosea are contemporary with the latter kings of Israel. God uses the circumstances of Hosea's marriage to a prostitute and subsequent events as a living parable of His love for the people of Israel, the punishment that He must subject them to, and their ultimate restoration.

Summary of the Books of the Bible

Joel - The prophet speaks to Judah in the years prior to the captivity. An extraordinary plague of locusts causes Joel to call for repentance. He then uses the plague to symbolize God's future judgement of nations.

Amos - The prophecies of Amos are contemporary with the latter kings of Israel. Amos first announces the LORD's judgement against surrounding nations for their sins against other peoples. He then announces judgement against Israel for their violations of the Law of Moses. The book ends with a brief prophecy of Israel's ultimate restoration.

Obadiah - The prophet Obadiah appears to be contemporary with King Jehoram of Judah. The book consists of a single prophecy of the doom of Edom (descendants of Esau) for their pride and aid to Israel's enemies, and of the ultimate triumph of Israel.

Jonah - This book is written some 60 years before Israel is defeated and taken captive. The LORD calls Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach against their sin. Jonah tries to flee by sea, is caught in a storm, swallowed by a great fish, and finally goes to Nineveh. There he preaches that the LORD will soon judge the people for their wickedness. The people repent and God withholds his judgement. Jonah's obedience is grudging to the end, and the LORD shows him the measure of His compassion for all people.

Micah - The prophecies of Micah are contemporary with the latter kings of Israel. The book consists of three cycles of prophetic messages, each including an indictment for sins, a judgement, and a promise of restoration. The warnings are against Israel and Judah, both to the leadership and the common people.

Nahum - The book of the prophet Nahum consists of a single prophecy of the doom

of Nineveh for the cruelty of Assyria to those nations they had defeated. It occurs about 150 years after the book of Jonah.

Habakkuk - This prophecy was written to Judah in the last years before the Babylonian captivity. It consists of a dialog between Habakkuk and the LORD about the lawless of the people and their judgement. Habakkuk replies with a prayer of worship and faithful obedience.

Zephaniah - The book was written during the last days of Judah. Zephaniah's warning of approaching judgement is used as a picture of the Day of The Lord, followed by a promise of restoration.

Haggai - The messages of Haggai occur some 18 years after the people have begun to return from captivity. They have turned away from rebuilding the temple, and are trying to build comfortable lives for themselves. The LORD reminds them through Haggai that the reason they are struggling is that they have neglected to put His work first. If they would change their priorities, He would bless their other labors more fruitfully.

Zechariah - Zechariah prophesied to the people of Jerusalem in the early years of the return from captivity. His seeks to motivate the people to continue work on the temple by showing the future glory that the LORD would bring to His people and their land.

Malachi - Malachi speaks to the people of Jerusalem approximately 100 years after their return from exile. Malachi speaks to a people grown cold in their worship, telling them of God's love and desire to bless them, and reminding them of the awfulness of His judgement.

5. Getting More From Your Bible Reading

1.0 Introduction

The Bible is God's primary communication to us. The Bible *is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work* (2 Timothy 3:16-17). In the Bible we learn everything we need to know for our complete spiritual development, our service to God, and a great deal of practical wisdom for living. While it is a good thing to read the Bible and learn what it is saying, that alone is inadequate; when God speaks to us He expects a response. James says *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror 24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does.*(James 1:22-25).

But the Bible can be a difficult book. It is really composed of 66 different books written over 1900 years ago, and in a language and culture very different from our own. So how do we determine its message to us for our time and circumstances? In this lesson we will learn a very basic technique for reading the Bible and applying it to our lives today. Because of the circumstances in which most of you find yourselves at the present time, we will be using no additional study materials; only the Bible itself.

2.0 The Fundamentals

There are certain fundamental concepts that apply to all personal Bible Study, regardless of what book of the Bible we are reading.

2.1 Prayer

In reading the Bible, we have the unique opportunity of consulting with the author; a privilege we don't have when reading most other books. So why not ask for His help? When you begin to read the Bible, ask God to help you understand it and ask Him how to apply what you read to your life. If you do this, you will find the Holy Spirit guiding your thoughts and conclusions.

2.2 Select a Passage to Study

We must begin by selecting the passage of scripture we will study. A passage is a section that contains a complete thought, story, or sequence of logic. It may be as brief as a verse or as long as a chapter, but will usually consist of several verses. In the gospels or other narrative books, for example, a passage might be a parable, including its setting and interpretation, a story of a miracle, or a dialog between two people. In the epistles, we should think in terms of one or more paragraphs and logical thought flow. In some cases, such as some of the shorter Psalms, the whole chapter may be one passage. On the other hand, in Proverbs we may just study one verse at a time, such as: *A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.* (Proverbs 15:1) In general, a passage should be as short as possible, while still containing a complete story or thought. **Depending on the student's level of understanding, you may find it worthwhile to discuss connections between successive passages, such as "but," "and," "therefore," or a complete disconnect between passages.**

5. Getting More From Your Bible Reading

3.0 Asking The Right Questions

This very simplified technique for Bible study asks a series of questions about the passage we have read. Because of their very general nature, only a few of the questions will be answered in any one passage of scripture. In fact, it is hard to imagine a passage that would have answers to all the questions. However, it is equally hard to imagine a passage that would not have an answer to at least one of the questions. Let us first look at the questions: **Discuss the questions briefly without a passage of scripture to get the student to understand what they are looking for. The next page gives an example of using the questions on a specific passage.**

1. Is there an example for me to follow? **This will apply primarily to narrative sections of scripture. Be sure to identify positive examples; negative examples fall under the next question. Be sure to look for positive or negative comments about the example in surrounding verses.**

2. Is there a sin for me to avoid or give up? **This may appear either as a bad example or as a command to not do something.**

3. Is there a command for me to obey? **This may be a positive command to do something, or a negative command to not do something. Be careful to apply principles, not simply examples which may not apply today.**

4. Is there a promise for me to claim? **Be careful that it is applicable to today.**

5. What does this passage teach about God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit? **The teaching may be by action or by precept.**

6. Is there a reason for me to praise or to worship God? **This is perhaps the most universal question; almost any passage should have an answer to this question.**

7. Do I need to get help in further understanding this passage? **Recognize that a simple reading will not always provide all the meaning. You may have to search other scriptures, read commentaries, or ask a Bible teacher, pastor, chaplain, etc.**

8. Is there a prayer that should become mine for this day? **As we read the prayers of other people, we are inspired to pray in the same manner for ourselves or others.**

5. Getting More From Your Bible Reading

4.0 A Sample Study

Let's apply the questions to the story told in Matthew 8:1-4.

Matthew 8:1-4 *1 When he came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. 2 A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." 3 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cured of his leprosy. 4 Then Jesus said to him, "See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."*

1. Is there an example for me to follow?

The man with leprosy first knelt in respect/worship. So I must first worship Jesus Christ as God - acknowledge who He is, know Him, before I have a right to ask for anything.

He asked - prayed to - Jesus for healing. So I too can come to Jesus for healing of physical, emotional, and sin problems.

I must also remember that the man said "If you are willing," so I must ultimately leave the choice to heal to Jesus.

2. Is there a sin for me to avoid or give up?

no

3. Is there a command for me to obey?

no - explain that in the OT, before he could live as a person without leprosy, a leper had to go to the priest as final authority to pronounce that healing had occurred (Lev. 14:1-3). We no longer are under that law.

4. Is there a promise for me to claim?

no

5. What does this passage teach about God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit?

That the Lord Jesus Christ is compassionate (as seen in His touching the man) and has power over illness.

6. Is there a reason for me to praise or to worship God?

Yes, His power and His compassion.

7. Do I need to get help in further understanding this passage?

Probably not.

8. Is there a prayer that should become mine for this day?

We might pray for healing of a physical disease or for freedom from a bad habit, remembering that the leper said "If you are willing".

5. Getting More From Your Bible Reading

5.0 Other Examples

These examples include other types of writing (poetry, wisdom, epistles) and may be used in the Bible Study if time permits, assigned as homework, or simply left to the student to do on his/her own. If you assign these as homework, and if you have a good student group, you may consider assigning one or more students to prepare and teach a specific passage.

1. Luke 18:9-14

2. Psalm 1

3. Romans 8:12-17

4. Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

5. Acts 16:16-24

6. Acts 16:25-34

6A. Understanding Prayer (Part 1 of 3)

1.0 Introduction

Prayer is our greatest joy and comfort, the link to our greatest source of power; yet at the same time, it is also our most difficult discipline. In prayer, we have a personal conversation with the Almighty Creator and controller of the universe, yet we appear to be speaking to no one, and we get no audible response from anyone. In the first two lessons we will consider several aspects of prayer; in the last lesson we will consider some encouragements and some hindrances to prayer.

2.0 The Disciples' Prayer

Matt 6:9-13 9 "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Teaching Note: Many people think of prayer only as asking God to do things for them. The purpose of studying this prayer (better known as the Disciples' Prayer than the Lord's Prayer) is to show that there are many elements to prayer: confession, worship, giving thanks, intercession, personal needs, and submission. Note that we are not using the common acronym ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication).

"Our Father in heaven, Our relationship with God is that of children to a loving Father, who desires to give to us what is best for us, and He knows best.- Only His children have a right to pray this way. Note that in the jail/prison setting, most people were not raised by a good father; either there was none or he was abusive, so their image of father may be very different from what Jesus is using here. You may need to take some time teaching the loving fatherly nature of God. The prodigal son (Luke 15:11-24) is a good place to do this.

hallowed be your name, worship, recognition of His holiness, reverence for God

10 your kingdom come, priority - purpose, whatever He wants, His reign for His purposes.

your will be done my submission to His will

on earth as it is in heaven. The need for God's will is universal, just as important and needed on earth as it is in heaven, but is different from man's will.

11 Give us today our daily bread. personal needs - for necessities, daily, one day at a time. Manna is a good example of daily provision, Exodus 16:14-26)

12 Forgive us our debts, confession, to maintain relationship 1 John 1:9 for example of sin as a debt Matt 18:22 ff

as we also have forgiven our debtors. evidence of our forgiveness and sincerity, to forgive others as God has forgiven us.

For questions on difficulty of forgiving in extreme situations, see the last page of Lesson 6C.

13 And lead us not into temptation, protection, God does not tempt us (James 1:13) Keep us from our own evil desires

but deliver us from the evil one. Let us not be tempted by Satan

Teaching note: You might review by pointing out the following elements in this prayer:

confession - forgive us our debts

worship - hallowed by your name

intercession and personal needs - daily bread, deliverance from temptation and evil one

submission - Your Kingdom Come, Your will be done

6A. Understanding Prayer (Part 1 of 3)

3.0 Elements of Prayer

When we talk with our friends, we converse in a variety of ways. We might discuss the news of the day, we might argue over the justice of a referee's call at a football game, or we might pour out our emotions about a close friend who has died. In the same way, there are many different ways that we talk to God in our prayers. We might ask for forgiveness of a habitual sin, thank Him for protection in a recent close call, or plead for the healing of a sick friend. As we look at the examples of prayer in the Bible, including the Disciples' Prayer on the previous page, we find several elements that are common in many of these prayers. In the next few pages we will look at these common elements, recognizing that a well-rounded prayer life will include time for each of them.

Teaching Note: In the discussion of these elements, it is important to strike the right balance between sounding ritualistic on one hand, and the common idea that prayer is primarily about asking God for things on the other hand. We don't want the students to think that they must do all these things every time they pray, but we do want to open them up to the idea that a well-rounded prayer life will include all these elements. We also want to keep a balance between the privilege of approaching the awesome power and holiness of God on the one hand, and the intimate Father/child relationship on the other hand.

3.1 Confession of sin

As we approach a holy God, we want to be free from any hindrance in our relationship due to sin. This is not the forgiveness of a sinner before his judge, but the forgiveness of a child seeking to maintain a close relationship with his father.

1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will

forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Depending on the maturity or background (e.g., Catholic) of some of the students, you may need to emphasize that this forgiveness is not about going to heaven or hell, but is about maintaining a close relationship with our Heavenly Father. This is much like a disobedient child who asks forgiveness from his parents; he never stops being their child, no matter how disobedient he is, but the quality of the relationship may suffer because of his disobedience. In Psalm 19, David asks for forgiveness for sins he does not know he committed.

Ps 19:12 - Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

It is not necessary to teach through all of the following passages, it is best to leave at least some for the student to learn on his/her own. Teach only what time will permit.

There are many other examples of prayers of confession in the Bible, which you may wish to read and study on you own.

- After David had sinned badly with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11), he wrote Psalm 51 in confession of his guilt. He later wrote of the relief of forgiveness in Psalm 32.
- In Luke 18:9-14, Jesus tells a parable that contrasts two men praying in the Temple. Only the one who confessed his sin was heard by God.
- In Nehemiah 1:4-11 and Daniel 9:4-19, we find examples of men praying for forgiveness for the sins of their nation.

6A. Understanding Prayer (Part 1 of 3)

3.0 Elements of Prayer (cont'd)

3.2 Worship

When we come to God in prayer, we also want to bring our worship to Him. In its most basic form, worship is praising God for who He is, for His character, His nature. This is very different from thanking Him for what He has done. Worship has also been described as “the overflow of a heart delighted with knowing God” and “the encounter of a redeemed heart in adoration of its awesome God.” However we describe it, worship must be:

- an encounter with the living God - we are consciously in His presence when we worship
- directed toward God - when we worship, we are directing our words to God
- centered on God: His character, His nature - not on ourselves or our needs
- an acknowledgment of His greatness, my smallness
- for God’s pleasure, not mine.

The Bible is full of examples of worship. The book of Psalms was the hymnbook of ancient Israel; in it we find some of the greatest examples of worship. Read, for example, Psalm 8, which worships God for His creation. Psalms 95 through 98 express the joy of knowing and worshipping God. Psalm 103 praises God for His love in caring for His people. As you read the book of Psalms, you will discover many other examples of worship. **For teaching purposes, you might select one of these Psalms and read it through, commenting on each verse, showing how the psalmist is focusing on God’s character and works.**

In Revelation 5:11-14, John is given a vision of worship in heaven: *Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. 12In a loud voice they sang:*

*"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!"*

13Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:

*"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!"*

14The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Other New Testament examples of worship are found in Hebrews 1:8-12 and Jude 24-25.

3.0 Elements of Prayer (cont'd)

3.3 Giving Thanks

As we pray, we also want to thank God for specific blessings He has provided to us. This may be thanking Him for something as great as providing salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ, or as simple as a good night's sleep (Psalm 3:5).

In Luke 17:11-19, Jesus heals ten lepers; only one returns to thank Him. Jesus commends Him for this. **Reading this story makes the point of the importance of being thankful to God for what He has done.**

In 1 Thess 5:17-18 Paul tells us to *17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.* **This shows that our thankfulness to God is not dependant on our circumstance. The verse says to give thanks in all circumstances, not for all circumstances.**

The following verses give some things for which various people in the Bible were thankful. Read each verse and identify what the people were thankful for.

Our spiritual blessings are more important than our material circumstances, and it is for these that we are thankful

2 Chronicles 7:3 - *When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "He is good; his love endures forever."*

God's goodness and love

Psalm 119:62 - *At midnight I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws.*

God's law (Bible)

Daniel 2:23 - *I thank and praise you, O God of my fathers: You have given me wisdom and power,*

Wisdom & Power

Matthew 14:19 - *And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.*

Food

Romans 6:17-18 *But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.*

Freedom from sin

Ephesians 1:15-16 - *For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.*

Faith and love of other believers

Colossians 3:15 - *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

The peace of Christ in their hearts

1 Timothy 1:12 - *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.*

strength, opportunity to serve God

6B. Understanding Prayer (Part 2 of 3)

3.0 Elements of Prayer (cont'd)

3.4 Intercession

When we pray, we are very aware of the needs of others. We may have friends and family members that don't yet know Christ as Savior, some may be sick, others needing God's guidance for difficult decisions in their life. These and many others issues are things we can pray for in the lives of others.

- In Colossians 4:3-4, Paul asks the Colossians to pray for him as he carries out his ministry: *3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.*
- In 1 Timothy 2:1-2, Paul tells us to pray for the rulers of our country: *1 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone- 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.* Notice that his purpose is that we may live peaceful and quiet lives so we can better teach others about Jesus Christ.
- Most importantly, Paul teaches us to pray for the spiritual development of others: read Ephesians 1:15-20 and answer the following questions:

(1:15-16) What is Paul thankful for? *Their faith in the Lord Jesus and their love for all the saints.*

(1:18) What does Paul ask for them? *That the eyes of your heart may be enlightened*

(1:18) Why does Paul pray this for them? *in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints 19and his incomparably great power for us who believe.*

Teaching Note: Use the following for further examples as time permits, the student should have some left for his own personal study.

For other examples of Paul's intercession for his friends, see Ephesians 3:14-21, and Colossians 1:9-10. For an Old Testament example of intercession, see Exodus 32:9-14.

Jesus' prayer on the night before He was crucified is recorded for us in John 17. Read this great prayer and meditate on it. Notice that Jesus prays for Himself (verses 1 - 5), for His disciples (verses 6 - 19), and for all who would later follow Him (verses 20 - 26), including us!

6B. Understanding Prayer (Part 2 of 3)

3.0 Elements of Prayer (cont'd)**3.5 Personal Needs**

In His model prayer for His disciples, Jesus tells us to ask God to “*give us this day our daily bread*” (Matthew 6:11) and to “*lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*” (Matthew 6:13) In these lines He is telling us to pray for our physical and spiritual needs. And so our personal needs become a significant part of our prayer life.

But why do we ask for “daily bread?” Would God withhold bread from us if we didn’t ask? Don’t atheists also get their daily bread? Then why should I have to ask God for it?

Much of what prayer is about is communion with God. Communion is more than communication; it is a mutual fellowship, an expression of oneness, an evidence of our dependence on Him. At times we also pray for the extraordinary things: a miraculous healing, the meeting of a financial need, the restoration of a relationship, or an early release from prison. Do we always receive these things? Do we sometimes receive these things? Do we receive greater or lesser answers in response to the amount of our faith? Let’s look to the Bible for answers to some of these questions.

Read Matthew 7:7-8 and answer the following questions.

What three things does Jesus tell us to do in prayer? ask, seek and knock.

If we ask, we will receive, if we seek, we will find, and if we knock,

the door will be opened.

When we ask God for our daily needs, we are demonstrating our dependence on Him, and He is showing His love for us, much as a good earthly father will provide for his children. Read Matthew 7:9-11 to see how Jesus uses that relationship to teach us that God will always give us what is best for us. But that may not always be exactly what we asked for.

In telling us to seek, Jesus is teaching us a more intense level of prayer. Read Genesis 32:9-12 to hear Jacob pleading with God for protection from his brother Esau; he thanks God for His past blessing and reminds Him of His promises to produce a large family of descendants from himself.

In telling us to knock (literally keep knocking), Jesus is teaching us to be persistent in prayer. Read Luke 11:5-8 to read a parable showing how we should be persistent.

In all of this God is not promising to do anything and everything we ask Him to do. But He is promising to do what is best for us according to His unlimited wisdom and power. Read Matthew 26:36-46 to hear Jesus in Gethsemane pleading with His Father to take the cup of the cross away from Him. But after asking intensely and persistently, the answer He received was “no,” and He submitted to His Father’s will. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 for a similar incident in the life of the Apostle Paul.

Very often the greatest test of faith in prayer is to accept the answer we do not want to hear.

Teaching Note: There are two common misconceptions about prayer that we must refute in this lesson. The first is that if we pray hard enough, long enough, and with enough faith, God will answer any prayer we pray. The second is that the measure of the success of our prayer life or our walk with God is how completely our requests are being answered.

6B. Understanding Prayer (Part 2 of 3)

3.0 Elements of Prayer (cont'd)

3.6 Submission

When we finish our prayers, we commonly say “in Jesus’ name.” Why we do this and what does it mean? It actually comes directly from the words of Jesus when He was with His disciples the night before He was crucified. **This is not some magic phrase we attach to our prayers to have a better chance to get them answered**

John 14:13-14 *And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the son may bring glory to the Father 14. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.*

John 15:7-8 *If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given you. 8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

The Apostle John then repeats the promise in his first epistle.

1 John 5:14-15 *This is the assurance we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. 15. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of him.*

From these verses we learn several things about what it means to ask “In Jesus’ Name.”

1. We ask in His authority. It is only through Jesus’ sacrifice that we can approach the throne of God. Read Hebrews 4:14-16.
2. We ask according to Jesus’ character. In biblical times, a person’s name was reflective of his character. So what we ask of God, we ask with Christlike character: love, mercy, and compassion.
3. We ask according to His will. His promise to answer is based on our abiding in Him and His Word abiding in us. When this is true, we are being obedient to Him and our will has become one with His. This means that we believe we are asking for the same things He would be asking for in our situation.
4. We are seeking God’s glory. The ultimate objective of our prayer must be to glorify God, not ourselves.

A final thought: we must bring our needs to God and leave them there in faith; only as we do this do we find the real peace we are seeking. Philippians 4:6-7 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Notice that the peace comes from the prayer, not the answer.

4.0 Encouragements for Prayer

As we come to God in prayer, there are several things He encourages us to do that will make our prayer life more effective. **Note that an effective prayer life is measured by our closeness to God, our understanding of His will, and our consistency in walking in His will, not in our “batting average,” or our percentage of “yes” answers to our prayers.**

1. As we saw in the previous lesson, our prayers should always be offered to God through Jesus. Paul repeats this admonition three times in the book of Ephesians.
 - Ephesians 2:18 - *For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*
 - Ephesians 3:12 - *In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.*
 - Ephesians 5:20 - *giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The reason for this is that it is only through Jesus and His death on the cross that we can have access to God the Father. **You may wish to review Hebrews 4:14-16.**

2. Also as we saw in the previous lesson, prayer must always be according to God’s will. **You may wish to review John 14:13-14 and 15:7, and 1 John 5:14.**

One reason for prayer to be according to His will is that He is so much wiser than we are. Romans 11:33-34 *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 34"Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"*

3. Prayer should be a regular and continual part of our life. As we mature in our Christian walk, our conversation with God becomes more continual and the attitude of our lives is to recognize that He is always continually with us.

The Bible encourages times set aside specifically for prayer. Psalm 5:3 - *In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.* We are also encouraged to pray continually, that is to always be in an attitude of prayer, ready to speak to God at any time. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 - *Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

4. Faith is an essential element in prayer. *Without faith it is impossible to please God* (Hebrews 11:6). The rest of Hebrews 11 shows us that our faith must be in God and according to His promises, because *He is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine* (Ephesians 3:20). A good example of asking in faith according to God’s promise is found in James 1:5-7 *5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. 6But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord;*

5. The Bible also encourages God’s people to pray together. We read of many occasions that the early church met for prayer.
 - Acts 1:14 *They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.*
 - Acts 2:42, 46, 47 *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 46Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.*
 - Acts 12:5 *So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.*

5.0 Hindrances to effective prayer

As a part of encouraging our effective prayer life, God warns us of some attitudes that will hinder our prayer to Him.

1. The first and most obvious hindrance is unconfessed sin. Sin is rebellion against God, and it is impossible to be in His will when we harbor known sin in our lives. David expresses this in Psalm 66:18 *If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;*
Isaiah 59:2 teaches the same lesson - *But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.*
2. When we pray, our motives must be pure and not selfish. James 4:3 - *When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. A reminder that prayers are for personal needs, not selfish pleasures.*
3. Another hindrance to our prayers is if we are holding a grudge against someone; after all, Jesus admonished us to forgive as we have been forgiven. Mark 11:25 *And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. **You may also wish to teach Matthew 5:23-24, that if someone has a grudge against us, we are responsible to go to that person and resolve the matter before we pray. See the additional note on forgiveness on the next page.***
4. We are even taught that the quality of our home life will affect our prayers. 1 Peter 3:7 - *Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. Obedience is a prerequisite to effective prayer*
5. We must not be lazy in our prayers; rather, we must be fervent as we seek God. James 5:17-18 - *Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. **For this story of Elijah, see 1 Kings 17:1 to 18:1***
Paul speaks of Epaphras wrestling in prayer Colossians 4:12 - *Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.*
6. Formalism and hypocrisy are deadly to effective prayer, as Jesus taught. See Matthew 6:5-8.
7. God also expects us to do our part in bringing the answer to prayer. Prayer is not an excuse for inaction on our part. Read Exodus 17:8-13 (**Moses held his arms up in prayer, Joshua and the army fought the battle**); Joshua 7:6-12 (**emphasis on verse 10, "get up"**); and Nehemiah 4:6-9 (**they prayed and posted a guard**). Some examples of praying without doing our part might include: praying for good test grades and not diligently studying the material; praying for parole, while acting up in prison; singing without sufficient practice; teaching/preaching without study.

6C. Understanding Prayer (Part 3 of 3)

Appendix on forgiveness.

Forgiveness can be a very difficult issue in the jail/prison setting. Many people, women especially, but also some men, have been seriously and continuously abused as children, teens, or even as adults, by someone in their family who has never shown any remorse over their conduct. Given that real forgiveness is a commitment to treat the person as though the action never happened, to forgive such a person may be emotionally impossible as well as practically foolish.

One woman in our ministry told of being repeatedly abused sexually by her father when she was eight years old. Many years later, when he had no place to live, she forgave him and took him into her home. He then sexually abused her daughter, who was eight years old. He is now in prison. Her complete forgiveness in spite of his lack of remorse, while surely commendable, was not wise. Now she asks, "Must I forgive him before I can be forgiven?"

God tells us to forgive others as He has forgiven us: Ephesians 4:32 *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.* and Colossians 3:13 *Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.* But when we consider forgiving others as God has forgiven us, we remember that our forgiveness (salvation) was conditioned upon repentance as well as faith: Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "*Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*". and 1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.* Furthermore, in His teaching on forgiveness, Jesus often conditioned it upon repentance: Luke 17:3-4, *3 So watch yourselves. 4 If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.* In His parable of the two debtors in Matthew 18:22-35, Jesus again made it clear that forgiveness is based upon sincere repentance. The Ephesians and Colossians passages at the beginning of this paragraph call on believers to forgive each other, based on the forgiveness we have already received. So to ask someone to forgive an unrepentant person who is not a believer is to ask them to do what God Himself is not willing to do and goes beyond the teaching of the Bible on forgiveness.

What then are we to do when someone has hurt us grievously and is unrepentant? Certainly we are not to carry a grudge or seek revenge, because that will only lead us into sin. I believe the answer is given in Romans 12:17-21 *Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20 On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.* In this passage Paul is teaching that our attitude toward those who have wronged us is to treat them kindly, as we would any stranger, and leave their final judgement to God. I believe this represents a Biblical middle ground between seeking revenge and giving forgiveness, where we are open and kind to them, but not completely forgiving. In so doing, we will find peace within ourselves while protecting ourselves from further harm, recognizing that if they don't repent, God will bring judgement on them that will be even more severe because of our kindness.

1.0 Introduction

How does one begin to describe an infinite, eternal spirit who is utterly beyond our comprehension? Perhaps it is like trying to understand the ocean in all its vastness. We can stand on the shore and see vast stretches of the ocean, we can fly over it and see even more. We can dip in and take a cup of ocean water and touch it, examine it, even taste it. If we did this in many places we would find that the blue water of the Pacific was different from the green water of the Caribbean, and that the frozen ice of the Arctic was different yet. So it is with God; we can keep learning for a lifetime and still be only standing on the shore of knowing all of who He is. But that should not keep us from beginning to understand Him.

When we are getting acquainted with a person, after learning his name, we first ask factual questions about his life; such as where he lives and works, and how big is his family. Then we get into questions related more to his personality: is he happy, funny, sad, intelligent, generous, and so on. So it is with God, we begin by learning some individual characteristics about Him. But when we come to learning about God, it is foolishness to even think we can *really* understand God because He is infinite (without limits) in all His characteristics, and we are finite (have fixed limits) in our ability to understand. But we can seek to understand Him to the limits of our comprehension. Furthermore, we can know Him relationally. Jesus taught us to pray to “our Father in heaven,” implying a loving, protecting, and guiding relationship.

As we seek to know God, we find that, just like knowing a person, some characteristics have a great deal to do with how we relate to Him; His love, mercy, and even His anger. The reason we are able to relate to these characteristics is that we are created in His image and so, in a very small and imperfect way, we have some of the same characteristics.

Some other characteristics of God don't affect how we relate to Him; He is eternal, infinite, and knows all things. In these ways, we are not like Him, and have difficulty comprehending these characteristics. So as we try to learn about God, we will be describing Him in both relational and non-relational terms.

The importance of understanding the nature and character of God is well stated by A. W. Tozer in his book “The Knowledge of the Holy,”

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. ... no people has ever risen above its religion, and ... no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or meaningless as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God. ... the most important fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God.”

The Prophet Jeremiah also speaks of the importance of knowing God, (Jeremiah 9:23-24), *This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, [24] but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.*

In this lesson we are seeking to gain an understanding of the nature and character of God as described in the Bible.

2.0 God's Name

One of the first things to ask about God is, "What is His name?" because "God" isn't really a name, it is a descriptive term. God is the general term for deity, or anyone who claims divine power. The Hebrew word is *el* (singular) or *elohim* (plural), the meaning is "the mighty one." **You may have to remind your students that the Old Testament of the Bible was originally written in Hebrew.** This shows that the primary characteristic expected of a god is that he be powerful. When used in the Bible with an initial capital letter - God - it refers to the true and living God of the Bible. When used with all lower case letters - god - it refers to idols; proclaimed to be god, but in reality having no divine characteristics.

On one occasion, Moses asked God what His name was. Exodus 3:13-14, *Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" 14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'*" By using the name "I am," He is saying that He is eternally self-existent and is independent of anything outside of Himself. By contrast, we are dependent, we need a mother and father to bring us into existence, then we need air, food, water, gravity and many other things to survive. God needs none of these.

The English equivalent of the Hebrew letters in "I am" is YHWH. **Remember, the Hebrew alphabet has no vowels.** This is pronounced Jehovah or Yahweh. In our English Bibles this name is printed as "LORD." (All capital letters) The reason it is written as LORD rather than Jehovah is that for many centuries before the time of Christ, the Jewish people, out of respect for their God, would not pronounce His name on their lips. This tradition has carried into the Old Testament of the Christian Bible by using the word LORD, to be sure they did not use His name in vain, to avoid breaking the third commandment.

The third way God is referred to in the Bible is "Lord." When spelled with an initial capital letter - Lord - it indicates a relationship of respect and obedience to God. This is a general term of great respect, sometimes translated master. When used with all lower case letters - lord - it speaks of a respectful relationship with another person. The Hebrew word is *adoni*.

If time permits, you may wish to go to Deuteronomy 10:17, which offers an interesting use of all three terms, and uses lord and god in both their divine and human applications. For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.

3.0 God's Non-relational Characteristics

The very first words in the Bible (Genesis 1:1) are, *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* These ten simple words tell us a great deal about God. From them we learn that God existed before anything else existed, He created everything that exists, and that He had no beginning.

The fact that He created everything that exists shows that He is incredibly powerful and intelligent. Imagine the power required to be able to create billions upon billions of stars where nothing had existed! And imagine the intelligence He must have to create the complexity of living beings, from the tiniest one-celled organisms to the largest animals. And then to create the delicately balanced environment in which they could all live in perfect harmony. This simple statement introduces us to the non-relational characteristics of God. **Don't allow any questions to take you down the rabbit trails of when God created (old earth vs. young earth), what happened to dinosaurs, or why are there natural disasters. If there are questions about evolution, however, we must be prepared to show that evolution is incompatible with the Biblical view of creation.**

The Bible also tells us that there are certain characteristics of God that should be obvious from observing creation, Romans 1:20, *For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*

What qualities must God have to create everything that exists? **He must be eternal, infinitely powerful, infinitely intelligent and wise. (Students may see other characteristics, be very accepting of them.)**

Another verse tells us of God's detail knowledge of what goes on in the world is Matt 10:29-30, *Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

Do you think there is anything going on anywhere in the world that God does not know about? **No**

What else does this show us about God? **That He is present everywhere**

Now read Psalm 139:13, *For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.*

In addition to creating the physical universe and everything in the world when it began, what else does God create? **Me, all people. (Be sure that they understand that this means He knows each of us individually.)**

In the next lesson we will consider God's relational characteristics and the tri-unity of God.

7B. Understanding God (Part 2 of 2)

1.0 God's Relational Qualities

The book of Psalms is both the hymn book and prayer book of ancient Israel. While about half of the Psalms were written by King David, the others were written by a variety of people from the time of Moses on through the end of the Old Testament era. Each individual chapter, or Psalm, is a unique prayer by a real person expressing his feelings about life and about God, and about their relationship. Each Psalm, as with all of the Bible, was also inspired by the Holy Spirit. And while it is true that every book in the Bible reflects something of God's character, the Psalms give us the broadest picture of God, written in the most human of terms. We will, therefore, use this book as our primary source for understanding God's relational qualities.

Read the following verses from the Book of Psalms, and identify some characteristic of God that you see.

Psalm 77:13 God is holy

What does it mean to say that God is holy? Holiness first of all is to be morally perfect. God cannot sin, He cannot think of sinning, He cannot accept evil in any form (**Habakkuk 1:13a**), and He will never tempt man to sin (**James 1:13**). Another aspect of holiness is that of separation. Because God is morally perfect, He cannot fellowship with sinful man. But after we receive His Son, Jesus Christ, as our Lord and Savior, He declares us to be righteous and holy (**Hebrews 10:10**), and we are welcomed into His presence (**Hebrews 10:19-22**). **This is a good place to present the gospel if needed.**

Psalm 11:4-7 God is righteous and just

To say that God is righteous is to say that He will always do what is right and that He is the true essence of righteousness. It also means that His moral law as given to man is an expression of His righteousness. To say that God is just is also to say that He is the perfect judge, that all His judgements will be perfect according to His righteous character. Every sin must be punished in perfect fairness, either by Christ on the cross, or by the sinner in eternal condemnation.

Psalm 47:7-9 Sovereign, or king over all the world

To say that God is sovereign is to say that He rules over everything that happens in the world. Proverbs 21:1 says, *The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.* (**Also see Acts 17:6**) In addition to controlling the nations of the world, He also has complete control over nature. (**Job 38**).

Psalm 89:1-2 Love

The whole Bible is full of God's love, a love that is truly unconditional. He has loved us each from before we were born. In the Old Testament we see His love in continuing to forgive and restore Israel, in spite of their sin and failure. In the New Testament we see Him giving His Son to die that we might be able to call Him our Father, and live in the light of His love.

1.0 God's Relational Qualities (cont'd)

Psalm 51:1-4 Mercy

Because of His great love, God is merciful. Mercy is when God withholds from us the punishment we so justly deserve. In Psalm 51 David is pleading for God's mercy after committing adultery and murder. **If time permits, you may wish to go to 2 Samuel 11 to tell the story of David and Bathsheba and/or read more of Psalm 51**

These are but a few of the relational characteristics of God; you will see many more as you continue to read the Bible. But these few will give you a start at understanding God's character.

It is amazing and wonderful that God, who is eternally self-existent and the all-powerful creator of the universe, also desires to have a relationship with people that he created in His own image. And that because of His love and mercy, when those people He created turned against Him in sin, as we all have, He continued to love us. Furthermore, because His holiness prevented a relationship with sinners, He sacrificed His only Son so we could be restored to relationship with Him, and call Him our Father. Let us truly worship Him with reverence and awe.

2.0 The Tri-unity of God

2.1 Introduction

The Bible clearly states in many places that there is only one true and living God, His name is Jehovah and that He is the creator of all that exists in the universe. However, the Bible is equally clear that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is fully divine, and that the Holy Spirit is also God, with the full characteristics of deity. And when Jesus speaks of God, He refers to Him as the Father. So while there is only one God, He manifests Himself in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **You may have to explain that the meaning of “person” is not necessarily limited to human beings. Rather, it is indicative of an individual being with personality.** That He is not one God with three names is evident from the fact that all three are individually present at the same time on several occasions. The doctrine of the Trinity is simply our best attempt to understand and express these truths and to hold them all simultaneously.

In stating these seemingly incompatible truths, we are acknowledging that it is beyond the ability of our limited human minds to fully contain the concepts of an infinite God. Stated another way, if God were so small that we could fully understand Him, He would not be worthy of our worship. So as we strive to understand the truth of the Trinity, it should cause us to grow in wonder and awe of our infinite God. Our inability to fully comprehend God should never be a stumbling block to our faith.

Many physical analogies have been offered to help explain the Trinity, none of which can truly do justice to this great truth. Yet perhaps this one will be helpful. Consider a snowman. It is one entity - a snowman - but it is made up of three parts: the top ball, the middle ball, and the bottom ball. All three are of the same substance (snow), and we can speak of each one separately, or we can speak of a complete snowman.

2.2 The Oneness of God

The oneness of God is expressed clearly in Deuteronomy 6:4, *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.* and in Isaiah 44:6, *"This is what the LORD says-- Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God."*

The truth of God's oneness is affirmed in the New Testament in Mark 12:28-30 even as Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:4, *28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" 29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: `Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'*

So the Bible consistently teaches that God is **One** .

2.0 The Tri-unity of God (cont'd)**2.3 The Threeness of God****2.3.1 In the New Testament**

There are many places in the New Testament where all three members of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are seen together.

First, at the baptism of Jesus, Luke 3:21-22, *When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."* Here we see Jesus referred to by God as His Son, we see the Holy Spirit in a physical manifestation, and we hear God the Father speaking from heaven.

Jesus often spoke of the Father and the Spirit, Luke 11:13 *If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

After His resurrection, as Jesus commissions his disciples to proclaim the gospel to all the world, He tells them, Matthew 28:19, *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.* Notice that baptism is in the name (singular) of all three persons of the Trinity.

2.3.2 In the Old Testament

While the doctrine of the Trinity is never stated as clearly in the Old Testament, there are a few interesting hints of the Tri-unity of God in the Old Testament. In the creation narrative in Genesis 1:26, God speaks of Himself in the plural, *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."*

Similarly, in Genesis 3:22, when God put Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden, *And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."*

So the Bible clearly teaches that God may be manifest in three different persons.

2.4 Conclusion

We have seen that the clear teaching of the Bible is that there is only one true and living God in the universe, and His name is Jehovah. Yet we have seen that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all spoken of as God, individually and simultaneously. We hold that while these truths may seem different from each other, they are not contradictory. They are simply an expression of the greatness of our God and serve to increase our awe and wonder of Him. What we may not fully comprehend, we can apprehend. To the glory of God alone.

8. Understanding Jesus Christ as the Lord of Your Life

1.0 Introduction

To be a Christian is to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Being a Christian is not like choosing to cheer for one football team rather than another; in other words, being a Christian is not like being a Browns fan. Being a Christian means committing my whole life to being obedient to Jesus Christ, not simply making Him a part of my life. He doesn't just fill the religious compartment of my life; He is the king over all activities of my life. Every aspect of my life will be different because of my relationship with Jesus Christ. Because of Him, I am different as a husband or wife, father or mother, friend, employee, and neighbor. Jesus Christ and His plans for me become the driving force in my life. Anything less than this is a failure to understand who He really is and what He has for us.

This was well expressed by C. T. Studd, who said "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice I can ever make for Him will be too great." As we submit to Him in this way, we find that there is a greater peace and joy in our souls than could ever happen when we control our own lives.

2.0 Jesus Christ is worthy of being the Lord of Our Life

Because of who Jesus Christ is, He is worthy of being the Lord of our lives. The following verses tells us seven very important things about who Jesus Christ is and why He is worthy of being the Lord of our lives. **The purpose of studying the following passage is to show that because of who Jesus Christ is, He is far more capable of directing our lives than we are ourselves.**

Hebrews 1:1-3 - *In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2but in these last days he has spoken to us by his son,*

whom he appointed heir of all things,

He is the rightful owner of everything; He can give to us all we need

and through whom he made the universe .

He is the creator of all things

3The Son is the radiance of God's glory

The Glory of God is the visible evidence of His presence. In the Old Testament, the Glory of God was often seen in a bright light, such as the burning bush (Exodus 3), Mt. Sinai (Exodus 24:15), Consecration of the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:34) and the Temple (2 Chronicles 7:1-3). Hebrews 1:3 shows that the Son of God was in that bright glory cloud and that Jesus, the Son of God, in His time on earth was the visible evidence of the presence of God.

and the exact representation of his being,

His character and personality as seen in the gospels are the character and personality of God, and are what we should imitate.

sustaining all things by his powerful word .

He not only created the universe, but he holds the physical universe together, and keeps it running, seasons come and go, sun rises and sets, etc.

After he had provided purification for sins ,

He personally and alone completely cleansed us from sin

he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven.

showing his God's approval of what He has done and showing His authority .

So is Jesus capable of being Lord of my life? **Yes**

8. Understanding Jesus Christ as the Lord of Your Life

3.0 Jesus Teaches that we should obey Him.

In the 14th chapter of John, Jesus tells his disciples four times that they must obey Him. Read John 14:15-31 and answer the questions below. **Note that the setting of this passage is the night before the crucifixion, Jesus is giving His last instructions to the disciples before His death.**

(14:15) What is the basis for obeying His commands? our love for Jesus

(14:23-24) How are we to show our love for Jesus? by obeying His teachings

(14:23-24) What will be the result of obeying His commands? God the Father and the Son will dwell with us

(14:31) Who is the example of obedience that we are to follow? Jesus Christ

(14:31) Who did Jesus obey? God the Father

4.0 Jesus Christ describes our relationship to Him

In the 15th chapter of John, Jesus Christ describes how we should relate to Him. Read John 15:1-8 and answer the following questions. **The purpose of studying the following verses is to show that we are dependent on Jesus to be able to do anything of importance.**

(15:1) Who is the true vine? Jesus Christ .

(15:1) Who is the gardener? God the Father

(15:5) Who are the branches? all believers

(15:4) Where do the branches get their strength? from the vine

(15:5) Where do we get our strength? from Jesus Christ

(15:5) What can we do without Christ? nothing

(15:8) What can we do with Christ? bear much fruit

Bearing fruit generally refers to changes in our character, rather than specific acts of Christian witness. See Galatians 5:22-25

8. Understanding Jesus Christ as the Lord of Your Life

5.0 For Further Study on your own.

1. To see what Jesus said was required of His followers, read Luke 9:23-26 and Luke 14:25-33.
2. For additional description of the fruit that should be seen in a Christian’s life, read Galatians 5:22-24.
3. To see how important Paul thought it was to follow Jesus, read Philippians 3:8-14.
4. To understand what it means to have Christ as the Lord of your life, read Romans 12.

1.0 Introduction

When the Bible speaks of God, it sometimes speaks of Him as being one. (Deuteronomy 6:4 - *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.*) In other places it speaks of God as being three. (2 Corinthians 13:14 - *May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all* and Matthew 28:19 *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*).

We are accustomed to thinking of Jesus Christ as God from the many statements about Him in the New Testament, especially the gospels, where we see Him living among people as the God-man. It is also clear that God the Son is eternal. (John 1:1-2 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was with God in the beginning.*)

But it is more difficult when we think of the Holy Spirit, because we never read about Him appearing in physical form. First we must understand that He is a living presence mentioned throughout the Bible, from the very beginning (Genesis 1:2 - *Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.*) to the very end (Revelation 22:17 - *The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"*.) and literally hundreds of places in between. He is never seen as a spirit in the sense of a feeling, for example a “spirit of generosity” or a “spirit of love;” these would be an “it,” the Holy Spirit is always “He,” indicating a person, not a feeling.

Our purpose in this study is to understand the Holy Spirit more clearly - who He is and what He does.

Note that some students may use or may have used the King James Bible, where He is called the Holy Ghost.

2.0 The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

The purpose of this brief survey is only to show that the Holy Spirit is not new with the New Testament; rather, He has been an active part of the Trinity all through the Bible. The difference is that he “came upon” people for a period of time and a specific purpose in the Old Testament. The next lesson will show how He permanently indwells the believer in the Church age. Do not linger over the details of these passages.

Read the following verses and identify the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.

Exodus 31:1-5 - *Then the LORD said to Moses, 2“See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, 3and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts-- 4to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, 5to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship.*

What did being filled with the Spirit of God help Bezalel to do? To be a superior
craftsman, working in gold, silver, bronze, wood and stone to build the tabernacle.

Judges 3:10-11 - *The Spirit of the LORD came upon Othniel, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war. The LORD gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othniel, who overpowered him. 11So the land had peace for forty years, until Othniel son of Kenaz died.*

What did being filled with the Spirit of the LORD enable Othniel to do? He was able to
overpower the King of Aram in war and be a Judge over Israel..

2 Chronicles 15:1-3 - *The Spirit of God came upon Azariah son of Oded. 2He went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Listen to me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you."*

What did Azariah do when the Spirit of God came upon him? Prophecy and speak the
word of the Lord.

From these and many other examples, we see that the Holy Spirit was a vital part of God's activity throughout the Old Testament. We see that He came upon people for certain times to perform great feats of skill, leadership, and prophecy. We see that He takes over a person at the deepest level of his being, gives a power and direction that he would not ordinarily have, so that person can carry out the work of God.

Peter also tells us that it was through the Holy Spirit that the prophets wrote the Bible. 2 Peter 1:20-21 - *Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

9A. Understanding The Holy Spirit (Part 1 of 2)

3.0 The Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ

3.1 The Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus Christ

The purpose of this section is also to show the pervasiveness of the Spirit's presence and power. Do not linger in this section to make applications to the Christian life; that will come later. Simply make the point the Holy Spirit was the agent of God in leading and empowering Christ.

The Holy Spirit was active in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ from His conception on through to the end of His life.

Read Luke 1:26-35. How was Jesus able to be called the Son of God? **He was conceived by the Holy Spirit through the power of God.**

Read Luke 3:21-22 Who descended on Jesus at His baptism? **The Holy Spirit**

Read Luke 4:1-2 Who led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted? **The Holy Spirit**

Read Luke 4:14-19 Who gave Jesus the power to preach to the people? **The Holy Spirit**

Read Luke 10:21 What else did Jesus have through the Holy Spirit? **Joy**

From these and other passages we see that the Holy Spirit was active throughout the life of Jesus Christ. When we also read of how Jesus was obedient to God the Father and how often He prayed to the Father, we realize that when we look at the life of Jesus Christ, we are seeing all three members of the Trinity in action. Think about these actions of the Holy Spirit and summarize the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus.

If time permits, get reactions in class, if not, let this be for personal meditation

Expected answers include, leading, empowering, protecting, doing miracles, etc.

9A. Understanding The Holy Spirit (Part 1 of 2)

3.0 The Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ (cont'd)

3.2 The Holy Spirit in the Teachings of Jesus Christ

The purpose of this section is to prepare the student for understanding the work of the Holy Spirit in his own life by showing what Jesus taught about the Holy Spirit. Again, do not take the time to make all the applications to the believer's life, that will come in detail in the next lesson. This section simply shows that Jesus emphasized the necessity of the work of the Spirit.

Read John 3:1-8. What does Jesus say is necessary for a person to see the Kingdom of God?

He must be born of the Spirit, or born again.

On the night before the crucifixion, Jesus told His disciples many things about the Holy Spirit. Read each of the following verses and write down what it tells us about the Holy Spirit.

John 14:15-17 He is a counselor (or comforter) and Spirit of truth, be with us forever, will be in us.

Comforter, Counselor: The Greek word is "paraclete" which literally means "one called alongside to help." Typical uses include advocate, as an attorney in court, or an intercessor.

John 14:25-26 He will teach us and remind us of the things that Jesus has said.

Testify, bear witness: to be a witness, to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something, or that he knows it because of being taught by divine revelation.

John 15:26-27 He comes from the Father, he will testify about Jesus and will enable us to testify as well.

John 16:7-11 He will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement. (you may expand on these from verses 10 and 11)

John 16:12-15 Guide us into truth, bring glory to Jesus Christ

In Acts 1:4-5, after His resurrection and just before His ascension, Jesus makes a great promise to his disciples. What is that promise?

That they will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Note that for all who come after the Apostles, this promised baptism of the Holy Spirit is simultaneous with conversion. Don't dwell on this point, but if

Baptize (Greek: *baptizo*): "the processes of immersion, submersion and emergence." One common use was the process of dipping a cloth into dye to change its color. In Biblical usage it can mean the physical ceremony of water baptism or the spiritual act of being immersed in and changed by the Holy Spirit.

someone objects, and wants to argue for the Spirit's baptism to be a later event, with or without speaking in tongues, you may use the following scriptures. Acts 2:38, the gift of the Spirit is received simultaneously with salvation. 1 Corinthians 12:13, we were *all* baptized by one Spirit into one Body. Romans 8:9, anyone who doesn't have the Spirit doesn't have Christ. Avoid this discussion if possible, because you probably will not change the opinion of the person who objects, but you do want to keep the others from being confused,

9B. Understanding The Holy Spirit (Part 2 of 2)

1.0 The Holy Spirit in the Church

This lesson is a bit lengthy; you may find it desirable to stretch it over two weeks depending on your students and on your teaching style.

The purpose of this section is to show the dramatic event associated with the coming of the Holy Spirit in a new and different way. This event shows that He now is present in the Church and in every believer, as promised in the Old Testament and in the teachings of Jesus. The overall drama of this event demonstrates its uniqueness, it is not something we expect to see repeated today.

Jesus' promise that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5) was fulfilled ten days later, on the day of Pentecost, when His followers were together in one place. (Pentecost is a Jewish holiday that occurs 50 days after the Passover.) Read Acts 2:1-4 and identify three things that happened when they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

1. **sound of a violent wind**
2. **appearance of tongues of fire settled on each of them**
3. **they spoke in foreign languages (other tongues)**

Read Acts 2:5-12. There were people from many different countries present for the Feast of Pentecost. They each heard their own language being spoken. What message did they hear in their own language (2:11)? **the wonders of God.**

What was their reaction (2:12)? **they were amazed and perplexed**

Read verses 14 to 21 to see how Peter explained this amazing event. He tells them that it is the fulfillment of the words of the prophet Joel that God will pour out His Spirit. What is the result of God pouring out His Spirit (2:21)? **everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved**

In verses 22-36, Peter explains to them the real meaning of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. **(NOTE - good opportunity for gospel presentation, if appropriate)**

Read verses 37-41 to see the results of this message. How did they respond (verse 37)? **what should we do?**

How did Peter answer their question (verse 38)? **Repent and be baptized**
(Be sure to explain that salvation is repentance and faith, baptism is an act of obedience after salvation showing identity with Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.)

What else would they receive (verse 38)? **The gift of the Holy Spirit**

In this chapter we see the fulfillment of Jesus' promise that His followers would receive - be baptized in - the Holy Spirit. This initial incident was accompanied by several miraculous events. When Peter preaches, he invites all to receive salvation, which includes receiving the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:13 teaches that all believers receive the Holy Spirit when they are saved. *(For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.)* In the next section we will see the effect of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Believer.

2.0 The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Believer

In the previous lesson about the Holy Spirit, we have learned that He is the third member of the Trinity; equal in every way with God the Father and God the Son, while carrying out His own distinct role. We have seen His activity in the Old Testament, coming upon selected people for a period of time to do the work of God. We have seen Him guiding and empowering the Lord Jesus Christ, and we have seen Him descend in power on the church at its beginning on the day of Pentecost.

In this lesson, we shall see Him carrying out the same activities, and many more, in the life of the believers. We cannot possibly study everything the New Testament says about the Holy Spirit because He is mentioned about 250 times. We have however, identified twelve distinct activities of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the believers and listed verses describing those activities. As you read these verses, answer the question “**What is the Holy Spirit doing in these passages?**”

1. *John 16:7-11 - 7 But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; 10 in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; 11 and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. (Note: John 14:26 identifies the Counselor as the Holy Spirit.)*

1 Thessalonians 1:5 - because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.

In John 16:7-11 we see that the Holy Spirit convicts the unbeliever of sin - makes him recognize his guilt - which is a necessary step toward salvation. Without conviction of sin, we would not repent. He convicts of righteousness because Jesus, the perfect example of righteousness, has returned to the Father and so is no longer visible as an example of perfect righteousness. He convicts of judgement because Satan is now condemned as will be all of his followers. 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10 shows an the result of the Spirit doing His convicting work.

- 2 *John 3:5-6 - Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. 6Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.*

Titus 3:5 - he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

The Holy Spirit brings about the new birth. (note - You may get a question about “water” in John 3:5. This is probably a reference to physical birth, not baptism or the Word of God, as are sometimes suggested. Physical birth is indicated by Nicodemus’ question in verse 4 and by the parallelism with flesh and spirit in verse 6.)

2.0 The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Believer (cont'd)

3. *Acts 2:38 - Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

1 Corinthians 3:16 - Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?

The Holy Spirit lives in every believer. (Note: If there is a question about every believer receiving the Holy Spirit at the time of salvation, see Romans 8:9 and 1 Corinthians 12:13 which say that all believers have the Spirit.)

4. *Ephesians 1:13-14 - And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession-to the praise of his glory*

2 Corinthians 5:5 - Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is an evidence of salvation. He is the seal (as a wax seal on a scroll), indicating ownership and authority. He is also the "down payment" of our full salvation which occurs when Jesus returns. These concepts are also essential indicators of our eternal security.

5. *Romans 8:13-14 - For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, 14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*

Galatians 5:16-18 - So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. 17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

The Holy Spirit gives us power over temptation and sin. If we are walking in the Spirit, we can overcome any temptation.

2.0 The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Believer (cont'd)

6. *John 14:26 - But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

1 Corinthians 2:9-15 - However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"- 10 but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. 14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Holy Spirit will guide us in our understanding of the Scriptures and cause us to remember them when we need them. (Note: These verses do not justify us receiving any new revelation from God on a level of the Bible's authority. God's revelation is complete; the Holy Spirit helps us understand it.)

7. *1 Corinthians 6:9-11 - Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

Galatians 5:22-25 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit changes our character.

2.0 The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Believer (cont'd)

8. *Acts 1:8 - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

Romans 12:6-8 - We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷ If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸ if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

The Holy Spirit gives us gifts and power to serve Him. You might also use the list of gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11. Try to keep the focus off the specific gifts (tongues, miracles, etc.) and onto the Giver and the purpose. Also see 1 Peter 4:10

9. *Acts 10:19 - While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you.*

Acts 13:3-4 - So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. ⁴The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

Acts 16:6-7 - Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. ⁷ When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.

Acts 20:22-23 - And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³ I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.

The Holy Spirit leads and guides in our lives.

2.0 The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Believer (cont'd)

10. *Romans 8:26-27 - In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. 27And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.*

The Holy Spirit prays for us when we are so upset that we can't pray.

11. *Acts 13:2 - While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*

Acts 20:28 - Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

Read full text, The Holy Spirit calls us to specific areas of service to God, not by vote.

12. *Ephesians 5:18 - Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit*

Acts 4:8 - Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people!

Acts 4:31 - After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Acts 6:1-4 - In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. 2So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.

The Holy Spirit fills us. Being filled with the Holy Spirit means being totally under His control so He can effectively use us to serve God. (Don't let speaking in tongues be confused with filling of the Spirit. In sixteen passages in the NT where someone is "filled with the Spirit" or the Holy Spirit "comes upon" someone, only three mention tongues, and there they are clearly foreign languages unknown to the speaker. In other places in Acts, people who were filled with the Spirit Preached the Word of God boldly, waited on tables, and bravely died a martyr's death.

9B. Understanding The Holy Spirit (Part 2 of 2)

3.0 Additional Material for Further Study

In John 14:16, *Jesus said And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever- the Spirit of Truth.* The Greek word used in the text for “another” (allos) means another exactly the same as the subject. This means that the Holy Spirit has exactly the same nature as the Lord Jesus Christ and will do the same for the disciples in the future as Jesus had done for them in the past three years. For us, this means that the Holy Spirit will do the same for us as Jesus did for His disciples. So we can take these 12 things that the Holy Spirit does in our lives and find examples of them in the life of Jesus with His disciples. The Holy Spirit References in the table below are the verses we have already studied. The references in the Jesus’ Actions column shows how Jesus did these things in the lives of His disciples. Studying these will further help you to understand the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Point	Activity	Holy Spirit Reference	Jesus’ Actions
1	Convicts of sin	John 16:7-11 1 Thessalonians. 1:5	Luke 5:1-8
2	Produces new birth	John 3:5-6 Titus 3:5	John 1:12-13
3	Lives in every believer	Acts 2:38 1 Corinthians 3:16	Matthew 28:20
4	Guarantees our salvation	Ephesians 1:13-14 2 Corinthians 5:5	John 10:27-30
5	Gives power to resist temptation	Romans 8:13-14 Galatians 5:16-18	Matt. 5:21-42
6	Guides our understanding of scripture	John 14:26 1 Corinthians 2:9-15	Luke 24:27 Luke 24:45
7	Changes our Character	1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Galatians 5:22-26	Luke 9:54-55 John 13:34-35
8	Gives gifts to empower us to serve God	Acts 1:8 1 Corinthians 12:7-11	Matthew 10:1; Luke 9:1 Luke 10:1-16
9	Leads and guides our life	Acts 10:19 Acts 13:3-4	Matthew 17:27 Matthew 21:2
10	Prays for us	Romans 8:26-27	John 17:6-19 Luke 22:31-32
11	Calls us to service	Acts 13:2 Acts 20:28	Matthew 4:18-22 Luke 5:27-28
12	Fills us with His presence	Ephesians 5:18 Acts 4:31	John 15:4

10. Overcoming Temptation

1.0 Introduction

When we come to faith in Jesus Christ, when we are born again, we come by repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ, believing that by dying on the cross, He paid the penalty that was due to us for our sins. When we come in repentance, we are not only saying that we are sorry for our sins, we are saying that we want to turn away from the sinful lifestyle we have been living and live a life pleasing to God and satisfying to ourselves. To repent is to change our minds about sin, about God, and about ourselves. Repentance is a statement to God that we want to live a different kind of life than we did in the past, a life of obedience to Him. But the common experience of us all is that, no matter how much we may wish to rid our lives of sin, we find ourselves failing time and again. While we know that God continues to forgive us, we still want to carry out the repentance that was our intention in coming to Him in the first place. Fortunately, God understands this and has provided the means for us to overcome temptation. Let us begin by reading some verses from Romans chapter 6.

2.0 Dead to Sin

Romans 6:1-7 - *What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We died to sin, how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

5 If we have been united with him like this in His death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

These verses teach us that when we were saved (baptized into Christ) we were united with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection. Therefore, because in His resurrection, He lives a new life, we too, are living a new life with Him. Furthermore, in this new resurrected life, we are no longer slaves to sin; we are no longer under its power. While it may be true that sin remains, it no longer reigns!

The significance of this teaching lies in the Biblical concept of death. Our culture thinks of death as “termination”, as exemplified by the movie “The Terminator.” But in the biblical view, death is not “termination” but “separation.” When a person dies, his soul is separated from his body; the soul lives on in either heaven or hell. Spiritual death is separation from God as Adam and Eve experienced in the day that they ate the forbidden fruit. They lived physically for another 900 years, but were on that day separated from God. So if we are dead to sin, we are separated from its power. Furthermore, if death is separation, then what is life but union. So as we are dead to sin (separated), we are alive to Christ (united with Him).

10. Overcoming Temptation

2.0 Dead to Sin (cont'd)

Romans 6:8-14 - Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. 13 Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. 14 For sin shall not be your master because you are not under law, but under grace.

Paul here tells us that we must “count yourselves dead to sin,” or in some Bibles, “reckon yourselves dead to sin.” This word count (or reckon) is a word that tells us to act according to a truth we know. The word is an accounting term, meaning that a transaction has been recorded. When your family sends money, it is recorded on your account at the commissary. Once it is recorded you can order product from the commissary; that is, you can reckon on it, or count on it by filling out the commissary form. So it is with our power to overcome temptation. God says the power is available by counting ourselves dead to sin; that is, to recognize and act upon the fact that we are no longer subject to sin, we are no longer slaves to sin. We have the power to overcome temptation. In the past, we were slaves to sin, but now we have been freed from sin and are slaves to God, to live righteous lives in His power. Also read and memorize 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Read Romans 6:15 - 23. Identify as many contrasting things as you can on the following lines. **You should hear some or all of the following items. Note that it is not so important to get every little detail correct as it is to see the big picture of the results of sin vs. the results of righteousness.**

Things associated with sin <u>Slave to sin, death (v. 16)</u> <u>Impurity (v. 19)</u> <u>Increasing Wickedness (v. 19)</u> <u>Shame (v. 21)</u> <u>Death (v. 23)</u>	Things associated with righteousness <u>Slave to God, . 16)</u> <u>Holiness (v. 19)</u> <u>Righteousness (v. 19)</u> <u>Freedom from sin (v. 22)</u> <u>Eternal life (v. 23)</u>
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10. Overcoming Temptation

3.0 Practical steps

The previous discussion lays the foundation of understanding how and why we are able to resist temptation. Now we want to look at some practical steps - things we can do on a daily basis that will help strengthen us for the inevitable time of temptation. These steps will all require effort and discipline on your part, as Paul reminded Timothy (1 Timothy 4:7b), *train yourself to be godly*.

1. Daily Quiet Time

Billy Graham said that he never knew a Christian who accomplished anything for God who did not have a daily quiet time; that is, time spent consciously in the presence of God. This must be a significant amount of time in serious prayer and Bible reading, not simply “God bless me and my family” and read a chapter of the Bible. While it is possible to have a devotional time with the Lord at any time, most people find it helpful to do it at the start of the day - to get us started on the right foot. When we do this, we are following the example of Jesus Christ, *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.* Mark 1:35

For help in this area, re-read some of the previous lessons:

3. Developing a Devotional Life

6. Understanding Prayer

“Summary of the Books of the Bible” and “Beginners’ Bible Reading Plan”

2. Pure thought life

Watch your thought life. Every sin is a thought before it is an action.

James 1:14-15 - but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. {15} Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Therefore, we must always focus our minds in the right direction. (Also Philippians 4:8)

Colossians 3:1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

An old Scottish proverb says “Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit, sow a habit, reap a lifestyle; sow a lifestyle, reap a destiny.” It all begins with a thought.

The area of the thought life is a particular struggle because the constant bombardment of television, movies, and magazines, all portraying various forms of sin as the commonly accepted way of life. This affects our thought life. We tend to accept as normal what God calls sin if we watch it continually. A good rule for entertainment is that if the story is based on anything God calls sin, we should not call it humor or entertainment.

The mind is the incubator of sin, but it can be the incubator of godliness, if you **reckon** right.

3.0 Practical Steps (cont'd)

3 Early Avoidance

Read the story of Joseph in Genesis 39:1-12.

Don't go to places that you know will be sources of temptation. You may think you are strong enough to resist, but you will find yourself being drawn into them again.

Proverbs 6:27-28 - Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? {28} Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched?

4. watch the small things

Song of Songs 2:15 - *Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom.*

Begin eliminating the small sins in your life, such things as foul language, selfishness, little white lies. As soon as you say "a small sin is OK" then the line between small and large will inevitably move to the large.

On the contrary, do small good deeds - pick up dropped things, be polite, demonstrate a contrast with the world that seeks power.

If we think rightly about the small sins in life, then the large sins will become more abhorrent.

10. Overcoming Temptation

3.0 Practical Steps (cont'd)**5. Choose your friends wisely**

Watch the company you keep, hang with those who will lift you up, who will set a good example, not those that will lead you to temptation. **(For a negative example see Samson, Judges 16:16-21.)**

Proverbs 1:10-19 - My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them. {11} If they say, "Come along with us; let's lie in wait for someone's blood, let's waylay some harmless soul; {13} we will get all sorts of valuable things and fill our houses with plunder; {14} throw in your lot with us, and we will share a common purse"-- {15} my son, do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths; {16} for their feet rush into sin, they are swift to shed blood. {17} How useless to spread a net in full view of all the birds! {18} These men lie in wait for their own blood; they waylay only themselves! {19} Such is the end of all who go after ill-gotten gain; it takes away the lives of those who get it.

Proverbs 4:14-15 - Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men. {15} Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way. Also Proverbs 13:20

1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."

6. Be accountable

Join with a Christian brother (or sister if you are a woman) and become accountable to each other. Know each other's weak spots, ask about them, encourage the good, help overcome the bad. While our ultimate accountability is to God, sometimes the fact that somebody is going to ask us about that sin is enough to keep us from it.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 - Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: {10} If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!

7. Use your time for good

Fill your time with good things, "idle hands are the devil's workshop." We can't simply stop doing evil, we must also begin to do good. This is the "put off/put on" principle that Paul taught.

Ephesians 4:22-24 - You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

11. Developing the Character of a Christian - Integrity

•1.0 Introduction

1.1 Introduction To Integrity

As we grow in the Christian life, God is at work in us to change our character so that we become more like His Son, Jesus Christ. One of the character qualities that He is developing in us is *integrity*. Integrity is the quality of living a life that is consistent with our core beliefs. One of the root meanings of the word is “cut from one piece of cloth,” indicating that we live the same way in different circumstances and in front of different people.

Nelson’s Bible Dictionary describes integrity as honesty, sincerity, singleness of purpose. Integrity is the opposite of being a hypocrite. Integrity can be further described as:

- being the same on Saturday as you are on Sunday
- being the same in the dark as you are in the light
- acting according to who you are, not according to the circumstances
- keeping our promises, even when it is difficult

1.2 Introduction To The Book of Daniel

After the death of King Solomon (1 Kings 11), Israel was divided into two warring factions: the northern kingdom, known as Israel, and the southern kingdom, known as Judah. The people and the leaders of both kingdoms turned away from the LORD and worshiped idols. Although warned to repent many times over by the prophets, Israel consistently refused. After about 200 years, Israel was overpowered by Assyria, who then dispersed the people throughout the kingdom (thus the 10 lost tribes of Israel) and brought other captured peoples into Israel (2 Kings 17). The kingdom of Judah experienced revivals at times, but finally turned completely from the LORD. About 125 years after the fall of Israel, God used the Babylonians to conquer Judah and carry the people into captivity in Babylon (2 Kings 24-25). Jeremiah had prophesied that this captivity would happen, and that it would last for 70 years. After that time they returned to rebuild the land, as described in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Daniel was a young man who was faithful to the LORD and was taken into Babylon. During the captivity, he rose to a position of great power in the government while always remaining faithful to the LORD. This book shows how the LORD protects and uses a person who remains faithful to Him in an ungodly society. This book also clearly shows God’s sovereign control over heathen nations and gives many detailed prophecies of future events.

11. Developing the Character of a Christian - Integrity

2.0 Examples of Integrity

2.1 Daniel and the King's Food

When they conquered Jerusalem, the Babylonians chose some of the best of the young men to be trained in their courts and schools to be leaders, to help convert the Jews to the ways of the Babylonians. Read Daniel 1:3 - 20.

Note that one of the things that the chief official did was change their names. This indicated his total authority over them and radically changed their meaning, because their original names all had to do with the worship of Jehovah, the God of Israel, while their new names had to do with the worship of idols. The name changes were as follows:

- **Daniel (God is Judge) became Belteshazzar (Bel protected his life; Bel was a chief Babylonian god)**
- **Hananiah (Jehovah is Gracious) became Shadrach (Command of Aku; Aku was the Babylonial moon god)**
- **Misrael (Who is what God is?) became Meshach (Who is what Aku is?)**
- **Azariah (Jehovah has helped) became Abednego (Servant of Nebo; Nebo was another god of the Babylonians)**

1. What did Daniel refuse to do (verse 8)? **eat the Kings choice meats and wine**
2. Why do you think he did this? **The meat had been ceremonially consecrated in the worship of idols - this may take some explanation, as the students will probably not know this.**
3. How could he have eaten the meat and rationalized his decision? **Saying he needed to stay healthy to help his people, he knew the idols were meaningless, you have to "go along to get along" You may get some real creativity here!**
4. What was Daniel's attitude in his refusal? **politeness**
5. What did Daniel propose as a test (verse 12-13)? **eating only vegetables for ten days**
6. What was the result of the test (verse 15)? **Daniel and his friends looked better than the others who ate the kings meat**
7. How did the guard react (Verse 16)? **allowed them to continue to eat only vegetables**
8. How does this story demonstrate Daniel's integrity? **he continued to do what was right - act according to his core values - in difficult and threatening circumstances**
9. How did God reward their integrity (verse 17)? **gave them great understanding**

Note that it wasn't the vegetables that made them better, it was an act of God!!

11. Developing the Character of a Christian - Integrity

2.0 Examples of Integrity (cont'd)

2.2 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and the Statue of Gold.

Because of the great wisdom God gave to Daniel and his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they were appointed to important positions in the Babylonian government. But Nebuchanezzar got carried away with his own ego, and put their faith to a severe test. Now read Daniel 3:1-30.

1. What did the king require everyone to do (verse 5)? **bow down and worship the statue of himself**
2. What would happen to anyone who disobeyed (verse 6)? **they would be thrown in a fiery furnace**
3. How did most people respond (verse 7)? **bowed down and worshiped**
4. How did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego respond (verse 12)? **they would not bow down**
5. How could they have rationalized bowing down to the statue? **It would not change anything, God needs us in our important positions to protect His people**
6. How did they answer the king (verses 17-18)? **God could protect them, but if He chose not to, they still would not bow down to the statue.**
7. After the king threw them into the furnace and God protected them, the king issued a new decree. What did the king say about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (verse 28)? **They trusted in their God and were willing to die for Him.**

The last half of verse 28 is a powerful statement of what constitutes integrity *They trusted in him (their God) and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.*

8. What other characteristics are required to carry out a life of integrity? **Faith and courage.**

11. Developing the Character of a Christian - Integrity

2.0 Examples of Integrity (cont'd)

2.3 Daniel's Worship

Daniel remained a top government official for many years in Babylon. About 60 years after he and his friends were brought to Babylon, the Medo-Persians captured Babylon and set Darius in place as the ruler. Daniel became his most trusted official, but that made the other officials jealous. They came up with a plot to have Daniel killed. Read Daniel 6:1-23.

1. What was the first thing Daniel's enemies tried to do to destroy him (verse 4)? **Find some evidence of wrong conduct in his life**
2. What was the only "weak link" in Daniel's life (verse 5)? **His worship of God**
3. The other officials conned the king into issuing a decree that everyone must worship the king, and only the king (verses 6 - 9). What did Daniel do in response to this news (verse 10)? **continued to pray to God in his usual way**
4. What might Daniel have done differently to get around the new law, or at least avoid being caught? **Prayed in secret, only at night, not bowed down**
5. How did the king respond when he heard of Daniel's defiance of his law (verse 13-14)? **He was distressed and wanted to rescue Daniel**
6. What does the king's response tell us about Daniel? **Good reputation, integrity**
7. What did the king finally have to do with Daniel (verse 16)? **throw him in the lion's den**
8. What did the king think Daniel's God could do (verse 16 and 19)? **Protect him from the lions**
9. Where do you think he got this idea? **From Daniel's life of witness.**
10. What did God do to protect Daniel (verse 22)? **sent an angel to close the lions' mouths**
11. How did Daniel display integrity ? **by continuing to worship in the way he believed was right, in spite of threats to his life.**

Also see 1 Peter 2:12 to show that our lives affect those around us as a witness.

11. Developing the Character of a Christian - Integrity

3.0 The Wisdom of Integrity

The book of Proverbs teaches us wisdom for living; it gives us Solomon's observations (as inspired by God) on what works best in life. It should be no surprise that Proverbs has many things to say about a life of integrity.

Prov 10:9 *The man of integrity walks securely,
but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.*

Prov 13:6 *Righteousness guards the man of integrity,
but wickedness overthrows the sinner.*

Prov 15:26 *The LORD detests the thoughts of the wicked.
but those of the pure are pleasing to him. see Ps. 24:3-4*

Prov 28:18 *He whose walk is blameless is kept safe,
but he whose ways are perverse will suddenly fall.*

4.0 Later Quotes

Martin Luther (1483–1546), German leader of the Protestant Reformation, in a speech on the 18th of April 1521, when he was on trial for his faith and under penalty of death, said, "I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God."

Another interesting quote, from a source other than the Bible, says: "One must live the way one thinks or end up thinking the way one has lived." Paul Bourget, a French novelist.

11. Developing the Character of a Christian - Integrity

5.0 For Further Study

In the Old Testament, God identified many men as people of integrity:

- Noah (Genesis 6:9),
- Abraham (Genesis 17:1),
- David (1 Kings 9:4),
- Job (Job 1:1,8; 2:3,9)

Certain positions of authority called for men of integrity:

- Leaders (Exodus 18:21)
- Judges (Deuteronomy 16:18)
- Kings (Deuteronomy 17:14-20)

Although Jesus did not use the word integrity, He called for:

- purity of heart (Matt 5:8),
- singleness of purpose (Matt 6:22),
- purity of motive (Matt 6:1-6).

Psalm 15 describes the person who may dwell with the Lord, a person of integrity.

 12. Growing the Fruit of the Spirit

Although this material is presented as one lesson, it is far too long to cover in one Bible Study. Depending on your teaching style and your student's responsiveness, this may take from two to four weeks. The material is in one lesson in the Teacher's Notes, but the Student's Notes are divided into two sections, with the break occurring after 6.0 Kindness and Goodness.

1.0 Introduction

Many television programs today offer a makeover, even an extreme makeover. You can get a makeover of your face, your body, even your house. The idea is that by making over the outside, you will feel better about your self, thus "making you over." The problem with a physical makeover, of course, is that it is only temporary: wrinkles will re-appear in the face, bodies will again sag, and houses will eventually need redecorating. God also offers us an extreme makeover, but His is from the inside out, changing our character, not our appearance. This makeover is permanent and growing. He calls this change "The fruit of the Holy Spirit."

After listing a long series of sinful personalities, in 1 Corinthians 6:11 Paul says, "*And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*" In this verse, Paul is talking about our forgiveness from sin and our right relationship with God. This is a change in our standing with God; it is immediate, complete, and permanent.

In Galatians 5:19-21, Paul gives a list of acts of the sinful nature, including such sins as *sexual immorality, hatred, jealousy, and envy*. These are followed by the fruit of the Spirit, which is "*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*" This is God's extreme makeover, a real and lasting change in personality, from the inside out. The ultimate role model for this makeover is Jesus Christ Himself, as He perfectly embodied all these character traits, and God's goal for us is to make us like His Son.

By saying these new character traits are the *fruit of the Spirit*, Paul tells us two things: first that the source of them is God Himself, in the Holy Spirit. Secondly, they grow; they do not appear fully developed overnight in a new Christian. The full development of these character qualities is a life-long process. To paraphrase another writer, "God loves you just the way you are, but He loves you so much he refuses to leave you the way you are; He wants you to be just like Jesus."

As we study each of these characteristics, we will define it, discuss a biblical example, and then suggest what it might look like in our lives today.

Read Galatians 5:16-25, emphasizing the following points:

16-18, we have a sinful nature, its desires are contrary to the desires of the Holy Spirit.

19-21, these are the actions of the sinful nature, no one can be a Christian whose habitual pattern of life is like this.

22-25, This is the character the Holy Spirit is developing in us. When we behave this way, we are demonstrating the character of Jesus Christ, and we will not violate the law of God.

12. Growing the Fruit of the Spirit

2.0 Love

The first of the fruits of the Spirit is *love*. The love that is produced by the Holy Spirit is not the kind of love that comes naturally to us; that warm, wonderful feeling we get from a relationship with another person, such as the love of a mother for her child, or the feelings between two young people totally infatuated with each other. While this love may be very enjoyable, it is also somewhat self-centered, because what we like about it is the good feeling we get from loving another person. The love that God has for us, and the love that He places in us, is expressed in the Greek word *agape*. This love is a selfless love, a love that seeks the best for the other person regardless of how they respond to our love. Such a love is not natural, it can only come from God.

This kind of love is the love that Jesus Christ had for us when He died for us. 1 John 4:9 says “*This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.*”¹⁰ *This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*”

What this love looks like in life is described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Write the characteristics of love in the blanks on the left side of the page. On the right side of the page you may write any notes of explanation you may need, indicate places you need to work on to show love in your life.

Love is <u>patient</u> ,	<u>refrains from anger, especially in difficult times</u>
love is <u>kind</u> .	<u>pleasant, helpful, seeking the other’s best</u>
It does not <u>envy</u> ,	<u>happy with the other’s success, congratulatory</u>
it does not <u>boast</u> ,	<u>not attracting attention to self, uplifts the other person</u>
it is not <u>proud</u> .	<u>not self-centered, recognizes that anything good comes from God</u>
⁵ It is not <u>rude</u> ,	<u>polite, considerate of the other’s feelings</u>
it is not <u>self-seeking</u> ,	<u>seeks the good of the other</u>
it is not easily <u>angered</u> ,	<u>not concerned for our “rights”</u>
it keeps no <u>record of wrongs</u> .	<u>willing to forget the other’s mistakes, true forgiveness</u>
⁶ Love does not delight in <u>evil</u>	<u>doesn’t dwell on the failures of the other</u>
but rejoices with the <u>truth</u> .	<u>rejoices in the success of the other</u>
⁷ It always <u>protects</u> ,	<u>keeps the other from trouble</u>
always <u>trusts</u> ,	<u>doesn’t question the other’s motives, believes the best</u>
always <u>hopes</u> ,	<u>looking for the best in the future</u>
always <u>perseveres</u> .	<u>sticks with the other person no matter what</u>

This love, which can only be a fruit of the Holy Spirit, will be displayed in these ways in all of our relationships: marriage, family, and all others we have contact with.

 12. Growing the Fruit of the Spirit

3.0 Joy

Joy is a deep inner delight in knowing that we are God's children, that He loves us with an everlasting love, that we are terribly important to Him. It is knowing that if God had a refrigerator, our picture would be on it. Joy is different from happiness. Happiness is the satisfaction that comes from pleasant circumstances; it is external, subject to change as the circumstances change. Happiness can be pumped up emotionally by upbeat music or by a charismatic speaker. Joy is internal, permanent, based on God, not circumstances. The joy of the Lord is a deep, settled assurance that all is well between us and God, it is knowing that we are the supreme object of His love.

Jesus is our example of joy, as He was able to endure the cross for the sake of joy. *Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. ² Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* **His joy didn't come from His circumstances (crucifixion), but from accomplishing our salvation and pleasing God the Father.**

In Acts 16, Luke records the conversion of the Jailer at Phillipi, showing that salvation - a right relationship with God - is the foundation of joy. *34 The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God--he and his whole family.* **Without knowing the Lord, there is no real basis for joy**

The source of our joy is the Holy Spirit. In Romans 14:17, we read, "*For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,*"

Romans 15:13 *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

The joy of the Lord is also the foundation of our worship.

Psalm 5:11 But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy.

Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you.

Psalm 98:4 Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; (5) make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, (6) with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn- shout for joy before the LORD, the King.

Psalm 100:1 Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. 2 Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

12. Growing the Fruit of the Spirit

4.0 Peace

Our understanding of “peace” in this context is based on the Hebrew word “shalom.” This word means much more than the absence of hostilities. Shalom is a feeling of “completeness, soundness, and well-being of the total person,” a sense that everything is in its right place. In the Old Testament, this was considered as only coming from God as a result of being in a right relationship with Him by obedience to the law. In the New Testament, this kind of peace only comes from the presence of God the Holy Spirit within us. Consider the following aspects of the peace we have.

Peace with God

Romans 5:1 *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with*

God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **This is the most important aspect of our peace; God is no longer our Judge, He is our loving Father.**

Peace of God

Philippians 4:6-7 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition,*

with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. [7] And the peace of God, which

transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

The Peace of God is that settled confidence that He is in control of everything and that He will not let anything happen to me that is outside of His love and will for me.

Peace from God

Ephesians 2:13 - 14 *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought*

*near through the blood of Christ. [14] For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility. **This verse refers to the barrier in the Temple that kept the Gentiles out of the areas where only the Jew could worship God. Now, in Christ, these two are brought together. So, today, all the differences in people are erased when they become one in Christ. s.a. Galatians 3:28***

So by the Holy Spirit, we have peace with God, the peace of God, and peace with our brothers and sisters in Christ. This does not mean we won't have any enemies, but it does mean we will have peace within, even in the presence of hatred without.

12. Growing the Fruit of the Spirit

5.0 Patience

Patience is the ability to remain consistent in difficult times. Patience is not losing one's temper in a difficult circumstance. It is not a passive, wimpy, do-nothing attitude. It is a strength that endures trial and remains true to its own character. It is perseverance with pleasantness.

The Bible defines patience for us in Ephesians 4:2 *Be completely humble and gentle*

be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Paul uses the attitude of Jesus Christ toward himself to show the extent of God's patience with him.

1 Timothy 1:16 *But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners,*

Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example

for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

Peter also tells us of God's patience with sinners. 2 Peter 3:9 *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

Unfortunately, there is only one way to acquire patience, and that is to have the patience we already have stretched beyond its normal limits. So the Holy Spirit uses the circumstances of life to supernaturally grow patience in us.

James 1:2-4 - *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because*

you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance ⁴ Perseverance must finish

its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. Also see Romans 5:3-5

12. Growing the Fruit of the Spirit

6.0 Kindness and Goodness

These two aspects of the fruit of the spirit are almost indistinguishable from each other. Kindness is to have a gentle and considerate nature toward others; goodness is to act toward others in a way that is morally honorable and helpful in effect. A person who is kind and gentle will seek to do that which is helpful for other people, and will do it with a pleasant manner. Sometimes one person can do a good thing for another person, but do it in an unpleasant way, out of necessity, or because it is his job; this is goodness without kindness. It is also possible to act in a kindly way toward a person without meeting their real needs; this is kindness without goodness. The work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is to cause us to seek the best for others, and do it in a way the reflects the character of God.

Both of these characteristics are the result of a Godly kind of love, as we saw in our study of Love as a fruit of the Spirit. We learned from 1 Corinthians 13 that love is kind, meaning “pleasant, helpful, seeking the other’s best.” We also learned that love is not self-seeking; rather, it “seeks the good of the other.”

Kindness and goodness are both characteristics of God, they flow from His infinite love for us. So we, too, should display our love for others in kindness and goodness. In these, as in all aspects of the fruit of the Spirit, the Lord Jesus Christ is our primary example.

Read John 8:1-11 and answer the following questions.

1. What did the Pharisees want for the woman (v. 5)? death by stoning
2. What did Jesus want for her (v. 11)? to live a good life
3. How would you compare the attitude of Jesus with that of the Pharisees toward the woman?

Jesus gentle, kind Pharisees harsh, mean-spirited

Sum up the story by discussing goodness (saving her life, sending her away with a blessing) and kindness (the gentle way he treated her, not reprimanding her for her past life)

Read Mark 10:13-16 and answer the following questions.

1. What did the disciples do to the women who brought their children to Jesus? rebuked them
2. What did Jesus do with the children? took them in His arms, blessed them
3. How would you compare the attitude of Jesus with that of the Disciples?

Jesus gentle, kind Disciples harsh, mean-spirited

Sum up by contrasting kindness with harshness

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12. Paul here describes his ministry among them. What are some words he uses to describe his actions and attitudes?

gentle, like a mother, loved, holy, righteous, blameless, encouraging, comforting,
Summarize by showing these as acts of goodness (bringing the message of salvation) and kindness (the way the message was brought) NOTE: This is the end of lesson 12a in the Student’s Notes.

12. Growing the Fruit of the Spirit

7.0 Faithfulness

Faithfulness is remaining consistent in our commitment to God and in our relationships with other people in our lives. This is not the faith by which we are saved, but it is the faith by which we live. Faithfulness toward God is to walk consistently in His ways and to faithfully follow His direction in our lives. Faithfulness toward others is to be consistent in our relationships and to carry out the commitments we make to them. Faithfulness to God and man will interact when we obey the Lord's commands in ministry in a way that reflects the faithfulness of Christ to us.

Faithfulness is an attribute (**characteristic**) of God, as stated in Exodus 34:6 *And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. Throughout the Old Testament, God remained faithful to His promises (**His covenant**) to Israel, in spite of their repeated unfaithfulness to Him, often saying "because of the oath I swore to your forefathers ..."*

Jesus commends faithfulness in His followers in two parables about faithful servants. Read Matthew 24:45-51 and answer the following questions:

1. What was the servant put in charge of (v. 45)? giving the other servants their food
2. When the master returned and found him faithful, what did he put him in charge of (v. 47)?
All his possessions

Now read Matthew 25:14-30 and answer the following questions:

1. What did the master say about the servants who invested their talents of money wisely (v. 21 and 23)? They were good and faithful servants.
2. Because they had been faithful in small things, what did he promise them (v. 21 and 23)?

He would put them in charge of many things and they would share his happiness

3. What would happen to the servant who was unfaithful (v. 28-30)? he would be punished and what he had would be taken away.
4. In both of these stories, what is another word that describes the faithful servants? obedient; and the unfaithful servants? disobedient
5. How is the unfaithful servant described (v. 26)? wicked and lazy

In both of these stories, the faithful servants carried out their master's instructions and were rewarded with commendation, greater responsibility and sharing in his joy. Certainly this is how we want to be received by our Lord Jesus Christ when we are faithful to Him. **Teaching note: In the second parable a talent is an amount of money, not some special capability. These parables have many potential rabbit trails that are of no value to the point of this lesson, such as, why were different amounts given, is God a hard master (v. 26), and eternal security because the lazy servant was sent to hell. Avoid such questions, or answer briefly and move on as quickly as possible, sticking to the main point of faithfulness. Remember that a parable is a simple story with a single point, don't let people get you into over-interpreting the parables.**

1 Peter 4:10-11 says *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

What gifts has God given you to faithfully serve others? Answers might include the gospel message, opportunities to tell others about Jesus, whatever we have of time, abilities, financial resources (though not in jail!),

12. Growing the Fruit of the Spirit

8.0 Gentleness

Gentleness, or meekness in some translations, is defined as strength under the control of discipline. Gentleness is not weakness; on the contrary, it is a strength that is strong enough to not have to display itself in a domineering way. In the original Greek language, it is a word that would be used for a wild horse that has been tamed. The horse is no weaker, it is simply controlling its strength to put it to good use. True meekness points away from ourselves and toward the source of our strength; it comes from knowing that we are relying on God's strength in every situation.

The greatest example of this kind of meekness is seen in our Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah 53:7 says of Him *He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.* In all His trials before Pilate and the Jews, He never complained nor threatened, yet he had the full power of God at His disposal.

Jesus encourages meekness in us when He says in Matthew 5:5 *Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.* This is to say that our strength should be in Him, and He will reward us.

Read the story of Jesus' arrest in Matthew 26:47-75 and identify verses which show the following characteristics:

Jesus' true meekness 50 welcoming Judas; 63 silence before accusers, 67 accepting mocking

Jesus' real power 53 could call angels, 64 future power and authority

Peter's false strength 51 attacking with his sword, 58 following into the courtyard

Peter's failure 56 fleeing, 70 72 74 denying he knew Jesus

This shows the difference between Jesus' meekness - power under the control of discipline - and false bravery and apparent strength which relied only on Peter's own strength and ultimately failed.

Paul shows us what true meekness should look like in our lives.

Romans 12:3 and 10, *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of*

yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober

judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.10 Be

devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above

yourselves.

In what areas of your life do you need to rely less on your own strength, be gentle instead of tough, and rely on God's strength?

12. Growing the Fruit of the Spirit

9.0 Self-Control

Self control, or temperance in some translations, is the ability to control one's passions and desires so that they are not expressed in an extreme or ungodly way. When a person is self-controlled, his/her mind sets limits on the expression of his/her emotions and physical desires. When a person is drunk, or in a fit of temper, we say that he/she is out of control. A person is equally out of control when he/she uses drugs to escape from the reality of the world around him/her.

When a person is self-controlled, the mind and the emotions are balanced in controlling the will; the mind provides the direction, the emotions provide the power. When a person is out of control, the emotions and physical desires have taken over control of the will. That person's actions are no longer controlled by right thinking. Loss of self-control will inevitably lead to sin.

The extreme of loss of self-control is addiction; whether to alcohol, drugs, sex, money, food, or power. The desire for the addictive substance or gratification has taken over total control of the person's mind and will; nothing else matters but satisfying the craving. These are not diseases, but are the habitual loss of self-control.

Paul describes this difference of control in Romans 8:5, *Those who live according to the*

sinful nature *have their* *minds* *set on what that nature desires; but those who*

live in accordance with the *Spirit* *have their minds set on what the* *Spirit* *desires*

We will inevitably be under the control of one or the other: the sinful nature or the Holy Spirit.

Paul gives us the means of self-control in Romans 12:2, *Do not conform any longer to the*

pattern *of this* *world* *, but be* *transformed* *by the renewing of your* *mind* *. Then*

you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Emphasize the idea that our lives are to be controlled by our God-transformed mind, not by the ways of the world which are to satisfy the desires of our sinful nature by any means we choose.

Peter give us two motivations for self control:

1 Peter 4:7 *The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.*

Prayer is our greatest resource in any situation, and we need to be clear minded and self-controlled for that purpose.

1 Peter 5:8-9. *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.* ⁹ *Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

We must be self-controlled in order to resist the temptations of Satan. If we are out of control (drunk, high, in an uncontrolled rage) we can be easily led into sin.

12. Growing the Fruit of the Spirit

10.0 Summary

In giving us His Holy Spirit, God has given us the power to overcome all the evil of our sinful nature. If we look at the acts of the sinful nature in Galatians 5:19-21, we find an antidote for each of them in the fruit of the Spirit in verses 22-23.

Where there was **hatred**, the Spirit brings **love** regardless of merit.

Where there was **jealousy**, the Spirit brings **joy** in accepting what we have.

Where there were **discord, dissensions, and factions**, the Spirit brings **peace** independent of the circumstances.

Where there was **selfish ambition**, the Spirit brings **patience** to allow God to bring advancement in His time and direction.

Where there was **envy** of another person, the Spirit brings **kindness** toward that person.

Where there was **impurity**, the Spirit brings **goodness**.

Where there were **idolatry and witchcraft**, the Spirit brings **faithfulness** to God.

Where there were **fits of rage**, the Spirit brings **gentleness** in our relations with each other.

Where there were **sexual immorality, debauchery, drunkenness, and orgies**, the Spirit brings **self-control**.

13A. Understanding the Church (Part 1 of 2)

1.0 Introduction

1.1 To the Church

When we think about the word “Church” various thoughts may come to mind: a quaint white building with a steeple located in the middle of town, a group of people singing hymns and listening to a sermon, or a very large, hierarchical organization of Archbishops, Bishops, and Priests. These are common uses of the word church today, but we should really get our understanding of what church means from the Bible.

Ekklesia is the Greek word which is translated “church” in our Bibles. It is simply a group of people called together for a purpose. In the Greek language, *ekklesia* was not specifically religious, and was often translated assembly. But when translated Church, it takes on very specific meaning for Christians.

Our first understanding of the church comes from the meaning of the word itself (see box at right); it is clearly a group of people. In the Bible, church never refers to a building, it is always a group of people.

The first use of the word Church in the Bible is in Matthew 16:18b where Jesus says *I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.* There are several things we can learn from this brief statement.

It is not necessary to have the students open their Bibles to Matthew 16:18, you will save having to answer questions about Peter, rock, etc.

1. Who is responsible for building the Church? Jesus Christ
2. The Church is more powerful than hades (hell)
meaning that the church is more powerful than those that oppose it; those who will one day be in hell
3. How many Churches are there? one

Yet much later in the New Testament, Jesus tells the Apostle John in Revelation 1:11, *“Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.”*

4. How many churches does Jesus mention in this passage? seven

From these two statements we see that there are two expressions of Church. The first is the *universal* church, which is made up of all those who are born again believers, followers of Jesus Christ. The second expression is the *local* church. In the New Testament we see many examples of believers who gather together in one location, and who are called a church.

There are three common uses of the word Church today that do not come from the Bible:

- a building (as in the church on the corner)
- a denomination (as in The Baptist Church)
- or a national church (as in The Church of England)

Denomination is a term used to describe a group of local churches which have a common set of beliefs and have established some degree of authority structure. Some denominations have a very rigid hierarchical structure; others are very informal in their association.

Teaching Points of emphasis - the church has both local and universal meaning. Be able to answer the inevitable questions about denominations. Our objective is not to point a finger and say “You gotta get in a good church when you get out!” Rather, we want them to see that it is desirable to be in a church, and that it is God’s plan for them to do so. So instead of “You got to” it becomes “I want to go.”

Non-denominational is a term used to describe a local church which has no organized connection with other churches.

13A. Understanding the Church (Part 1 of 2)

1.0 Introduction (cont'd)

1.2 To the Book of Acts

The name “Acts” is simply a shortened version of “The Acts of the Apostles,” which is the older name for this book of the Bible. This name is very descriptive as this book records some of the actions of the Apostles for the first thirty years in the life of the church. The book begins with the ascension of Jesus into heaven forty days after His resurrection from the dead. Ten days later, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descends on the infant church in a mighty and miraculous way. The remainder of the book describes the growth and expansion of the church in the power of the Holy Spirit from Jerusalem throughout Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). While some of the events of Acts are unique to the Apostolic times, most of the activities are descriptive of how the gospel is proclaimed, how churches are started, and how they grow. And so Acts becomes a pattern for the church today.

2.0 The Church in Acts

The first picture we see of a church is in Acts 2:14-40, which tell about Peter’s first sermon. The next verses give us the results of that sermon. Read Acts 2:41 - 47 and answer the following questions about the first church.

1. What were two characteristics of those who made up the first church (verse 41)?
accepted his message (saved, believed) and were baptized
Note that baptism is not necessary for salvation, but was commonly done immediately in the early church. Now some churches require baptism for membership, other do not. Don’t spend more time than necessary on baptism, that will be covered in another lesson.
2. What did they devote themselves to after they became part of the church (verse 42)?
Apostles’ teaching, breaking bread (communion, Lord’s supper),
fellowship, and prayer
3. What did they do if someone among them had a financial need (verse 45)?
sold their goods to meet each other’s needs - concept is sacrifice for another’s benefit
4. How often did they meet together (verse 46)? every day
5. What was their attitude as they met together (verses 46 and 47)? glad, sincere, joyful
6. What was the result of their meeting together in this way and with this attitude (verse 47)?
more people got saved (because they saw the lives of the people in the church)

Teaching points of emphasis - church is about a lot more than going to a service on Sunday. It is a whole life pattern. It is not just about getting; it is also about giving. You might make it easy to remember by using the acrostic Fellowship STEW to describe the activities of the church:

Fellowship
Sharing
Teaching
Evangelism
Worship.

13A. Understanding the Church (Part 1 of 2)

3.0 Two Pictures of the Church

In order to help us understand the church, Paul uses two analogies to emphasize various aspects of the church.

3.1 The Church as a Building

Read Ephesians 2:19-22. In this passage, Paul uses the analogy of a building to describe the church. We are all building blocks making up the building.

1. Who is the chief cornerstone of the building (verse 20)? Jesus Christ
2. Who are the foundation stones (verse 20)? Apostles and Prophets - their teachings, the Bible
3. Where do we fit in (verses 21 and 22)? the visible upper part of the building
4. Who lives in the building (verse 22)? God - the Holy Spirit

Verses 11 - 18 of this chapter tell us that Paul is especially concerned to make the point that both Jews and gentiles (non-Jews) are being built together in this building. If we imagine a building made of fieldstone, we realize that each stone has to be cut and shaped purposely to fit in a certain place, and that the beauty of the building is enhanced by the diversity of shapes, sizes, and colors of the stones, all working together to make a harmonious and beautiful building. And God Himself, in the person of the Holy Spirit, dwells within this building, which is the church.

Teaching points of emphasis - our diversify (age, race, ethnicity, education, economic status) all brought together does not exist anywhere else on earth but in the church, God has to shape us for our part, it is all according to His plan as the architect of the Church.

13A. Understanding the Church (Part 1 of 2)

3.0 Two Pictures of the Church (cont'd)

3.2 The Church as a Body

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. In this passage, Paul uses the analogy of the human body to teach us additional truths about the church. He pictures all the members of the church as parts of a human body.

1. There is one body, but it is made up of many parts (verse 12).
2. How do we become a part of the body (verse 13)? baptized by the Spirit
This is an integral part of being saved, not something that happens later.
3. Is any part of the body unnecessary (verses 14-17)? no
4. How many parts of the body have a function to perform (verses 14 - 17)? all
5. Who plans what each part of the body will do (verses 18-19)? God
6. Which parts of the body are unnecessary (verses 21-23)? none
7. How do the parts of the body relate to each other (verses 25-26)? harmoniously, cooperation
8. Whose body are we (verse 27)? Jesus Christ's
As the church - His body - we are how He carries out His work in this world. The church is His physical presence in the world

Colossians 1:18 gives us a further bit of information about the church. *And he (Christ) is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*

9. Who is the head of the body? Jesus Christ
10. What does the head of the body do? Controls the actions of the body
11. So who controls the actions of the church? Jesus Christ

Teaching points of emphasis - The importance of being a part of a church for the purpose of helping others, witnessing to the world, corporate worship, etc. Being in a church, and in fact our faith as a whole, is not just about what God does *for* us, but what He does *in* us and *through* us; it is about giving, not getting (Jesus said "it is more blessed to give than to receive"), and by giving we gain more real and genuine satisfaction, we are part of something much bigger than ourselves. And when all of this is done well, others will see God in the church and want to be saved and become a part of the church.

13B. Understanding the Church (Part 2 of 2)

1.0 Leaders of the Church

1.1 What the Leaders Do

As head of the church, Christ has placed a variety of people as church leaders. Other than the Apostles themselves, there does not seem to be any hierarchical structure of authority over groups of local churches. This kind of structure came along later in church history. But there are clearly a variety of roles to be filled in the local church.

Read Ephesians 4:11-13 and answer the following questions.

1. What five kinds of leaders does Paul identify in this passage (verse 11)? apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

Don't worry about explaining the details of apostles, prophets, etc. at this point, that comes on the next page.

2. What do the leaders in the church do (verse 12)? prepare God's people for service
3. What will be the result if they do their work well (verse 13)? unity and maturity
4. What will this unity and maturity look like? Fill in the key words in verses 14 - 16.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. 15Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

From this passage we see that God has given the gift of leaders to the church to equip the members for service. This service will build the body in both strength and size.

Teaching points of emphasis: Leaders do not do all the work of the church; they build up the congregation in depth of knowledge so the congregation can do the work of ministry.

13B. Understanding the Church (Part 2 of 2)

1.0 Leaders in the Church (cont'd)

1.2 Who the Leaders Are

The Bible uses many terms to describe various kinds of leaders in the church. The following definitions cover most of the terms used in the New Testament.

Apostle: from the Greek word *apostolos*, meaning one sent with a special message or commission.

Read Luke 6:12-16. Who selected the twelve apostles? Jesus

Later Matthias was added to replace Judas (Acts 1:12-26), and Paul was also designated an Apostle (1 Cor. 15:3-11, Gal. 1:1). Two requirements for the Apostles were that they had seen the risen Christ and had been appointed by Him. All the New Testament writers were either Apostles or their very close associates.

Prophet: a person to whom God spoke directly, giving a message for the people (Numbers 12:6).

Read Deuteronomy 18:17-22. What was the test of a prophet? Perfect accuracy

Read Deuteronomy 13:1-5. What was another test of a prophet? teach truth about God

Teacher's Note: Even if a prophet performs miracles, but teaches falsehood about God, he is not to be believed. Warning for today's "miracle workers" who teach things beyond the scriptures. See Acts 17:11 for a New Testament use of this principle.

What was to happen to a false prophet (13:5; 18:20)? put to death

Note that apostles and prophets appear to be gifted people limited to biblical times. They received revelation from God and recorded it for us in the Bible (Ephesians 3:4-5). Their work is shown as foundational to the church (Ephesians 2:20), but not of an ongoing nature in the life of the church. For someone to speak now as a Prophet or Apostle would be to claim authority equal to that of the Bible, but that is forbidden in Revelation 22:18-19.

Teacher's note - If the question arises about a couple of other people referred to as apostle in the NT, for example Rom. 16:7, who were not among The 12 Apostles, explain that this is the generic use of the word as one sent with a message, they were not Apostles in the sense of the 12 and Paul as uniquely appointed by Christ Himself.

Evangelist: from the Greek word *euangelion*, meaning "gospel" or "good news." So an evangelist is a person who is gifted by God in proclaiming the good news (the gospel) of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The main work of an evangelist is outside the local church, seeking to build up the church by bringing in new believers. Acts 8 tells the story of an evangelist named Philip.

Look at Acts 8:5, 35, 40. What did Philip do? taught/preached about Jesus/the gospel

Don't try to read all of Acts 8, there are too many rabbit trails.

Pastor: from the Greek word *poimen*, meaning "shepherd," indicating a person that provides spiritual leadership and care for the people in a local church. This is carried out in preaching, teaching, individual counseling and discipline. Other words used interchangeably with pastor are elder, bishop, and overseer. In explaining the duties of pastors, Peter implies that pastors are "undershepherds," and Christ Himself is the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:1-4). The qualifications for an elder are given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. **See Psalm 23 and John 10 for the actions of a shepherd.**

13B. Understanding the Church (Part 2 of 2)

1.0 Leaders in the Church (cont'd)**1.2 Who the Leaders Are (cont'd)**

Teacher: a person who is gifted by God with the ability to study and explain the message of the Bible in such a way that it can be understood clearly and to show how it should be applied to people's lives. A good teacher should also be able to recognize and refute false doctrine. Titus 2:1-6 gives instructions to a teacher about what he is to teach. Verses 7 and 8 tell the teacher how he is to behave. **See Ezra 7:10 for the importance of a teacher to study and to live what he teaches**

What warning does James 3:1 give about teachers? **they will be judged more strictly**

Deacon: from the Greek word *diakonos*, meaning "a servant." In the church, a deacon is a person who serves the church by attending to the practical aspects of life, such as caring for the poor. The qualifications for a deacon are given in 1 Timothy 3:7-12. An example of the work of deacons is given in Acts 6:1-6. What task was assigned to the deacons by the Apostles?

waiting on tables; that is, caring for the needy

Note that while the offices of evangelist, pastor, teacher, and deacon refer to specific individuals, all believers should be doing all of these things to some extent, thus growing into a recognized leader in the church. So all of us at times serve others in practical ways; all of us teach at times by word and by example; all of us are to bring the good news of the gospel to unbelievers; and all of us will at some times comfort and counsel other believers. **Again, the importance of involvement by every member.**

Saint: from the Greek word *hagios*, meaning "holy one." This term is not about leaders, but is applied to all who are born again through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. All such people are declared righteous by God, though their lives may not fully reflect a holy lifestyle. The word saint is never used in the Bible as a title for one individual; rather, it is always used in the plural to indicate all the believers in a local church, as in Ephesians 1:1, 15, 18; 3:18; and 6:18.

13B. Understanding the Church (Part 2 of 2)

2.0 What to Expect in a Local Church

When you are released from incarceration, you will be looking for a good local church. If neither you nor your family have an association with a good local church, you may find yourself saying “How do I find a church that is like the teaching in the Bible?” Let us offer a few practical things to look for as you consider a home church.

1. The preaching and teaching should be soundly based on the Bible. The sermons should explain a passage of the Bible, not just use verses to prove a point that the pastor wants to make. (2 Timothy 4:2.)
2. There should be many opportunities to meet together during the week: Sunday morning worship, Adult Bible classes on Sunday morning, Sunday evening worship, mid-week prayer meetings, small group Bible Studies during the week, and men’s and women’s ministries. While not every church will follow this pattern exactly, there should be many opportunities to meet in different formats. Church is not for Sunday morning only. (Hebrews 10:25)
3. Look for singing that is enthusiastic and words that are meaningful. Generally avoid worship that is simplistic and very repetitious. Instrumentation and style are far less important than the content of the words and the love of God reflected in the enthusiasm of the congregation. (Matthew 22:37; Psalm 150)
4. Look at people’s faces; are they happy to be in church? (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
5. Expect people to welcome you into their church, they should be happy to have visitors in their services. (Philippians 4:21)
6. Avoid a church where there is evident controversy or criticism of leaders. (Hebrews 13:17)
7. Expect the church to hold you accountable. Part of a shepherd’s job is to watch the sheep to keep them from going astray. (1 Peter 5:1-5)
8. Expect to find a place where you can begin to serve. While you may not be mature enough to be a teacher, you can cut the grass, clean the floors, direct traffic in the parking lot, and care for babies in the nursery. (1 Peter 4:10-11)

14. Understanding Baptism

Churches have widely varying traditions about baptism, both as to its mode (immersion, sprinkling, pouring) and its subjects (infants, children, adults). For those people in jail who have a strong church tradition about baptism, do not try to change their minds or tell them their church is wrong. Simply acknowledge that many traditions have arisen since Biblical times and it is not our intent to affirm or deny any traditions. This lesson simply teaches the Biblical, historical pattern from which those traditions grew.

1.0 Introduction

The teaching of the New Testament gives the church two ceremonies, or ordinances, to practice. The first of these is Baptism, which we will study in this lesson; the second is The Lord's Supper, or communion, which we will study in a later lesson. Baptism is a ceremony which every believer in Jesus Christ should do soon after he is saved as a public declaration of his faith in Jesus Christ and his commitment to live as Jesus taught. Communion is a ceremony that is repeated on a regular basis as an act of worship, remembrance, and proclamation of the death of Christ and the promise of His return.

These are the only two ordinances practiced by the early church. To be an ordinance, a ceremony must have been commanded by Jesus Christ in the gospels, practiced by the early church in Acts, and taught by the Apostles in the epistles.

2.0 The Meaning of "Baptize"

The words "baptize" and "baptism" were not used in the English language prior to the release of the King James translation of the Bible in 1611. The older English Bibles, such as the Wycliffe Bible and the Coverdale Bible, used the words "dipped" and "immersed" in places where our Bibles have baptized. By the time the translators authorized by

Baptize - from the Greek word *baptisma* (noun) "consisting of the process of immersion, submersion, and emergence" and *baptizo* (verb) meaning "to dip, for example, the dyeing of a garment, or the drawing of water by dipping a small vessel into a larger."

King James did their work, some churches had begun to sprinkle rather than immerse people, so they created a new word by copying from the Greek *Baptizo*. So "Baptism" became a part of our English language and has been used in all English Bibles since that time.

Be prepared to answer the following questions, but only if necessary.

What is a sacrament, compared to an ordinance? In some mystical way, a sacrament is thought to convey a blessing for doing the required ritual. An ordinance is simply an external physical action which proclaims an inward spiritual reality. Any blessing is a result of the faith of the person, not the performance of a ritual.

Why are there only two, some churches have more? These are the only two that meet the requirements of being commanded by Jesus Christ in the gospels, practiced by the early church in Acts, and taught by the Apostles in the epistles. Any others were added later, and are not a part of the Bible. Footwashing, for example, is something Jesus did once, did not command, is not practiced in Acts, and is not taught in the epistles. Some churches practice it as an act of humility, but it is not properly an ordinance.

14. Understanding Baptism

3.0 The Baptism of John the Baptist

John the Baptist was a forerunner to Jesus. His purpose was to announce to the Jewish people that their Messiah was coming and to prepare the people for His message. Read Mark 1:2-8 and answer the following questions.

1. What was the purpose of John's baptism (verse 4)? repentance of sins
2. What did the people do before they were baptized (verse 5)? confessed their sins
3. What did John baptize people with (verse 8)? water
4. What did John say Jesus would baptize with (verse 8)? the Holy Spirit

So we see John baptizing people - immersing them in water - to show their repentance from sin. Their baptism was a physical public act that demonstrated an inner spiritual reality (repentance).

Now read Luke 7:29-30. These verses show the difference in the people who had been baptized by John - who had repented - and those who had not been baptized and who had not repented. Those who repented and were baptized were ready for Jesus' message; those who had not repented rejected Jesus' message. So John prepared the people for the arrival of Jesus.

The emphasis here is not on the similarity of John's baptism with Believer's Baptism so much as it is a physical act representing a spiritual reality.

4.0 Jesus Commands Baptism

After Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, He spent 40 days with His apostles before ascending back to heaven. During that time he taught them many things, because now they understood that Jesus' death on the cross was not a failure and the end of His mission, but was the purpose for His coming and was the beginning of their mission to carry the good news of the gospel to the whole world. In Matthew 28:16-20, He gave them a summary of what their mission was to be; we call it the Great Commission. Read these verses and answer the following questions.

1. What was to be the primary object of the disciples' mission (verse 19)? *Make* Disciples
2. What three things did they have to do to make disciples (verses 19 and 20)?
go, baptize, and teach them to obey Jesus
Note: the command to baptize assumes they have believed.
3. In whose name are we to be baptized? Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

In saying this, Jesus is telling His disciples, and us today, that the way to make disciples is to go to where the people are who need the gospel, proclaim the gospel to them and baptize them, which we will see happening in the book of Acts, and teach them to obey Jesus commands.

14. Understanding Baptism

5.0 Baptism in the Early Church

The book of Acts gives us a history of the Church in the 30 years immediately after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As we watch the apostles proclaiming the gospel, we find a common pattern that when people believed the gospel they were baptized almost immediately. Let's look at a few examples to see this.

5.1 Samaria

Read Acts 8:12 and fill in the blanks. *But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. **Emphasize sequence of believing and being baptized***

5.2 The Ethiopian

Read Acts 8:26 - 39 and answer the following questions.

1. What did Phillip do first after getting into the chariot (verse 35)? Told him about Jesus
2. What did the Ethiopian official ask after that (verse 36)? can I be baptized
3. What did Phillip do (verse 38)? baptized him

Emphasize the immediacy of the baptism.

5.3 Saul

Acts 9:1-19 tells the story of the conversion of Saul, or Paul as he is called later. In the course of the story, Saul is struck blind by the Lord, and a man named Ananias is sent to heal him. Read verses 17 to 19, and answer the following questions.

1. What was the first thing Saul did after receiving his sight (verse 18)? got baptized
 2. What was the next thing he did (verse 19)? ate a meal
- Emphasize the importance of baptism - after fasting for three days, it was more important to Saul to be baptized than it was to eat.**

5.4 Lydia

Read Acts 16:13-15 which tells the story of the conversion of Lydia. Notice that she responded to Paul's message and was baptized. She then invited Paul and his companions to stay at her house. **Again, sequence and immediacy.**

5.5 Philippian Jailer

Read Acts 16:22-34, which tells the story of the conversion of the jailer in Phillipi, where Paul and Silas were being held in jail. Notice especially in verses 31 to 34 the sequence of events: Paul explained the gospel, the jailer washed Paul's wounds, Paul baptized him, then they went to his house for a meal. **Again emphasize importance. Note that his whole household believed (v. 34) and was baptized (v. 33). There is no basis for household baptism based on belief of the head of the household.**

From all these examples, and many others we could look at, we get a pattern of people believing on Jesus as their Savior and almost immediately being baptized. So we see again that baptism is a physical public act which proclaims an inner spiritual reality.

14. Understanding Baptism

6.0 The Teaching of the Apostles

As we move into the epistles, we see Paul teaching about baptism, explaining its symbolism. In Romans 6, Paul teaches about our union with Christ; that as believers, we are one with Him; He lives in us, we live by His power. He uses baptism to illustrate this truth in verses 3 and 4. Read these verses and fill in the blanks.

3Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Paul here uses baptism (going down into the water and coming up out of it) as a picture of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. This becomes symbolic of our oneness with Christ and publically identifies us with Him. It also proclaims our obedience to Him

Now read Galatians 3:26-28. In this passage, Paul uses the picture of baptism to show that all believers are baptized into Christ, and that our racial and ethnic backgrounds have no bearing on our relationship with God. Our unity in Christ, as symbolized by all having been baptized, is greater than any worldly differences we might have.

7.0 Common Questions

1. Do I have to be baptized to go to heaven? No, baptism is not what saves us. The thief on the cross who believed in Jesus was promised that he would be in Paradise with Jesus that very day, and he certainly did not have time to be baptized (Luke 23:39-43)! Salvation is by grace through faith alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). But baptism is an important step of obedience, and to follow the Biblical pattern, should be done as soon as possible after conversion.
2. Should infants be baptized? There is no place in the New Testament where an infant is baptized. Baptism is a symbolic act showing that a person has repented of sin and trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. An infant cannot do this. Some churches, however, baptize infants as a symbol of their being part of the covenant community of the church.
3. I was baptized as an infant or young child, now I have come to real faith in Christ as an adult. Should I be baptized again? Yes, your first baptism was not symbolic of genuine faith. Now that you have a real and personal faith you should proclaim it by being baptized.

Be prepared for other possible questions,

Is sprinkling OK? (some churches do it, but it lacks the symbolism of death, burial, and resurrection.)

What about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit? (All believers are baptized - immersed - into the Body of Christ upon conversion, see 1 Corinthians 12:13. This is something He does, not us. It is true of all believers and is not necessarily accompanied by outward signs.)