



MPI PUBLISHING

DISCIPLES THAT MAKE DISCIPLES

TWELVE LESSONS IN BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP

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Disciples That Make Disciples: Twelve Lessons in Biblical Leadership.

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Printed in the United States of America.

Published by Metro Praise International Publishing,
Chicago, IL.

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DEDICATION

“To Jesus, may your kingdom come and your will be done on the earth as it is in heaven.”

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INTRODUCTION

Now is the Time

Welcome to the discipleship revolution! Here is where we make our stand, and now is the time we fight for the spiritual freedom of our nation and the nations of the world. This book is meant to be a manual to teach you how to be a true follower and disciple of Jesus Christ. It is designed to teach you how to give your whole life to Jesus so that you will be able to say with all your heart, both now and forever, "I am a disciple of Jesus!" Do not wait or hesitate. Now is the time to forsake all and follow Him.

Today, in the United States, we are watching the armies of darkness attempt to bring death to the Christian church and destroy the validity of the Bible and the truths it presents. We have watched metal detectors replace prayer in schools. We have witnessed godlessness and pride lead to the slaughter of millions of unborn children in abortion clinics. We have seen the mass media present fundamental Christianity as a promoter of hate speech and intolerance while the "wisdom of this age" has resulted in more depression, suicide, violence, and broken families than has ever been seen before in our country. The youth of our nation have traded the Christian values of their grandparents for the idolatrous beliefs of pop singers, talk show hosts, and reality stars. Not to mention, sins that used to be hidden are now out of the closet, while the church has been forced into the closet and told to remain silent or face public ridicule.

We need God to change our lives, families, communities, cities, and nation. God's method of change is to use people, like you and me, who will be born again and be Jesus' disciples. Disciples are committed followers and students of Jesus Christ who practice His teachings and go out to preach the gospel to the entire world. True discipleship is the only hope for this wicked and sinful generation. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus gave

His disciples His plan to change the world. He declared, “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, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*” Do you want to be a disciple who makes new disciples?

The Call to Discipleship

To be a disciple means to be a committed follower and student of Jesus Christ who makes new disciples. It is not enough to just “believe” in Jesus with a shallow affirmation, like checking off “Christian” on a religious survey. You must be born again and transformed to live like Jesus by keeping all of His commands. Certainly, salvation is by “faith alone” (Ephesians 2:8). However, the saving faith that God requires is a faith infused with a willingness to obey all of God’s commands. If someone claims to be born of God yet lives without keeping His commands, he is a liar. John clearly wrote in 1 John 2:3-6,

“3 We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. 4 Whoever says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. 5 But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.”

Jesus’ commands are neither hard nor burdensome. They are a joy to the soul because they fulfill every need we have (1 John 5:1-3). As a result, the Bible teaches that demons are wiser than many so-called comprising “Christians” because they not only believe in God, they also tremble (James 2:19-20). Many of these same Christians lack the fear of God and keep willfully sinning and being disobedient. They think God’s grace will cover their immense spiritual laziness and rebellion. However, the author of Hebrews wrote in Hebrews 10:26-27, “26 *If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no*

sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God."

Therefore, faith without works is dead (James 2:26). True biblical faith in Jesus will always result in a total transformation of one's life. If a person is truly born again, as Jesus taught in John 3:3, he will automatically desire to spend the rest of his life committed to obeying all of His commands and making new disciples. If, however, someone claims to be born again and continues to deliberately break Jesus' commands without genuine repentance, his belief is more like "make believe" because he has neither the biblical evidence of his salvation (a new life) nor the fruit of a life engrafted into Jesus (obedience to all of God's commands with the fruit of the Spirit). And yes, making new disciples is just as much of a command that Jesus expects us to follow as the command, "*Thou shalt not steal*" (Exodus 20:15).

Consider that the word "Christian" is only mentioned three times in the Bible. The word "believer" is mentioned around 26 times. The Greek word "disciple" ("*mathētēs*"), however, is found over 250 times! This choice of words makes it clear how Jesus wants us to identify ourselves. He wants us to be His disciples. From the very start of Jesus' ministry, He set out to make twelve disciples who would live like Him and follow all of His teachings. After three years of intensive training, He told them to do the very same thing for others as He had done with them. They were commanded to go out and make new disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). Therefore, all "true" Christians and believers in Jesus are dedicated disciples through and through.

If Jesus, God in the flesh, perfect in all knowledge and obedient to the Father in everything, could have chosen a million different methods to change the world but only chose one, discipleship; how important do you think discipleship should be to you and me? Every aspect of Jesus' three years of ministry revolved around this principle. Making disciples should be the clear method chosen and embraced by the church to change the world.

Consumers vs. Disciples

Jesus did not say, "Go and make church members" or "Go and make believers." He said, "Go and make disciples." When we are saved by grace, through faith, we are rightly called "believers." When we identify our system of beliefs with the teachings of Christ (the Anointed One), we are then rightly called "Christians." However, we are only rightly called Jesus' "disciples" when we live like Him and obey all His commands. To make this point crystal clear, Jesus said in John 14:15, "*If you love me, keep my commands.*" So, biblically speaking, there is no other way to truly love Jesus except to be His obedient disciple.

Today, many people in the church are not Jesus' obedient disciples but, instead, are "make believers" and "consumer Christians." Consumer Christians want the best deal at the best price. They pick churches that tickle their ears and suit their selfish desires, quit good churches whenever things get uncomfortable, and join the church with the least requirements (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Disciples, however, are in the Kingdom of God for the long haul. They are willing to do whatever it takes to see the Kingdom of heaven invade the kingdoms of this earth. Below are some helpful comparisons between being a "consumer Christian" and a "dedicated disciple" of Christ:

- Consumers only give their free time to sports and entertainment, while disciples give their free time to spiritual growth and ministry.
- Consumers only want the American dream, while disciples want the spiritual dreams of God to change the world.
- Consumers only desire comfort in this life, while disciples willingly sacrifice their comfortable lives to see lives changed by the power of God.

- Consumers want to be loved and accepted by the world, while disciples are rejected by it.
- Consumers want to be thought of as reasonable and considerate with those who differ with them, while disciples are persecuted and often times called “extremists,” “intolerant,” and “troublemakers.”
- Consumers only live for the praise of people, while disciples live only for the praise of God, their Father.
- Consumers only give to Jesus when it is convenient and stop when the call brings any discomfort, while disciples embrace the call to serve God and give their all to Jesus.
- Consumers are consumed with their wants, needs, families, problems, and dreams, while disciples are all-consumed with God’s heart, look to other’s hurts and needs, and help solve other people’s problems.
- Consumers spend their lives for their own selfish gain, while disciples spend their lives for the Kingdom of God.

After reading the comparisons, is it any wonder we fail to change the world like Jesus and the first disciples did when today’s church is full of consumers?

The Statistics and Stories Don’t Lie

George Barna, a well-known Christian researcher, has spent years studying the decay of the modern church in the U.S., along with being a strong proponent of returning to biblical discipleship. Here are some of his shocking statistics concerning the state of the church found in his book *“Think Like Jesus.”*

- Only 2% of young adults in the church have a “Christian Worldview.” In other words, 98% of young people in the U.S. don’t believe the Bible is true concerning six core Christian doctrines like, “Jesus is God in the flesh.”
- Only 14% of all Christians believe the Bible teaches absolute moral truth and is relevant to their everyday lives.
- Only 23% of U.S. churchgoers attend small groups during the week.
- Only 29% of Christians volunteer one hour outside of the church service a week.
- Only 30% of churchgoers believe there is a major difference between the Quran, the Book of Mormon, and the Bible.
- Over 32% of Christians are divorced, compared to 33% outside the church (almost the exact same amount).
- Over 53% of all Christians do not believe homosexuality is a sin.
- Over 60% of all Christians believe that as long as a person does good things in life, he can go to heaven.
- Over 70% of young adults raised in church do not attend church every week.
- Over 78% of all Christians do not believe the devil is a real person. They believe Satan is just a “bad force.”

The data may be heartbreaking concerning those in the pew, but it is only a symptom of the greater sickness in the pulpit. If the head is sick, so is the whole body. And, if the shepherds

don't care for the sheep, God will judge them and remove them from the fold (Ezekiel 34). Here is a short list of some headlines in the past couple of years regarding sin in church leadership:

- "Pastor caught doing drugs and paying for sex with a homosexual prostitute..."
- "Pastor found dead in hotel from suspected drug overdose..."
- "Bishop's wife files for divorce after sex scandal involving three young men in the church..."
- "Bible college president forced to resign after allegations of stealing money..."
- "Local pastor comes out of the closet with the support of wife and congregation..."
- "Pastor is arrested and sentenced to twelve years in jail for having sex with a teenager in the church."

May God have mercy on these sinful leaders! How much more destruction to God's people must you watch until you decide to be a solution to the problem? Jesus said in 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."* Decide, today, not to be another sad statistic or story. Be a disciple of Jesus Christ and change the world by the power of the Holy Spirit!

Only One Way to Serve God

Today, let God's Word regarding discipleship challenge you to confess your faith in Jesus as the Lord of your life (Romans 10:9), repent of all your sins (Acts 2:38), be filled with the Holy

Spirit (Acts 2:38), and be an obedient disciple of Jesus Christ (John 8:31)! As you read this book you will be trained to be a true disciple of Jesus for the rest of your life. So stop making excuses. Don't compare yourself with others. Start talking, acting, and living like Jesus.

When Jesus walked the earth, He didn't offer two ways to follow Him – your way or His way. He didn't say to His first disciples, "There is 'Option 1' for the lukewarm and Sunday morning only follower; then, for those who wish to go deeper, there is 'Option 2,' and they have to obey all I commanded."

Jesus didn't come to barter with you like a person shopping in an outdoor market. He didn't say, "I'll give you a good life if you give me everything you have," so you can say, "Wow, that's a bit much to ask, Jesus. Plus, I really don't need all those extra blessings in the Bible, anyway. How about I give you half of everything I have and you give me a decent life and some rewards in heaven?" God forbid! Jesus' teachings can only be summed up in the phrase, "It's His way or the highway!" And, "Jesus is either Lord of all or not Lord at all!"

Below is a brief description of Jesus' uncompromising, discipleship-based teachings. Prayerfully read them and consider what they mean.

- 1. JESUS MUST BE YOUR NUMBER ONE LOVE:** Luke 14:25-27, *"25 Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: 26 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes, even their own life – such a person cannot be my disciple. 27 And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.'"*
- 2. DECIDE TO LOSE YOUR LIFE:** Matthew 16:24-26, *"24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?'"*

3. DISCIPLES LEAVE EVERYTHING BEHIND: Mark 10:21-31, “21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. ‘One thing you lack,’ he said. ‘Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’ 22 At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. 23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, ‘How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!’ 24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, ‘Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.’ 26 The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, ‘Who then can be saved?’

27 Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.’ 28 Then Peter spoke up, ‘We have left everything to follow you!’ 29 ‘Truly I tell you,’ Jesus replied, ‘no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields – along with persecutions – and in the age to come eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first.’”

4. FORSAKE ALL FOR THE CALL: Luke 9:57-62, “57 As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’ 58 Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.’ 59 He said to another man, ‘Follow me.’ But he replied, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’ 60 Jesus said to him, ‘Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.’ 61 Still another said, ‘I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.’ 62 Jesus replied, ‘No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.’”

In response to these powerful teachings of Jesus decide, right now, that you will let God take over your life and make you the disciple He wants you to be. Remove the line you may have drawn between going to church and being the church. Dismiss

the idea that only a few will preach or only the “super Christians” will witness or only the first disciples could do miracles. Start believing what Jesus said you can do and start being who Jesus said you can be!

You have been chosen, just like the first disciples Jesus picked 2,000 years ago. They were not any different than you. They could not do it by themselves. They had to totally rely on the power of God and so will you. Sure, you may make mistakes, so did Peter, James, and John, but you will learn like they did, that Jesus has both the power of salvation and transformation. Remember, you are saved by God’s power, made a disciple by His power, and you are to live your life with purpose by His power. It is all about trusting and believing that God knows what He is doing and will do what He said He would do (Philippians 4:13). When you decide to be a disciple of Jesus, you will experience the power of God in ways you never thought possible. You will see others changed by the same power of God that is working in you. Get ready to launch out of your “natural” and into His “supernatural!”

Inspirational Prayer

Are you ready to get started? Pray this out loud,

“Father, I come in the name of Jesus thanking you for the cross and for forgiving me of all my sins. I accept your free gift of salvation and receive the infilling of the Holy Spirit. I now pray that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead would give me the power to live and do all you commanded. I ask that you take away all my compromise, sin, and fleshly comfort so I can please you in all I do. I humbly ask you to set my life on fire so the world can watch me burn with the Holy Spirit.

I don’t ever want to be the same again. I want to live as your child and a disciple of Jesus Christ. Start right here and right now in my life. Transform every part of me. I dedicate my entire life to you and your Kingdom. Empower me to practice and preach your teachings, to function in the anointing of the

Spirit, to tear down satanic strongholds, and to build your Kingdom.

Thank you for saving me and calling me into your work. By your strength, I declare I will see this world changed – starting with me. By your grace I will not give up, back down, or compromise. Like Peter, I have nowhere else to go but with you. I proclaim for all to hear, I am your disciple! In Jesus' name I pray all this, Amen."

Prayerfully Meditate and Memorize

At the end of every chapter you will be given a passage of Scripture to prayerfully meditate on and memorize. For the introduction please consider the passage below.

Hebrews 12:1-2, "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 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The Basics

This book is written in three main sections: *Section 1, "Disciples Are,"* teaches what should be found in every disciple's spiritual life. *Section 2, "Disciples Possess,"* teaches what habits a disciple should have in their everyday life. *Section 3, "Disciples Do,"* teaches the things that a disciple should do in their life for God's Kingdom.

To get the most out of this book it is recommended that you first go through the book, *"Welcome to Your New Life,"* by Joe Wyrostek, so that you can have confidence that you have been born again, filled with the Holy Spirit (with the evidence of speaking in other tongues), and have a healthy walk with God. This book assumes you are already born again, solid in your faith, and are Spirit-filled.

Second, go one lesson at a time with your Bible and read all the Scriptures mentioned in the (brackets) or mentioned in the sections; Example, (John 3:16). Third, answer all the questions, honestly, on a separate piece of paper and allow God to show you your strengths and weaknesses. Fourth, try to keep a prayer journal and write out your prayers and testimonies everyday (or a minimum of once a week) so that you will be able to see your progress and God's power working in your life.

Fifth, make time each day to pray for an hour and seek God's face. Worship Him for who He is and fall in love with Him over and over again. Sixth, find an accountability partner of the same gender who you can meet with each week to: (a) Discuss your walk with God, (b) Pray together to overcome weaknesses, sins, and setbacks, (c) Share testimonies to encourage each another, and (d) Do ministry together, like witnessing or helping in church.

Seventh, consider making a commitment to watch less TV, avoid perverse music and movies, and limit your time on

the Internet. Eighth, keep track of what you're doing in your free time to see if you can make more time for God and for serving in church. Ninth, memorize a passage of Scripture per lesson and recite it to others. Remember, everything in life is like a "bank." You can only get out what you put in! Last, ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with His power at all times because without God it is impossible to be Jesus' disciple (Matthew 19:26).

Easy to Remember List

1. Make sure you are a committed Christian with a firm foundation. If you haven't already, consider going through the book, *"Welcome to Your New Life,"* by Joe Wyrstek.
2. Do one lesson per week and read all the verses in the (brackets) and in the sections; Example, (John 3:16).
3. In a separate notebook, answer the questions at the end of each lesson.
4. Keep a daily or weekly prayer journal, like a diary between you and God.
5. Try to spend one hour a day in prayer and worship unto God.
6. Find an accountability partner to meet with weekly or monthly to share your spiritual growth.
7. Cut out things in your life you don't need like TV, movies, negative music, etc., to focus more on God.
8. Keep track of your free time so you can give more of your life to God and the church.

9. Memorize and meditate on the passage of Scripture at the end of each lesson and recite it to others.
10. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with His power and ability at all times.

Seven Heart Revealing Questions

Before you start this life-transforming journey of spiritual growth and discipleship, please ask yourself the following questions and answer them in your journal.

1. Do I really desire God to change me 100% from the inside out?
2. Am I willing to grow, even if it gets uncomfortable and costs me everything?
3. Will I stop all excuse making, complaining, and simply go to God in prayer if I feel burdened?
4. Am I committed to finishing this book by completing all twelve lessons in twelve consecutive weeks?
5. Do I really love God more than my job, my family, and even my own life?
6. Have I truly counted the cost to be a disciple of Christ?
7. Do I really believe biblical discipleship is the only way to follow Jesus?

If you answered “Yes” to all these questions you are ready, by God’s grace, to start this journey. If you answered “No” to any of these questions, please go back to the introduction and re-read the verses given in the section, “*Only One Way to Serve God,*” and do not continue in this book until you are fully

convinced by the very Word of God that discipleship is a must. God is fully able to complete what He has started in your life (Philippians 1:6).

For all those ready to move forward with faith in the power of God through the Holy Spirit, let us remember the words Jesus spoke to His disciples, in Luke 9:62, *“No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”* And, Matthew 19:26, *“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”* Let our journey begin!

SECTION ONE: *Disciples ARE*

The first section of the book describes four things that disciples are spiritually. This is who a disciple is in his character.

Disciples are free from all sin and bondage, holy and set apart unto God, humble to serve, and anointed by the Holy Spirit to do the works of Jesus.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:14, "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden."

LESSON 1

Disciples Are Free

FREEDOM!

Disciples need to be free to bring freedom to others. If the devil cannot stop you from following Jesus, the next thing he will try to do is to steal your purpose. The number one way the devil will try to destroy your destiny is to keep you in some type of sin, emotional distress, unforgiveness, addiction, fear, bitterness or try to keep you living in the past (John 10:10).

By keeping you chained to your sin or weakness, the devil can stop you from fighting and keep you from helping others. No matter whom you are, if you are not careful the devil can come and try to put you into bondage. Just like a police officer can put someone in handcuffs and stop them from going somewhere, the devil can come and try to arrest your spiritual calling, stopping you from advancing the Kingdom of God.

This is why Jesus said He was anointed. Jesus came to set the prisoners free. It doesn't matter how big the sin might be or how long the addiction has been in someone's life, when Jesus comes He will set you totally free! Jesus boldly declared in Luke 4:18-19, *"18 The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

Be Honest

Please take a moment to really examine your life by answering the following heart-revealing questions.

1. Is there anything in your life that the devil can use as a foothold against you as mentioned in Ephesians 4:27-5:20?
2. Are you repenting for the same sin over and over again but not experiencing a transformation of heart and mind?
3. Are you holding a grudge of unforgiveness toward someone who has hurt you?
4. Do you have a bad habit in your life that you cannot quit no matter how many times you have tried?
5. Do you have a recurring fear that overwhelms you and makes you powerless?
6. Have things in your past caused you to currently struggle with low self-esteem, lack of trust, or emotional hurt?
7. Do you always find yourself “walking away” from church and real mentorship because you make excuses to compromise and take the easy way out?

If you answered “Yes” to any of these questions, you need to be set free by the power of God and experience total freedom in your life today. Praise God, because Jesus wants to set you free right now!

Jesus, Break These Chains

Now ask yourself this final question, “*Do I really want to be free?*” Be honest with yourself and sincerely make up your mind once and for all. Are you tired of running from the devil in an area of your life? Have you had enough of the devil’s lies and deceptions? Are you fed up with the same old issues coming up over and over again? In other words, “Are you sick and tired of being sick and tired?” If you are ready, now is the time. Jesus will set you free today! Take a moment to read what

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 and prepare to wage war with the devil and win.

“3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.”

The weapons you are going to use against the devil have divine power to demolish the strongholds you face. Your three main weapons are prayer, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit. Begin to use these weapons right now. Take some time to read the following prayer and apply your faith to God’s Word. Spend as much time as you need in prayer and use the power of God to destroy your strongholds. Get some trusted leaders in the church to pray with, and for you, so that your fight against the devil is not alone.

“Father, I come to you in the name of Jesus and ask you to set me free. I repent of all the sins I have committed that have brought these bondages upon me (Pray and confess each sin and bondage). I stand on your Word which says, ‘I am a new creation in Christ.’ I believe that ‘Who the Son sets free is free indeed.’ I rebuke the power of Satan that has come against me, and I declare that I am free from the prison of his bondage. (Rebuke the devil specifically in the areas where you have been bound and cursed.)

I declare today is a new day. I am a new creation, and I will live in total freedom! I am more than a conqueror. I am a blessed child of God. Satan, you are defeated, and I place you under my feet in the Name of Jesus. Go and never come back!

Holy Spirit, I welcome you into my life to fill my entire being with the power of God. I hunger and thirst for you. Fill my whole body, soul, and spirit with the sanctifying presence of Jesus. I boldly confess, ‘I am free from all sin and bondage in Jesus name!’ Amen.” (Begin to praise God and declare your freedom until you know that you have received all that you have asked.)

Starting today, fully trust and believe that what Jesus said in John 8:36 applies to you in each and every part of your life. *“If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”* You are free!

The Battle for Your Mind

Moving forward, to live and stay free you must understand that the battle of sin and bondage will be fought in your mind in the form of negative thoughts and temptations. Consequently, the mind is the battlefield you will have to fight every day if you want to maintain the freedom Jesus has given you (Romans 12:1-2). Remember, once a person is free they are totally free. So the battle is not to get free, but to stay free.

According to 1 Thessalonians 5:23, you are a three-part being: body, soul, and spirit. Your soul is made of three parts: the mind, the will, and the emotions. Since your spirit is born again and is with the Holy Spirit, the devil knows he cannot defeat you there. This means he cannot “steal” your salvation and new nature (Romans 8:37-39). So he will try to attack your soul (mind, will, and emotions) with his temptations and lies.

He will attack the center of your soul (your mind and thoughts) with “stinking thinking.” However, Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10:5, *“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”* Therefore, no temptation can stand against the Word of God!

Every Christian will experience the battle of the mind as long as they live. Satan even attacked Jesus in this way. Let us look to Jesus as our example of how to defeat the daily attacks the devil brings against us. Luke 4:1-12 records the story of Jesus’ time of temptation with the devil.

“1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

3 The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.' 4 Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Man shall not live on bread alone."' "

5 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And he said to him, 'I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7 If you worship me, it will all be yours.' 8 Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only."' "

9 The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down from here. 10 For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; 11 they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."' "

12 Jesus answered, 'It is said: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."' 13 When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time."

Hallelujah! Jesus defeated the devil by quoting the Word of God, "It is written!" He didn't have a secret weapon or special trick that only He could use. Jesus used the same Word of God you have in your Bible today. The best and only way to defeat the attacks of the devil in your mind is to use the Word of God as a weapon against his lies.

In Ephesians 6:17, Paul even called the Word of God, "The sword of the Spirit." On one hand, it is true we will have to face the devil in daily battles over what our mind believes and what it produces as actions. On the other hand, it is also true we have the all-powerful sword of the Spirit that is able to cast down and destroy all the attacks of the devil.

The Mind of Christ

Paul declared in 1 Corinthians 2:16 that because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, "...we have the mind of Christ." Then he commanded us in Colossians 3:1-2, "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.” Our faith and obedience to the truth of God will determine our victory. If we disbelieve that our minds have been changed, we will continue to live in a sinful pattern of thinking. However, if we believe we are who Jesus said we are and can do what He said we can do, we will experience total freedom from sin in this world.

For more encouragement, if you believe and do what God commands, consider the following passages that will affirm your victory and prove that your present mind belongs to Jesus, (Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 2:5; & Romans 8:5-9).

The devil can only have a stronghold in your life if you allow him into your mind and believe his lies. So, don't let sin have control over your life. Fight temptation in your mind with the Word of God and win every time (1 Corinthians 10:13). Don't let shame or fears have control of your life. Resist them. Learn to fight thoughts and temptations with the Word of God and you will live in total freedom everyday!

Review Questions

1. In what areas of your life do you need to receive freedom?
2. Do you really want to be free from all sin and bondage?
3. What are the three main weapons you have against the strongholds of the devil?
4. How can you receive freedom from your sin and bondage?
5. What does the Bible teach you to do to remain free from all sin?

Prayerfully Meditate and Memorize

Philippians 4:8, "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things."

LESSON 2

Disciples Are Holy

Be Holy

The word “holy” means to be “set apart and pure.” Both the Old and New Testaments teach that God is holy. The book of Revelation teaches that there are angels who fly around the throne of God declaring His holiness. Read the description of God’s holiness in Revelation 4:8-11,

“8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.’ 9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

11 ‘You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.’”

When Jesus came to earth He walked in perfect holiness. He lived a life separate from the sinful world. Jesus taught His disciples to come out from the world and live like Him. For you to truly be the disciple Jesus wants you to be, you must desire to live holy like Him (2 Corinthians 6:17). Peter also outlined the seriousness of living holy in 1 Peter 1:13-17.

“13 Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. 14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in

ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'

17 Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear."

Holiness is not just following "rules," it is being who God made you to be. Certainly, God's commandments are to be obeyed, but the heart of keeping His commands should come from wanting to be like God in your character, thoughts, and deeds. Jesus said to be (right now in the present) perfect like your Father in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:48).

Why did Jesus say we must be perfect like God, the Father? God's plan was not only for us to be saved from our sins, but to also be sanctified from our sins. Jesus told us to be perfect because in sanctification He made us perfect. Sanctification means, "to be made holy and perfect." Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 that when we are saved, we are also washed, sanctified, and justified.

"9 Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

11 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."

God is aware of man's fallen, sinful nature, because this is the very reason He sent His Son, Jesus, as a sacrifice. Jesus came to give us a new holy nature. Jesus' sacrifice wasn't only a means of offering mankind forgiveness for sin but also cleansing us from all sin. If this were not true, how could we be perfect like our Father is perfect? Therefore, Jesus' death was not only a means of offering salvation, but sanctification as well.

You probably didn't know that when you asked Jesus to forgive your sins that you were not only forgiven of sin but

were set free from the power of sin. The power of sin was broken in your life and the presence of sin was totally removed. Therefore, because you are in Christ, God no longer sees your sins but sees Jesus and His righteousness. And, it is through the righteousness of Jesus that you are able to be perfect and live a holy life free from sin. Now that's good news! Paul declared in 2 Corinthians 5:21, *"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*

The Beauty of Holiness

Now that you have learned that God is holy, and because of Jesus' death on the cross you have been made holy, I would like to teach you how to live holy. The Bible declares that when we live holy before God, it is worship unto Him. David said in Psalm 29:2, *"Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness."*

Remember, being holy is not about your good works. You cannot make yourself holy. Only through the blood of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit can you be made holy. As a result, when you were saved, you were made holy by the grace of God- not by good works. The part you now play is to choose holiness every day and to allow God to give you the power to do good works.

Many people have fallen into condemnation, which is a trap of the devil. Condemnation means, "to put yourself down by doubting God's grace," (Romans 8:1-2). Satan will either try to make you feel like you are not good enough to please God or, every time you sin he will say you are worthless and unable to change. But the devil is a liar (John 8:44)!

When we choose not to live holy and operate in God's power we will fall, but there is grace and forgiveness for our sins if we truly repent. God's grace is not an excuse to keep on sinning, but it gives us confidence in knowing that if we do sin, we are covered. Therefore, your heart should always want to please God and live holy because you were made holy; but, if you do sin, you can have full assurance that when you repent, the blood of Jesus will always wash you white as snow.

Prayerfully consider the following words of John that describe the life of holiness in 1 John 2:1-6,

“1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

3 We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. 4 Whoever says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. 5 But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.”

Three Ways to Live Holy

1. See the Person, Not Just the Rules

One of the keys to living holy is to always remember, “Holiness is about being like Jesus, a real person, not just following rules.” For example, if one Sunday morning I was absent from church but put a slide on the screen that read, “Joe says, ‘Please be seated at 11am, and don’t talk or move around.’” What do you think people would do?

Our service generally starts at 10 a.m., so the people would probably talk a little and ask the leaders what the message meant. If the leaders hadn’t heard from me, they would most likely say, “Well, let’s start service at 10:00, and if he is not here by 11:00, let’s just sit and wait like the screen says.”

Now, what if they have a time of praise and worship and at 11 a.m., I’m still not there? The leaders might say, “We’re sorry about the confusion, but Joe left a sign that said we should be seated at 11 a.m. and remain quiet. Let’s follow his instruction until he comes.”

How long do you think the people would remain quiet and seated without me being there? Five minutes, maybe 10? Why? The congregation would only see my “rules” and not “me,” the person.

Now think about every Sunday morning when I am at church, after we have had praise and worship and announcements, I begin to preach by asking the people not to move around or talk. Why is it they can sit there for another 60 minutes without any trouble? Because the difference between the two scenarios is that a person is present, which is why they can sit and follow the rules.

Now apply this example to our life of holiness. If all you see are the “rules” of the Bible, “Do not steal,” “Do not commit murder,” etc., then you are missing the point. I didn’t stop stealing just because of the “rules” that Moses was given by God. I stopped stealing because I know Jesus, the Law Giver, is always with me.

I see Jesus, first. Second, I see the rules He gave. Third, I keep the rules because I love Jesus. Simple. I am aware at all times that the God of the universe is living in me. I choose to follow Him because I know when I sin it is not just “breaking a rule.” It is breaking His heart. I have fallen in love with a person, Jesus Christ, not just a set of rules. I want to be like my Father in heaven. In order for you to see the joy in living holy, you must look past the laws and see the Law Giver. Let your love for God be your motivation to live holy like Him!

Likewise, someone who is holy is not just a person who does not lie, cheat, or steal. It is a person who is totally in love with God and wants every part of his or her life to reflect the perfect nature of who Jesus is. In John 14:15, Jesus said, *“If you love me, keep my commands.”* Notice that Jesus taught His disciples to first love Him. By loving Him they would keep His commandments. When you truly love Jesus you will keep His commands. Then you will love and understand His laws and rules because you have first fallen in love with Him.

Another example is to think about the difference between speeding after seeing a speed limit sign, versus speeding after seeing a state trooper. What’s the difference? A person! Now

consider Jesus, “the Law Giver,” is in your life everywhere you go. How much would you speed if the state trooper was in your car at all times?

Remember, when you do not follow God’s laws your real problem is not with “sin” but with “love,” because those who really love Him obey Him. So, if you find yourself struggling with sin and having a bad attitude toward serving God, check your heart because you have probably lost your first love and have started to become “religious.” Being “religious,” in a negative sense, means simply following a certain religion’s “guidelines and beliefs.” However, being religious doesn’t make you holy. Loving Jesus with all your heart in a vibrant relationship does.

Last, consider again these powerful words of John found in 1 John 2:3-6,

“3 We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. 4 Whoever says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. 5 But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.”

2. Live With a Healthy Fear of God

The Bible teaches in Proverbs 14:27, *“The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, turning a person from the snares of death.”* The “fear of the Lord” means to have terror and dread concerning facing God in judgment. You might have been told that the “fear of the Lord” just meant respect for God, as a Father, or to be mindful of His great power. Though both of these definitions have some truth, the writer of Proverbs is not just saying, “Think about God as a disciplinarian.” He is literally saying, “You better have terror and fear about facing God on Judgment Day if you’re not living right because hell is real!”

I believe today, in the American church, we have many people who think about God more as “Mr. Rogers” than the

“All Powerful Creator of the Universe” who is going to judge the world in righteousness. Yes, Jesus loves us, and yes, the Bible teaches, “God is love” (1 John 4:8). However, angels do not fly around His throne saying, “God loves everybody. God loves everybody.” The angels fly around the throne of God proclaiming, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty!” We need to respond in the same way and cry out to Him, “You are Holy!”

The foundation of God’s character is holiness. His love comes from His holiness, without which, love would be just a feeling or emotion. Holiness gives boundaries to God’s love. God’s love will not excuse sinners on Judgment Day. His holiness will demand justice and eternal punishment in hellfire.

God’s love will not welcome Satan back into His Kingdom because God’s holiness demands vengeance and everlasting damnation to Satan, along with all of his fallen angels. Brothers and sisters, we need a healthy fear of God, again, both in our churches and in our lives. Disciples have a fear of God, which reminds them of the consequences of turning from God, going back to the world, and suffering God’s wrath.

In Philippians 2:12, the Bible teaches us to serve the Lord with *“fear and trembling.”* Also, Paul declared in 2 Corinthians 5:11, *“Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others.”* Additionally, throughout the book of Proverbs, the Bible teaches about the benefits of truly having a healthy fear of the Lord. Below are seven powerful Proverbs that clearly encourage all Christians to fear the Lord:

1. Proverbs 8:13, *“To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.”*
2. Proverbs 9:10, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”*
3. Proverbs 10:27, *“The fear of the Lord adds length to life, but the years of the wicked are cut short.”*

4. Proverbs 14:26, *“Whoever fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for their children it will be a refuge.”*
5. Proverbs 15:16, *“Better a little with the fear of the Lord than great wealth with turmoil.”*
6. Proverbs 19:23, *“The fear of the Lord leads to life; then one rests content, untouched by trouble.”*
7. Proverbs 23:17, *“Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the Lord.”*

Take some time, today, in prayer and ask the Lord to give you a healthy fear of who He is. Certainly, God is your Father who loves and accepts you, but He is also your Creator and Judge who has not given you suggestions for a better life but commandments He wants you to fully obey! Consider the following passage found in Hebrews 10:26-31 regarding the nature of God’s judgment on those who continue in sin. It will encourage you to have a healthy fear of the Lord.

“26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. 28 Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

29 How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ and again, ‘The Lord will judge his people.’

31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

3. Daily Ask God to Develop the Fruit of the Spirit in Your Life

A great way to start your day is by asking God to transform your habits by developing, in you, the fruit of His Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is the nine manifestations of God's perfect character. Think of an orange, for example, which is one fruit divided into different sections. The fruit of the Spirit is similar, one fruit with many different parts. In Galatians 5:22-23, Paul teaches what the nine distinctions of the fruit are.

"22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

Start, today, by praying and asking God to develop each characteristic of the Spirit in your life. Go through each one and allow God to teach you what must change in your life for you to look and act more like Him. Pray through the following nine aspects of the Spirit with the suggested confessions below:

- 1. LOVE:** *"God, I ask for your perfect love to be developed in my life today. Help me to love my enemies, to forgive those who hurt me, and to be a vessel of your love to the hurting. Empower me to love you with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love my neighbor as myself. No matter where I go today, help me to come and go in love."*
- 2. JOY:** *"God, I receive your joy, today, and declare that since you are with me I have the fullness of joy. I choose to rejoice in you always. Help me, by your Spirit, to not let the devil, this world, my problems, or other people take your joy from my life. I choose to be happy and full of joy because you are with me and you are always worth celebrating!"*
- 3. PEACE:** *"Father, I receive your peace, today, in the name of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ! I surrender control of my life into your hands. Because I trust in your plans for me, I can rest in your presence. I know you will keep my mind at peace when I keep my*

mind on you. Because of you, I am free from all worry, fear, and anxiety. I am at perfect peace in your loving arms."

- 4. FORBEARANCE (PATIENCE):** *"God, give me patience, today, to go through the hard times of life. Help me to be still and wait, knowing that you are in control. When I think I can do something faster, remind me that your ways are not my ways and that your calendar is not on my schedule. I will live in your strength knowing that whatever I face today is in your plan, and that you have made a way of escape that will come at the appointed time you have set."*
- 5. KINDNESS:** *"Father, teach me, today, to be kind and considerate of other people's feelings. Help me look past my own selfish desires and see the hurts and needs of others. May your Spirit give me compassion for the lost, understanding for the weak, patience for the insulting, and love for all. I choose to be kind instead of being rude or discourteous. Today, I want people to see you in me."*
- 6. GOODNESS:** *"God, I want to be good because you are always good. I want to do good things, today, because you always operate out of goodness. May your Spirit use me to show others your goodness. Let my words, actions, and thoughts be for the good to those to whom they are directed. I stand in your goodness, and by your Spirit, today I choose to walk in goodness."*
- 7. FAITHFULNESS:** *"Father, I want to be faithful. I don't just want to proclaim my love for you. I want to demonstrate my love for you by living a life faithful to you and your commandments. Empower me to be faithful to my friends, church, job, community and, most importantly, to you. Let my word be taken seriously to those I give it. Help me to fulfill every promise and commitment I make today. I accept your faithfulness and choose to live by it in every area of my life."*
- 8. GENTLENESS:** *"God, teach me to be humble and gentle like Jesus. Help me to lower myself so you can lift me up. Remind me of your saying in Matthew 23:11 "...the greatest among you will be*

the servant of all." Let your Spirit give me the strength to be a servant to all and to prefer others above myself. Help me to carry my cross and crucify my ways, wants, and needs. Help me to live for your glory, according to your ways, and to look to other's wants and needs. I declare, today, I will be gentle and meek by your Spirit. I will lower myself so Jesus can be lifted up."

- 9. SELF-CONTROL:** *"God, I give you control over my life so that you can free me from all bad habits, addictions, selfish attitudes, harmful thinking, and destructive behaviors. I choose, today, to allow your Spirit to guide all areas of my life. Have control over my time management, my work, my diet, my relationships, my hobbies, my money, my thought life, my entertainment, and my family. Jesus, take control. My life is yours. I will not make excuses for my lack of control. I give you control and declare by your Spirit, 'I will live life honoring you in all my ways!'"*

People Are Watching You

Now, by the power of the Spirit, go out into the world and show people how a true disciple lives. Show them your life. Show them that even though you make mistakes, you still desire to live like Jesus in all your ways. Display to the world the great love and holiness of our God in heaven. Help teach others that God is our Judge and that to fear Him is to truly know Him.

People are watching you. They want to see if a person can really be changed. Show them that by the Spirit of God, you are like Jesus and He has perfectly made you holy and righteous, capable of always doing what is right. People have already seen too many hypocrites and fakers in the church. Go out into the world and show them Jesus!

Review Questions

1. What does it mean to be “holy?” Discuss how “God is holy.”
2. What does the word “sanctified” mean, and when is a person sanctified?
3. Describe the phrase, “I can live holy, because Jesus made me holy.”
4. How can a person truly love keeping God’s commandments?
5. What is the proper definition of the “fear of the Lord?”
6. Name some Scriptures that teach the benefits of living with a healthy “fear of the Lord.”
7. Name and describe the nine manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit.
8. Describe two areas of your life that have been impacted by this lesson.

Prayerfully Meditate and Memorize

1 Peter 1:15-16, *“15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’”*

LESSON 3

Disciples Are Humble

The Kenosis

Though Jesus was fully God, and equal to the Father in all ways as the Second Person in the Trinity, He lowered Himself and became man. Thus, Jesus became the God-Man, 100% divine and 100% man. The term that is used to describe the lowering and humbling of our great Lord and Savior is the Greek word “*kenosis*” which means, “to make of no reputation and to empty one’s self.”

Jesus left His glorious place in heaven to come down to earth in the form of a man to become the Savior of the world. Take a moment to read and study Paul’s description of this great and powerful event in Philippians 2:5-11,

“5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, he made himself nothing (“kenosis”) by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

If Jesus, the Second Person of the God nature, the Bright and Morning Star, the Alpha and Omega could make Himself nothing and become a man who would die for the sins of the world, how much more should we, His disciples, learn to

humble ourselves and make life not about our selfish needs and desires?

Jesus became the greatest example of a servant when He left the worship of the angels in heaven and came to earth to die on a cross for the sins of the world. He displayed the highest degree of humility by becoming a man, subject to the natural laws of the human condition such as hunger, fatigue, and even death.

Jesus never made people feel that He was too good for them. He loved to serve people and be there for them in their times of need. Jesus showed great humility in His relationships with the twelve disciples. He was always patient and forgiving towards them, even when they betrayed Him. Jesus was a great leader by being a great servant. Consider the words of Jesus in Luke 22:24-27 regarding how every disciple should follow His example of being a servant.

"24 A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. 25 Jesus said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors.

26 But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. 27 For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.'"

Who's the Boss?

Today, in the church, many people have a difficult time submitting and serving the pastor and leadership God has placed over them. Over many years of ministry I have seen people come to the church, get saved, and within a couple of months try to teach the teacher how to run the church. Lord have mercy!

One of the hardest lessons I find that people have to learn is humility. I know, for me, it took time as well. I had to learn

the hard way in Bible college. When I first went to school I felt like I was the “best of the best.” I loved to pray, preach, witness, and study my Bible. I thought I was the perfect Bible school student and felt it should be their honor to have me in their program.

I was so convinced of this, in fact, that I felt it was my job to teach the professors (who had been in ministry over 25 years) how to do their jobs. One day, when I had corrected my professor who was in charge of jail ministry, he brought me before the Dean of Boys for correction and discipline. In that meeting I was told that if I did not repent and accept discipline, I would be expelled from the school. In pride I dropped out.

I went to my dorm, packed my clothes, and left to go home. The only problem was my mother, who had led me to the Lord just nine months earlier. She said she wouldn't let me quit that easily. She pleaded with me to do everything I could to get back into the school even if it meant begging.

Finally, by God's grace, at a gas station with my car all packed and nowhere to go, I truly humbled myself and heard the Lord speak to my heart. I believe He had been trying to talk to me for some time but, then, I was actually ready to listen. The Lord told me that He was the one who had brought me to the school and that the leader's discipline was all part of His perfect plan.

I went back, called the dean, repented, and begged him to let me back in. Thankfully he took me back and gave me another chance. Since that time, the Dean of Boys, has been a spiritual father and mentor to me. He has been on the board of our church, and I contact him all the time seeking his advice and counsel.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4:15, *“Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.”* Today, I have a loving spiritual father and great leader in my family's life because I humbled myself. For everyone reading this book, you need to do the same!

Even now I look back on that day with tears in my eyes, and thank God for the people who loved me enough to tell me I

was wrong and needed to change. My punishment was to clean the toilets, every day, until they said I had changed my attitude. I have never been the same.

Today, as a pastor, I see people leave one church and go to the next. They don't take time to listen to see if God is the one who is actually correcting and leading them. Read Peter's encouragement for all of us to be humble, and heed his warning against pride in 1 Peter 5:5-6,

"5 In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.' 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time."

Pray this simple prayer of humility, out loud, before proceeding so that your heart can be open to grow in this area of your life:

"Father, I come to you, today, and ask that you would make me humble like your Son, Jesus. Father, I pray that you will teach me how to listen to others and follow the spiritual leadership that you have placed in my life. Take away my pride and make me a disciple who serves others without being easily offended.

Transform my life by showing me the areas I might have become unteachable, lazy to serve, or unwilling to change. By your grace, daily mold me and shape me into the servant you want me to be. Help me not to be like the Pharisees who thought everyone else needed to be humble except them. Teach me to be the first to recognize my need for you, godly leadership, and discipline. I trust you as my Master. Lead me, and I will follow.

In Jesus' name, Amen."

Ten Lessons in Humility

Below is a list of ten verses with a brief lesson on humility for each one. It is my hope that at the end of this section, you will have a thorough grasp of what it means to walk in humility as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

LESSON ONE: Listen to godly advice.

Exodus 10:3, "So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, 'This is what the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, says: "How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, so that they may worship me."'"

This verse teaches the importance of listening to others who have a Word for us from the Lord. Pharaoh could have been spared if he would have listened to Moses but, since he was prideful, he lost much of Egypt's wealth, his son, and his own life. Sin and pride will cost you more than you will ever want to pay.

LESSON TWO: Don't quit when things don't go your way.

Deuteronomy 8:2, "Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands."

Sometimes God will allow trials and tests to come into our lives to humble us. Many times you may face difficult times and think the best way out is to run away, but God wants us to be humble and learn how to serve Him and keep His commands even when times are tough.

LESSON THREE: Always come to God in humility.

2 Chronicles 7:14, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and

turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

The first thing we must learn to do to receive answers to our prayers is to humble ourselves before God. We need to take off the "masks" that we put on and admit to God that, without Him, we are nothing. Also, before we can truly repent of sin, we have to be willing to admit we have sinned.

LESSON FOUR: Be quick to obey the Word of God.

2 Chronicles 34:27, "Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before God when you heard what he spoke against this place and its people, and because you humbled yourself before me and tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the Lord."

When King Josiah found the laws of God, he humbled himself and did all he could to make Judah pleasing to God. So, the Lord blessed Him and the nation. Whenever we hear the Word of God we must immediately respond with passion and total obedience.

LESSON FIVE: Seek humility and honor will follow.

Proverbs 29:23, "Pride brings a person low, but the lowly in spirit gain honor."

This verse declares that pride will bring people low. It will eventually bring total destruction, but the humble will gain honor. The best way to gain honor in the church and at your workplace is to learn how to be humble and not walk in pride. Pastors and employers love to honor people who can listen and follow directions.

LESSON SIX: To live with God, stay humble.

Isaiah 57:15, "For this is what the high and exalted One says – he who lives forever, whose name is holy: 'I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.'"

God says He will live with those who have a humble and lowly attitude. He also promises to bring life and strength to their spirits. What an awesome promise to the humble- to live everyday with God!

LESSON SEVEN: True greatness is given to humble people.

Matthew 18:4, "Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Here Jesus teaches His disciples that to be great in the kingdom of God, they must be humble like a child. Children have an easier time admitting they don't know everything. They are willing to be guided and helped. Plus, children love to learn new things. Humble yourself like a child. Learn to rely on God, as your Father, and be willing to learn from others in authority.

LESSON EIGHT: When you go down in humility you will go up in God's kingdom.

Matthew 23:12, "For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Jesus teaches that His kingdom is the opposite of the world's system. In His kingdom the way "up" is "down" and the way "down" is "up." This means that when people try to do things their way, God will bring them down to nothing; but, when they are willing to humble themselves and learn from God and others in authority, they will be lifted up and exalted.

LESSON NINE: Obey your leaders.

Hebrews 13:17 "Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you."

Here we learn that God has placed leaders in the church to be our teachers and mentors. Everyone is to submit to them so that they can enjoy their work unto God. Wherever God has placed you in the church, make sure you have a "spiritual covering" and submit to the leadership in place. Plus, obedience to godly leadership comes with great blessings. It's totally worth it.

LESSON TEN: Grace and favor abounds in the humble.

James 4:6, "But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.'"

The Bible teaches us that God will give grace and favor to those who humble themselves. For those who are proud, He will oppose them and not bless them. If God opposes you there is no one to rescue you. So, live with humility and receive all of God's goodness.

Five Practical Ways to Live Humble

As a disciple you must learn to walk in humility in all areas of your life. Maybe you will have a boss who mistreats you. You must choose to be humble even when your patience is being tested. At church you may feel you can do things better than others but you must choose to be humble and submit to the authority God has placed over you.

In life you might feel that you're too good to help the poor, clean the church's toilets, or listen to your husband's or wife's advice. Remember to humble yourself like a child and be

willing to do anything that pleases God. Man is not at the center of the Universe; God is. Life is not about you. Life is, first, about God, and then it is about others. Humility is learning to make life about God even when it doesn't "feel good."

Humility oftentimes means serving others even when it hurts. It didn't "feel good" when Jesus went to the cross. It didn't "feel good" when David was being chased by Saul. It didn't "feel good" when Moses served the Israelites for forty years in the desert while people complained. However, each one was blessed and rewarded when they served God, and people, with true humility. In closing, here are five practical ways to live a humble life:

1. **SUBMIT TO GOD'S WORD:** Always read the Word of God with a heart that says, "God teach me your ways and change anything in me that doesn't line up with you," (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
2. **BE UNDER AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH:** No matter who you are, God wants you to be under biblical authority. Find a pastor or leader who can train you in the things of God. It must be someone godly who is willing to tell you when you're wrong and who you will listen to. Stick with that kind of leader the rest of your life (Hebrews 13:17).
3. **HAVE AN ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER:** Find a peer to talk to about your life and be open to their suggestions and advice. Try to listen more than you talk (James 5:16).
4. **FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY:** Learn the way God wants the family to operate and find the place where God wants you to be. Do it without compromise or excuse (Joshua 24:15).
5. **FOLLOW THE RULES OF SOCIETY:** Obey the laws of the government, the rules on your job, and the good social

values of your culture so that you can be an example of a true disciple to the world around you (Matthew 5:16).

Review Questions

1. What does the Greek word “*kenosis*” mean and how did it apply to Jesus?
2. Explain how you are to be humble like Jesus.
3. Describe two times in your life when you lacked humility. Explain how you could have acted in humility.
4. List three verses that teach humility and the lessons you have learned from them.
5. Name and describe some consequences you could suffer if you live in pride.
6. Give one example of how you can walk humbly in the church, on the job, and in the home.

Prayerfully Meditate and Memorize

James 4:6, *“But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: ‘God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.’”*

LESSON 4

Disciples Are Anointed

The Anointing

In the Old Testament Moses was commanded, by God, to anoint the priests for service in the Tabernacle by pouring oil over their heads and letting it run down their beards and their robes (Exodus 28:41; 29:7). The word “anoint” simply means to “cover or to smear.” Moses was commanded to cover the priests with oil as a sign to the people that the priests were set apart for the work of the ministry.

God’s reason behind covering the priests with oil was because He desired to give them a physical sign of how His Spirit was going to be upon them to enable their work in the Tabernacle. When Jesus came, He was called the “Christ” in Greek and the “Messiah” in Hebrew. Both words mean “The Anointed One.” Therefore, Jesus was the Anointed One of God, chosen to bring salvation to all mankind. The Jewish people had been waiting around 4,000 years (since the time of Adam’s fall) for the Anointed One to come and display God’s power upon the earth. There are over 40 major prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah found in the Bible; for example Isaiah 9:6-7; 53:1-12.

When Jesus came at the fullness of time and was baptized by John in the Jordan, the Bible records that the Holy Spirit came upon Him in the form of a dove and remained on Him (John 1:32). John the Baptist also declared in John 1:29, “*Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.*” Plus, he wrote that from the time of Jesus’ baptism, Jesus was given the Holy Spirit without measure (John 3:34). Therefore, because of the Holy Spirit residing in Jesus, He was given an anointing to serve God as the Christ (Messiah)!

The Anointed One Has Anointed You

Since Jesus was anointed like the prophets and priests in the past and was the one and only “Anointed One,” He was given the authority from the Father to give God’s power to His followers. Therefore, after Jesus’ resurrection, He sent the disciples the Holy Spirit so they could be anointed like Him (Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-4). It was Jesus’ desire that all of His disciples have the same power and authority as He had. Jesus was anointed for the work of saving mankind, and He anointed His disciples to spread the message of salvation! Read the following passage in John 14:12-14,

“12 Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”

Jesus wanted His disciples to carry on the work of the ministry just as He had done. He wanted them to continue to preach with power, heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out devils, and have authority over the devil (Mark 16:15-20).

As a result, when you receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit (with the evidence of speaking in other tongues), you are anointed with the same power that Jesus and the first disciples had. *Note: If you have not received the baptism of the Holy Spirit yet, please seek the Lord to receive it before moving forward. For more teaching on the subject refer to “Lesson 6: Filled with the Holy Spirit,” in the book, “Welcome to Your New Life,” by Joe Wprostek.*

Now, when you go to preach and do the work of the ministry, you will not go in your own strength but in the power of God. The anointing in your life is God’s ability to do what you could never do alone. If God is for you who can stand against you? Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4)!

Three Ways to Operate in the Anointing

1. *Talk Like Jesus Talked*

When Jesus walked the earth He didn't ask sickness to leave; He commanded it to go. When Jesus cast out demons, He didn't have a negotiation with them. He boldly rebuked them and they instantly fled. Jesus knew who He was and who His Father was. Jesus knew He was anointed and that the power of God in Him was unstoppable. What He spoke happened!

However, it cannot stop with Jesus. As a matter of fact, Jesus commanded us to go and do the very same thing. You might think that talking like Jesus is just for pastors or evangelists but that is completely wrong. Jesus said all who believe in Him would see the power of God follow their preaching. Mark 16:15-20 records,

"15 He [Jesus] said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.'

19 After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. 20 Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it."

Jesus also said in Mark 11:22-24,

"22 'Have faith in God,' Jesus answered. 23 'Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. 24

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.'"

So the first thing you need to do to operate in the anointing is to begin to talk like Jesus. Believe the Word of God and speak it with authority. God will do the rest!

2. Walk Like Jesus Walked

The Bible shows us that Jesus was always on the move. If you want to see miracles you need to be in a place where miracles can and will happen. You can't sit on your couch and expect to see people with AIDS healed. You need to get up and go to the places where those with AIDS are. You need to go to the streets and find the drug addicts and the prostitutes. Then you will begin to see the power of God displayed.

I remember when I first began to preach. It wasn't in front of a church or a youth group. It was in the inner city housing projects. I would take some of the money I made from working construction and would go and buy as many groceries as I could, find the neediest families, give them the food, and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to them. It was in those impoverished projects that I first saw people saved, delivered from drugs, slain in the Spirit, and mightily transformed by the power of God. John 5:1-9 gives us great insight regarding the kinds of places Jesus walked,

"1 Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. 2 Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. 3 Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed.

5 One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, 'Do you want to get well?'

7 'Sir,' the invalid replied, 'I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.' 8 Then Jesus said to him, 'Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.'

9 At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath."

Notice that Jesus walked directly to the place where they laid the sick so He could heal a man crippled for many years. Jesus knew where to go to display the power of God. You and I must walk into the same kind of places, by faith, if we want to experience the miracle working power of God. We need to walk into the hospitals and pray for the sick, into the streets to see deliverance, and onto the mission field to see the nations saved!

Jesus was around sinners, prostitutes, lepers, thieves, tax collectors, the lame, and the destitute. He wasn't afraid to go where the need was great. He never backed down from an opportunity to display the power of God. Go where Jesus would go. You will never change the world sitting down and doing nothing. Get up and go!

3. Be Filled Like Jesus Was Filled

Jesus had a close and intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit because He knew how to be filled to overflowing with God's power. The infilling of Jesus came at His baptism when the Holy Spirit came upon Him, in the form of a dove, and remained on Him. John 7:37-39 records that Jesus taught His disciples that they would also be filled with the Holy Spirit after He was glorified at the resurrection. Read this precious promise of being filled by the Holy Spirit,

"37 On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.'

39 By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified."

Paul also talked about being continually filled with the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 5:18. We are not able to operate off of yesterday's filling. We need to be filled, daily, with the power of God. Jesus knew that to be filled with the power of God, He had to spend time with the Father.

Jesus had the habit of spending the night in prayer and waking up early just to fellowship with His Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12). If Jesus felt the need to pray, how much more should we? It is in our times of prayer and worship unto God that He is able to fill us with His Spirit.

You must make consistent time to be with God for the purpose of prayer and consecration. These times alone with God will open the rivers of the Spirit and God will flow through your life to the world around you. In other words, you need to learn how to touch heaven to change earth! What an honor and privilege we have to spend time in God's presence and to be His jars of clay that He fills with His precious oil. What a joy to know the Lord of the harvest and to share in His work!

The book of Acts declares that on the day of Pentecost the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues. Afterward, Luke also records that they were filled again when they met together for prayer. Acts 4:29-31 reads,

"29 'Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. 30 Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.'

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."

It should be the pattern of every disciple to be filled and refilled, over and over, with the Holy Spirit. Let the cry of our hearts always be, "More Lord!" When you have the desire to be used of God, He will fill you with His mighty power. God is looking for people who will take Him at His Word and allow Him to use them for His glory (2 Chronicles 16:9)!

Go, the World is Waiting!

Take Jesus at His Word and believe what He said He would do in your life. Begin to talk like Jesus, walk like Jesus, and be filled with God's power like Jesus. You have been chosen to be a world changer, history maker, and a roof breaker. You're not alone. God is with you. His anointing covers you like the oil that covered the priests.

You have been given power to trample on serpents and scorpions. You have been sent to heal the sick and raise the dead (Luke 10:17-19). By the power of God you can cast out demons, see blind eyes opened, drug addicts set free, and bring freedom to every prisoner. Now is your time to shine for Jesus! Confess this prayer out loud:

"Heavenly Father, I come to you in the name of Jesus and humbly ask you to anoint me with your power and authority, by the Holy Spirit, to bring glory to your name.

Holy Spirit, I welcome you into my life and ask that you give me your gifts and use me to preach the gospel with signs and wonders following. I need you more, today, than ever before. Fill my soul with the Word of God and send me to bring freedom to the captives, sight to the blind, healing to the sick, and strength to the weak!

Father, I receive a fresh anointing and filling from your spiritual rivers within me. I declare, I am anointed and appointed to be Jesus' disciple and to do the work of the ministry just like Him. I confess I will walk, talk, and live like Jesus all the days of my life. Hallelujah! Amen."

Review Questions

1. What was the anointing used for in the time of Moses?
2. When was Jesus anointed?
3. How are you anointed?
4. Name and describe the three things you must do to operate in the anointing.
5. Write out three places you can go and bring the power of God. Aim for a minimum of one place per month and journal what you see God do through you.

Prayerfully Meditate and Memorize

John 14:12, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."

SECTION TWO: *Disciples* **POSSESS**

The second section of this book describes four things that disciples possess in their lives. These are the things they have in their daily life as good habits.

Disciples possess a blessed home that impacts the community, a balanced life that is built for the long haul, a great devotional life that fans their spiritual flames, and a lifestyle of giving that helps others in need.

*Peter said in 2 Peter 1:8, “For **if you possess these qualities** in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

LESSON 5

Disciples Possess a Blessed Home

Home is Where God's Heart Is

Today, the greatest display of God's love and nature can be seen in a happy and healthy family. Since the devil knows this as well, he tries to destroy the family and bring death instead of life, and he tries to bring hurt and pain instead of joy and healing.

Presently, in America, over 40% of first time marriages end in divorce (60% for second time and 73% for third time). Many of the divorces involve adultery and sexual sin. Roughly 1 out of 10 marriages are currently suffering from infidelity; and, those over 60 and less than 35 years of age are, on average, committing more adultery than ever before. Older couples (around 30%) are less satisfied with their marriage and are more willing to be unfaithful than prior generations; and, those in their first years of marriage (around 20%) make little or no effort to fight adulterous temptations.

Oftentimes these marriages end in power struggles, selfishness, and deep emotional hurt for both persons involved. Sadly, the children are the ones who are hurt the most. They needlessly suffer as they watch their mom and dad destroy the family they built together and try to start two new lives where there used to be only one.

For this reason God said in Malachi 2:16, *"The man who hates and divorces his wife," says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'does violence to the one he should protect' says the Lord Almighty.*" In other words, God hates divorce because it does harm to all the people involved. Throughout the years of my ministry I have yet to see a divorce that did not emotionally crush the couple involved and harm the children in some way. Though each divorce has its unique arrangements, most of the time the

mother is awarded primary custody of the children and the father has only a limited role in the children's everyday lives.

Studies now show the damaging results a fatherless home has on children. Girls, who grow up without a father in the house are more likely to get pregnant before marriage, struggle with low self-worth, and have more financial troubles in life. Similarly, boys who grow up without a father are more likely to get a girl pregnant before marriage and are nine times more likely to get arrested and do jail time. Both genders will have a much harder time getting good grades in school and will struggle having healthy relationships and marriages with the opposite sex.

The answer to this crisis in the family must come from the Bible, God's instructions for a blessed life. However, many Americans have turned away from the Bible and have, instead, replaced biblical foundations with sin, wickedness, and whatever seems right in their own eyes.

Cohabiting, the Cultural Death of Marriage

One of the newest and most destructive trends in the U.S., eroding the foundations of marriage and the family, is couples who live together without being married. Between 2006 and 2010, nearly half of heterosexual women (48%) aged 15 to 44 said they were not married to their spouse or partner when they first lived with them. That is up from 43% in 2002, and 34% in 1995.

Nearly 75% of all women aged 30 or younger said they lived with a partner outside of marriage at some point in their lives. And sadly, the length of time people now live together before marriage has increased from 13 months in 1995 to 22 months in 2010.

As a result of living together before marriage: (a) Only 31% of women, today, are married as compared to 92% in 1920, which is basically a 60% drop in marriage over the last 100 years, (b) The average age for a woman to get married is at a record high of 27 years old, and last, (c) If the cohabiting

couple ever do get married (only around 1 out of 5 actually do), they have an 80% higher rate of divorce than those who didn't live together before marriage.

Abortion, a Modern Day Genocide

The greatest tragedy of our times against the family is the slaughter of the unborn. There are over 3,000 children murdered each day in the U.S. That's over 1 million a year, or a staggering total of over 50 million slaughtered unborn babies since 1973. Current statistics shockingly reveal that 85% of the women who get abortions got pregnant outside of marriage; and, their number one reason for killing the baby is "they feel they are not ready to be a mother."

As a result, because of their perversion and selfishness, a human life is ended. Remember, it's never a "mother's right" to kill a child. And, if it is just a choice affecting "the mother's body," why does another person's body have to die and get discarded in the trash? Abortion is nothing less than murder because it is the taking of someone else's life.

God is clear, in the Bible, that human life starts at conception and that "personhood" belongs to preborn babies in their mothers' wombs. This is clearly seen in Jeremiah 1:5, "*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I set you apart.*" Thus, God considered Jeremiah a person while he was still in the womb. He wasn't just a blob of flesh and blood as some abortionists try to claim. Consider that the average abortion takes place when the pre-born baby is around nine weeks old. By this time, the child has formed his or her eyes, ears, fingers, arms and legs, as well as, all vital organs and spinal cord.

Also, in Luke 1:41 we see that John the Baptist was, in fact, a person able to be blessed by the Holy Spirit while still in his mother's womb, "*When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.*"

In Proverbs 6:16-17, God is very clear about the things that He hates and one of them is, *“hands that shed innocent blood.”* Consequently, God hates everyone’s hands that are involved in abortion including the doctor who performs the abortion, the mother allowing her baby to be murdered, the nurses and staff at the clinics, the boyfriend and family members who support the murder, and even the voters who allow the practice. All are guilty of murder in the eyes of God.

If the guilty do not repent for their crimes against humanity, God will punish them in the lake of fire for eternity. Revelation 21:8 warns that all, *“murderers...will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur.”* Therefore, God hates abortion and will punish all those who participate in this murderous act.

The Sin of Same Sex Marriage

Despite the homosexual movement’s growth in popularity, Paul clearly described homosexual behavior in the book of Romans as being “unnatural.” He wrote the following in Romans 1:18-32,

“18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 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 people are without excuse.

21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies

with one another. 25 They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator – who is forever praised. Amen.

26 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. 27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

28 Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. 29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; 31 they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy.

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

Surprisingly, some modern liberal scholars have tried to get around Paul's rebuke of homosexuality in the New Testament by saying that the only kind of people homosexuality would be unnatural for is those who are heterosexual "by nature," but whom God punishes by having them commit homosexual acts like rape or pederasty.

In other words, because people turned their backs on God they became male rapists, like some men in prison who are straight but rape other men because of their depraved mind and uncontrollable lusts. This kind of wickedness would be their "*due penalty for their error.*" So, for the "Christian homosexual movement" they would say, "I am neither an idolater nor a rapist, thus I am not being punished by God in any way for my love towards a person of the same gender."

As a result, today, the homosexual agenda wants same sex couples to be able to marry, adopt children, and have their

sexuality taught in schools during sex education as normal behavior. Accordingly, to oppose their agenda is to be labeled, “intolerant, hateful, and religious bigotry.” Homosexual activists in the U.S. have actually convinced most lawmakers and media outlets that they are fighting for their civil rights just as the African Americans did in the 60’s.

However, it is the job and command of the church to stand against this agenda, not with physical weapons or verbal abuse, but with the Word of God. God commands us to defend the institution of marriage as “one man with one woman” and to ask lawmakers and school officials not to promote this perversion to our children, military, or in our businesses (Proverbs 14:34). Here are two main reasons why Christians and society should stand against the homosexual agenda:

1. The Bible considers homosexuality a sin.

Biblically speaking, God calls acts of homosexuality unnatural because they are against His created order and thus a sin (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Romans 1:26-27 is a direct reference to the prohibition of same sex acts in Leviticus 18:22 and the creation of male and female marriage in Genesis 1:27. Anything sexual, outside of that description, is unnatural and is considered “*sexual immorality and impure*” (Galatians 5:19). Plus, the reason why we still look to Leviticus in regards to homosexuality and not to what we should eat (like shrimp or pork) is because Christ carried over the “moral laws” of marriage into the New Covenant (Mark 10:8) but not the “dietary laws” (Mark 7:19).

If the homosexual activist states that Jesus’ statement on marriage doesn’t mean He “limited” marriage to just one man and woman because Jesus never specifically forbade homosexuality, then the homosexual promoter would be forced to also extend Jesus’ “marital blessing” to incest, zoophilia, pedophilia, polygamy, polyandry, and polyamory because He didn’t “forbid” those sexual orientations either.

Therefore, either Jesus’ statement regarding marriage between one man and one woman “excludes” all other sexual orientations or one must accept every sexual fetish. We, as true

biblical Christians, must stand for traditional marriage values based on God's moral laws taught in both the Old and New Covenants.

2. Homosexuality is bad for society as a whole.

Socially speaking, modern studies of same sex relationships and families show a major negative impact on the children and partners involved. Extensive studies of the family life of both homosexuals and lesbians, are both true and very sad, (1) The couples are more likely to suffer depression and physical abuse, (2) The children are more likely to have trouble in school and with crime, and, (3) The children are more likely to be sexually abused.

The homosexual agenda is not only a sin according to the Bible, but it is also harmful to those involved. I ask that you will prayerfully make a stand against this agenda in your home, church, and community with the truth of God's Word because homosexuals can be saved and changed by the power of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)!

Godly Families are the Answer to Broken Homes

As 21st century American culture embraces deeply sinful and wicked practices, the family is being destroyed and replaced with sexual sin and selfishness. As a result, God's love and nature is lost in the home and in the community. It is clear that God's wrath is poured out upon the people and society who live without His guidelines for families.

However, that is not the way God intended it to be. God intended the family to be the best example of His nature. God chose the love between a man and woman to be the very thing He would use to show the love between Himself and His church. God primarily displays His perfect love and nature in the family in the following two ways:

1. The nature of God can be seen when a husband and wife work together as one.

This working together is how the Trinity: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work together as one and yet have different roles. Though God's Word says that the man has the role of authority over the wife in the family, he is also commanded to live his life to please her and make her happy and secure. In the God nature, the Father is over the Son in His role, but the Father places the Son at the center of worship and gives Him all that He has. In return, the Son always does the will of the Father and forever pleases Him in everything He does. The Holy Spirit also willingly serves the Father and the Son.

When the family is in accord with the Word of God there is perfect unity and peace among its members. Therefore, when the husband and wife work together as one, yet with different roles, they display the perfect nature of God to their children and the world around them.

2. The love of God is evidenced when parents lovingly and sacrificially raise their children.

God sent His Son to die for the sins of the world because He loved the world. And because Jesus gave His life and willingly died, God, the Father, now gives salvation to all who call upon Jesus' name. Consequently, God produced a family of spiritual sons and daughters through the love and sacrifice of Jesus.

The same is true in marriage. When the man and woman become one and share in their love together, they produce a family of sons and daughters. These sons and daughters are a result of the couple's deep love for each other and their willingness to come together to make children. The mother and father then sacrifice and lay down their lives for their children to create a healthy and happy home. Just as good moms and dads provide for each of their children's needs and desires, the Trinity provides for all of the needs of every believer both now, and for eternity. Paul wrote regarding the family structure in

Ephesians 3:14-15, *"14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name."*

Since all monogamous, heterosexual families come from God, we should then read His instructions on how to have the kind of family that pleases Him and is a blessing to society as a whole. Let's next examine each family member's roles and duties according to God's Word.

The Biblical Role of Husbands

Husbands are to love their wives as Jesus loves the church. As the husband you may be over your wife in your role, but you are to make her the center of your world and work together with her as a team. After God, your wife should be the most important person in the universe. As the head, you are to be there to make the final decisions but, in doing so, you are to always remember her needs and desires.

The most important thing you can give your wife is your love and attention. You must be able to fluently speak her love language. You should know if she responds best to a special touch, words of affirmation, quality time, gifts, or acts of service. A good husband knows when to love his wife. Plus, he also knows how to love her and fill her love tank everyday.

Second, you must also make your wife feel secure and at peace in your relationship. She must know that you will always be there for her. Whether you just listen to her hard day at work or give her a romantic night on the town, she must be able to trust you and know that you will never cheat or give your love to another woman. This means you will not spend time alone with another woman or look at other women and lust after them. You must only have an emotional relationship with her. No other woman can have that part of your life or heart. Your feelings and heart must belong to her 100%, forever.

Here are some verses from Paul in Ephesians 5:25-33, along with some practical advice, on being a good godly husband. Prayerfully read each section and let faith come as you confess and believe each verse is for you, today.

1. Love your wife as Christ does the church.

v. 25, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her..."

The Greek word "*agape*" is used for the word love. *Agape* means, "unconditional love." The first thing you are to do is have unconditional love for your wife. You are to have the same kind of love for her that Jesus has for the church. The best definition for love can be found in 1 Corinthians 13. Please read Paul's description of love and ask for grace to always love your wife in that way.

2. Give yourself up for your wife.

v. 25, "...and gave himself up for her"

Next, we see that Jesus "*gave Himself*" for the church. This means Jesus was "*selfless*" and not "*selfish*." He laid His life down for the church. You are to love your wife so much that you are willing to lay your life down for her every day. You must desire her wants and needs even above your own.

3. Support and take care of your wife.

vs. 26-30, "26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church – 30 for we are members of his body."

Here, Paul states that Jesus makes the church a radiant, beautiful, and holy bride. He does this because He loves the

church. In the same way, you must put action to your love for your wife. Your love for her should help her be all that God has made her to be. You must make her dreams your dreams, and do all that you can to help and assist her so that she can fulfill her God-given purpose.

Paul said that a wife will be a reflection of her husband, just like his own body. So, as you take care of your own body, you should take care of your wife. Her smile and the look on her face should be an indication, to everyone she meets, that she is the pride and joy of her husband. Everyone should be able to tell that she has been lavished with your love because her countenance shines wherever she goes.

4. Be united with your wife in everything.

vs. 31-33, "31 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' 32 This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."

Next, we learn that the church and Jesus are one. Likewise, you and your wife should be one. You must make her a part of your life and let her share in all your decisions and plans. Together, you should encourage and strengthen each other. The day you both said, "I do," you became a life-long team. You may be the head of the team, but if you lose your wife you will be the only one on the team. Prayerfully lead your wife and guide her in the plans God has for your family. Together you will do great and awesome things for God!

The Biblical Role of Wives

Wives are the backbone of every great marriage. The saying is true, "Behind every strong man, there is an even stronger

woman.” As the wife, you will either make or break your marriage. For the man to be successful as the head, he needs you to be his number one supporter.

I know, today, that the world may lead you to believe that being a “meek woman” is the same as being a “weak woman” but the exact opposite is true. The Bible teaches that the greatest among us would be the least. Jesus said the servant of all would be the best leader of all (Mark 10:44).

The greatest example of submission is found in Jesus. He was 100% equal with the Father in all ways, yet He humbled Himself and became a man and served His Father in every way that pleased Him. Everything Jesus did on earth was to please His Father and make His Father’s name great. Jesus’ number one goal in life wasn’t to do great miracles, to help people, or even to be the Savior of the world. His first and greatest assignment was to make His Father’s name great on the earth and to bring Him glory (John 17:4).

As a result, Jesus did many awesome miracles, changed people’s lives, and became the Savior of the world. Since Jesus pleased the Father, He was given a name that is above every name, so that “...at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and confess Him Lord” (Philippians 2:10). Always remember that Jesus’ chief desire, which informed all that He did, was to please His Father.

Other women may try to tell you not to let a 2,000-year-old book with outdated rules tell you what to do, but remember you’re not just following rules written in an ancient book. You’re following a living person, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Prayerfully read Paul’s words in Ephesians 5:22-24 with the brief advice provided below and let these verses inspire and encourage you to be a wife who pleases God in every way.

1. Submit to your husbands as the church submits to Christ.

v. 22, “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.”

The Greek word here for “submit” means “to be under someone’s authority.” This term was used for soldiers about how they were to obey their commanding officers in the Roman army. Paul states that you are to be under your husband’s authority just as you are under the Lord’s commands.

This may not sound good to your flesh, but it is the right thing for your spirit and for peace in your home. You cannot build a happy home with two equal authorities. One has to give in to the other. God’s plan for peace and harmony in the home is for the woman to freely and humbly give up her rights and let the husband have the final word.

This, of course, does not allow your husband to be either physically or verbally abusive, nor does it allow him to neglect your needs or treat you like a child. The passage is simply teaching you that, when it comes to the final authority of the house, your husband is in charge.

2. Submit to your husbands in everything you do.

vs. 23-24, “23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”

Once again, Paul writes that you are to submit to your husbands in everything. Everything means everything. From how you cut your hair, to what clothes you wear, to how you decorate your home, you must allow your husband to have the final say in everything. At the same time, as my wife and many other godly women will tell you, they are very happy because the authority is not there to harm them, but to protect them and the family from confusion and contention that can lead to divorce.

Notice how God gave four commands to the husband in this passage from Paul (love, give, support, and unite), but gave just one to the wife, submission. This is not strange, because if

the husband follows Jesus in all he does, the wife will be blessed in following her husband as the leader in the home.

The Biblical Role of Fathers

Fathers are given the most crucial role in the family because their responsibilities and accountability to God are the greatest. When God chose a title for Himself, He did not choose “mother,” “son,” or “daughter.” He chose “Father.”

Even though Jesus is the “Son” in regards to the Trinity, He is called the “*Everlasting Father*” in regards to all creation (Isaiah 9:6). Jesus, God the Son, is called the “Everlasting Father” because He makes spiritual sons and daughters and all mankind is made in His image. Since God chose the term “Father” to be the most dominant way of expressing His nature, you must live and act like Him when you are called by that name. The term, “Father,” carries with it the likeness of God, the Father, in both character and lifestyle.

The first father your children will ever see is you. So, before you ever tell them about God, the Father, you ought to have lived a life in front of them worthy of that title. Your life, as a father, will either be a good example of God, the Father, or a bad one. Plus, your life will model the kind of man your sons should grow up to be and the kind of men your daughters should marry.

You might be thinking to yourself, “But I’m not perfect. I make mistakes. How can I be like God?” Listen carefully. No excuse is valid in God’s eyes. Jesus, Himself, said in Matthew 5:48, “*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*” I know that a man may sin, but a true father does not live in sin. He does not continue in sin, nor live a half-hearted life for God (1 John 3:9).

As the head of the house, what sins you tolerate will dominate your family. You must decide that there will be no sinful habits passed down to your children. Therefore, rid yourself of all pornography, physical abuse, outbursts of anger, drugs, cigarettes, false religion, unhealthy eating habits,

perverse music, phobias, laziness, drunkenness, and cursing. You are both the “priest” and the “police” of your home. You set the spiritual climate in the house and decide what belongs and what doesn’t (Ephesians 4:30-32).

In the Bible, it is common to see children falling into the same sinful patterns as their fathers. Even contemporary psychologists teach that if a child grows up in a home where there is spousal abuse, the child is very likely to be in an abusive relationship. If a child lives in a home where there are drugs, alcohol abuse, smoking, profanity, pornography, and witchcraft, the children will have a greater chance of participating in the same destructive behavior.

You must learn to display God-likeness in front of your children. If you fall, you must show them grace and teach them that your Father in heaven forgives sin and gives power to overcome sin. King Solomon said in Proverbs 24:16, *“for though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes.”* Therefore, you must show them, by God’s power, you can live a life that exemplifies God in all that you do.

Twelve Attributes of a Good Father

1. Love God and keep all His commands.
2. Love your wife and always meet her needs.
3. Love your children and raise them in the ways of God.
4. Be dedicated to your job for your family’s provision.
5. Have kindness, patience, and compassion in directing your family.
6. Keep the order and peace in your home as designed by God.
7. Lead, by example, in the church and help serve in the ministry.

8. Have respect and love for others.
9. Be generous and kind to those in need.
10. Show grace and forgiveness to people in their time of weakness.
11. Enjoy life. Stay full of faith through life's ups and downs.
12. Do all things as unto God!

I pray you would go to your heavenly Father, each day, and seek His strength and wisdom. Your family is depending on you. God said you could do all things with Him, and that you were more than a conqueror (Romans 8:37). Start, today, by kicking the devil out of your home. Make your family a place where God dwells and where your children see God's character and love in you everyday! Be encouraged by the following verses:

Joshua 24:15, "But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

Proverbs 13:22, "A good person leaves an inheritance for their children's children, but a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous."

Psalms 103:17, "17 But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children – 18 with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts."

The Biblical Role of Mothers

As a mother, after God's love, you will have the greatest love the world has ever known. There is no greater love found on earth than the love a mother has for her children. When I was in juvenile jail with other teen criminals, I would notice who would come and visit. It would always be the mother. The child might have been a drug dealer, thief, or a gang member, but he was still his mother's child.

Why? Because the mother carries the child for nine months in her womb, and during that time she develops a strong bond with him that lasts forever. Though God chooses the example of a Father to be His primary example of power and authority, He also uses the role of the mother for the example of His love and nurturing.

Jesus said in Matthew 23:37, *"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing."* I believe that only mothers can truly understand the depths of God's love for His creation.

Though, as a mother you are still under the authority of your husband, you still have just as important a role in the upbringing of your children. You should be an example to your sons of the woman they will want to one day marry. And, to your daughters, you should be an example of the type of woman they want to grow up and become.

The Bible gives a very honorable place to your role as a mother, so do not let anyone look down on you for placing your children's needs even above your career or social status. Being a good mother is the greatest job a woman could ever have and, today, it is the most needed job in America! Your children need to see your love and Christ-like example every day. Be encouraged by the example written about in Proverbs 31. And remember it is by God's grace that you can be all that He has called you to be!

Twenty-Two Attributes of a Proverbs 31 Woman

1. **VALUABLE:** *"A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies," v. 10.*
2. **TRUSTWORTHY:** *"Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value," v. 11.*
3. **HARDWORKING:** *"She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life," v. 12.*
4. **SELECTIVE:** *"She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands," v. 13.*
5. **SHREWD:** *"She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar," v. 14.*
6. **PROVIDER:** *"She gets up while it is still night; she provides food for her family and portions for her female servants," v. 15.*
7. **SAVVY:** *"She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard," v. 16.*
8. **STRONG:** *"She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks," v. 17.*
9. **DILIGENT:** *"She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night," v. 18.*
10. **MULTI-TASKER:** *"In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers," v. 19.*
11. **COMPASSIONATE:** *"She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy," v. 20.*
12. **CONFIDENT:** *"When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet," v. 21.*

13. **BEAUTIFUL:** “She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple,” v. 22.
14. **RESPECTED HUSBAND:** “Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land,” v. 23.
15. **PROSPEROUS:** “*She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes,*” v. 24.
16. **DIGNIFIED:** “*She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come,*” v. 25.
17. **WISE:** “*She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue,*” v. 26.
18. **INVOLVED:** “*She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness,*” v. 27.
19. **BLESSED FAMILY:** “*Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her,*” v. 28.
20. **OVERACHIEVER:** “*Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all,*” v. 29.
21. **GOD-FEARING:** “*Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised,*” v. 30.
22. **HONORED:** “*Honor her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate,*” v. 31.

The Biblical Role of Children

The biblical role for children is simple, “Obey your parents!” Paul wrote the following words in Ephesians 6:1-3,

“1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 Honor your father and mother – which is the first commandment with a promise – 3 so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

As long as a child lives at home with his or her parents, he or she is expected to follow all the rules set up in their parent’s house. The only times a child shouldn’t obey their parents, or guardians, is when they, (a) Ask them to break God’s commands or (b) Physically, sexually, or mentally abuse them. Other than those times the child should always honor and respect their parents even if they do not serve God.

Once the child has reached adulthood, he or she can “leave and cleave” to their spouse and start their own family with the rules and guidelines that God personally gives them from His Word (Genesis 2:24). If they live on their own, as a single adult, they must be responsible to God as an individual until they marry. Though the adult child should always honor and respect their parents for the rest of their lives, all major decisions and final authority for their life and family will rest on their own relationship with God.

Ten Ways for Children to Honor God and Their Parents

1. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.
2. Love and honor your parents by doing the things they ask.
3. Do well in school and stay out of trouble.
4. Be committed to the church and helping others.
5. Obey all of God’s commands and teach them to others.
6. Choose good friends and hobbies.
7. Don’t have sex until marriage.

8. Follow God's plans for your life and future family.
9. Patiently wait for God to bring your spouse.
10. Never give up or get tired of serving Jesus.

Father Knows Best

Our heavenly Father knows what is best for us as His creation. I pray that you and I will be able to fulfill each role that He has for us, in the family, so that we might reflect His loving nature upon this earth. Though Satan may come and try to steal, kill, and destroy the family, Jesus has come that our families might have God's life in abundance (John 10:10)!

Review Questions

1. What are some of the most common problems with families today?
2. Why do you think God hates divorce?
3. Why are cohabitating, abortion, and homosexuality a sin?
4. How is God's nature seen in the family?
5. How is God's love seen in the family?
6. Briefly describe the role and responsibilities of the husband.
7. Briefly describe the role and responsibilities of the wife.
8. What does a good father do for his family?
9. What way is God's love like a mother's?

10. Names things a godly mother does for her family from Proverbs 31.
11. What is the role of children in the home?
12. What things have you learned from this lesson? Describe three things you can do differently.
13. Write a prayer, with at least three verses, that describes the type of person you want to be and the type of family you desire to have.

Prayerfully Meditate and Memorize

Joshua 24:15, "But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

LESSON 6

Disciples Possess a Balanced Life

The American Dream Nightmare

The American dream has taken more from the lives of Americans than most realize. When I look around at the culture today, I don't see healthy and spiritually fulfilled lives. Instead I see that most Americans are in debt financially, overweight and unhealthy physically, struggling with their family relationally, and frustrated with their job emotionally.

I believe the reason for much of the hurt and frustration in people's lives today is because they are focused on achieving what the world says is success and happiness. To see how the American dream ends, read what King Solomon, the richest and wisest man said in Ecclesiastes 2:4-16,

"4 I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. 5 I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. 6 I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. 7 I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me.

8 I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers, and a harem as well – the delights of a man's heart. 9 I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me. 10 I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil.

11 Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun. 12 Then I turned my thoughts to consider wisdom, and also

madness and folly. What more can the king's successor do than what has already been done?

13 I saw that wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness. 14 The wise have eyes in their heads, while the fool walks in the darkness; but I came to realize that the same fate overtakes them both. 15 Then I said to myself, 'The fate of the fool will overtake me also. What then do I gain by being wise?' I said to myself, 'This too is meaningless.'

16 For the wise, like the fool, will not be long remembered; the days have already come when both have been forgotten. Like the fool, the wise too must die."

Solomon is saying that life has to be about more than just making money and being wise. Life is about God. Loving God and loving people are the two greatest things you can do. Plus, when you die you will have eternal life and heavenly rewards. Most people, including Christians, are willing to trade eternal heavenly blessings for temporal earthly pleasures.

For the average family to have a house, two cars, private schools for their kids, all the "modern" home improvements, and two vacations a year, they will most likely have to "trade in" their time of church, prayer, devotion, workout and diet, quality family time, and rest. There is nothing wrong with living the good life. It is great to have both God and the "American Dream," but we should never trade our relationship with God and our family for what the world calls, "success."

If you are one of the millions caught in the "rat race," you need to get off the track and start another race, called the "Amazing Christian Race!" The Christian race is about doing things God's way. It's about prioritizing life with the things God says are important and having the things God says are needed.

Chasing the American dream without God will leave you empty and unsatisfied. You might think, "If I could get a better job I would be happy." Or, "If I could buy a bigger house and a nicer car I would feel fulfilled." Or, "If I could save up for a trip to Disney World my family would get closer." Really? If those things made people happy, those who already have them

should be the happiest people on the planet! So, why is it that when you talk to the people who have the things you wish your family had, they don't think it's enough? They still want more. So the rat race continues.

Let's be honest, from the overspending in government to the high debt of the American family, the "American Dream" has really become the "American Nightmare" in many ways. We have forgotten what is most important in life, God and family. We must change direction and start living the life that God has for us. We must learn to live a balanced life that will lead to blessings, health, and spiritual fulfillment. Consider 2 Peter 1:3-4 as you start to re-prioritize your life according to God's Word,

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

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.

8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins."

According to Peter, all you need for life is found in God. Therefore, it is "In God We Trust" not, "In Money We Trust." Peter teaches that we should add to our faith in God, (1) Goodness, (2) Knowledge, (3) Self-Control, (4) Perseverance, (5) Godliness, (7) Mutual Affection, and (8) Love. These are the things we should be pursuing in life; not larger houses, fancier cars, lavish vacations, or bigger bank accounts. Certainly, there

is nothing wrong with these things in their proper place but, without God; one's quality of life will never change for the better regardless of what one owns.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*" So if we want Jesus' blessings we need to first, (a) Seek His kingdom and (b) His righteousness. Until then, it doesn't matter how much "stuff" we have or how "busy" we are, we will never truly experience the God-kind-of-life.

As you learn the keys to a balanced and successful life don't be just a "learner." Be a "doer." Put these keys into practice, immediately, so that you can see your life change and become the life God created it to be.

Seven Biblical Priorities to a Balanced and Successful Life

1. Always put God first.
2. Make family time a must every day.
3. Practice daily devotions and serve in the church.
4. Work a job that works for you.
5. Eat less, workout more.
6. Enjoy a day of rest each week.
7. Make healthy friendships.

Time Management God's Way

Before we get into the seven biblical priorities to success, let us first look at the subject of "Biblical Time Management." Biblical time management simply means, "Exercising proper control and discipline over one's time to allow for all of God's priorities

to be successfully completed each day.” In other words, you live your life based on God’s calendar!

Every person has the same 24-hour day. Most people sleep for eight hours, work for eight hours, and mismanage the other eight hours. The big question is, “What are you doing with your other eight hours?”

Did you know that the average American spends almost 34 hours each week watching TV? That’s almost 5 hours a day! Plus, most Americans spend another 17 hours a week online, which is an average of about 2.5 hours a day. Certainly, some of this time is spent “multitasking” by surfing the Internet while watching TV; nonetheless, the time we waste each week is staggering!

I challenge you, before you make any excuses by claiming you don’t have time for God and His priorities, to first sit down and make a “Time Management Chart.” I believe in doing so you will not only find “extra” time for the things of God, but will be convicted of how much time you have given to things that are not of eternal value (TV, sports, entertainment, the Internet, etc.). For the rare few, even after making the chart, if you find yourself with little time wasted, you will still be able to see how to make the most out of your time for God. Remember, Jesus made time for you by dying on the cross. You can and should make time to live for Him everyday!

List all of your activities. Start by writing how many hours you sleep a night, how many you work (include commute time), how many you spend eating, how many you spend getting ready, how many you give your family (activities, errands, etc.), how many you spend in schooling and exercise, and the hours you give just to God (daily devotions and church activities). Do this each day for a week, then add up all of the time (hours).

After you have factored in all the priorities of life, subtract the hours you have tallied from the number 168 (hours in a week). Consider what is left over as “free time.” Now you can begin to plan more positive activities with that time. Plus, you can see where you have been wasting time, begin to restructure your life according to the priorities of the Bible, and

give yourself time to do the things that are really important.

You only have one life. Don't let it pass you by. Live your life to the fullest, for God, by making the most of every moment. Paul said in Ephesians 5:14-16, "*15 Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.*" Make the most of your time by prioritizing it in a way that pleases God. Remember, no one will be excused on Judgment Day because they were "too busy to serve God!"

PRIORITY #1: Always Put God First

Make no excuses. Do whatever it takes, starting now. If life gets hard, put God first. If you get promoted and make more money than you ever dreamed, put God first. When people are on your side, put God first. When everyone leaves you, put God first. When you start your family, put God first. When you are by yourself, put God first. When you get busy in life, put God first. When you're bored and life moves slowly, put God first.

When you understand what is going on around you, put God first. When you have no idea what is going on around you, put God first. When you feel like quitting discipleship, put God first. When you are healthy, put God first. When you are sick, put God first. When you lose, put God first. When you win, put God first. When you're at work, put God first. When you're at play, put God first. When God's commands are easy, put God first. When God's ways seem hard, put God first. In everything you do, all the time, in every situation put God first!

The way you put God first is to love Him with all your heart and to obey all His commands. There are more than ten "commandments" in the Bible. There are commands to pray, to love your enemies, to help the poor, to be filled with God's power, to preach the Word, and so on. You must follow God's commands, at all times, for your life to be successful. The most important part of having a well-balanced life is to always put God first! Be encouraged by the following verses to always keep God number one in your life!

1 John 5:3-5, "3 In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, 4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."

Romans 14:7-8, "7 For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. 8 If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord."

PRIORITY #2: Make Family Time a Must Everyday

God said it was not good for man to be alone, so He gave Eve to Adam and told them to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28). The first organization God started was a family. Families are designed to be a place where relational and emotional needs are met daily. When a family is built on the Word of God, it is the single greatest force on earth, but when it is built on the flesh and given over to sin, the family can cause much pain.

You must decide that you and your house are going to serve the Lord, together. When each member of the family chooses to be the person God commanded them to be there will be unity in the home. When the family operates in divine unity and structure, God will pour out His blessings upon the house and all who live in it.

Make time every day to, (a) Read God's Word together, (2) Worship and sing songs to God, (3) Pray and lift up each other's needs, and, (5) Talk to each other about things that really matter in life. Ask each member what his or her specific needs are and help them through the hard times. Plan special days and events just to be alone as a family and try to make quality time with each member every day. God gave man a family so that we could feel love from each other and not be alone in this world. Decide right now to make family time a

must everyday! Be encouraged by the following verses to always make time for your family.

Joshua 24:15, "But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

Acts 10:2, "He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly."

PRIORITY #3: Daily Devotions and Church Service

Paul said the church is the Body of Christ and Jesus, Himself, is the Head (1 Corinthians 12:27). The Bible makes it clear that the church and private devotions are to be a very important part of spiritual growth. Some people want to stay home and pray by themselves. They use the excuse that their body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and that God is everywhere. However, they fail to remember that in the book of Acts, the early Christians met daily in the temple and in their homes together (Acts 2:42-47). Everywhere the apostles went, they established churches to govern and support the disciples to grow spiritually.

Every Christian should make private time, every day, for prayer and Bible study. Also, they should meet multiple times a week with other believers to teach and be taught the Living Word. The true disciple of Christ should also find a place to assist and serve in the local church so that the work of the ministry will be done.

God never intended you to live your life partially spirit-filled. If all you do is go to church, but you never have private and personal times of prayer and devotion, your faith will be weak and reliant upon what others can do for you. On the other hand, if all you do is stay home and have private times of devotion and are never under authority, you will be weak in

faith because you will only go as far as you can reach, instead of being lifted up to higher levels by others who have gone higher with God.

You must have regular church involvement and personal devotions. Make time every day to privately, (a) Read and study God's Word, and (b) Pray and worship. Make attending church and serving in your local church a top priority. Aim for meeting with others 2-3 times a week (Sunday church, life group, and outreach/prayer meeting). Be encouraged by the following verses to always make time for personal devotions and church attendance.

Hebrews 10:24-25, "24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Acts 2:42-47, "42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

PRIORITY #4: Work a Job that Works for You

God created mankind to have dominion over the earth and to rule all that He created. God gave man his first job of naming the animals and caring for the garden. Work is not a result of sin and the fall of man, God always intended man to be productive with his time (Genesis 1:28). However, when sin did

come to earth, it cursed the ground. From then on, the work man has done has become difficult at times and can bring sweat to his brow (Genesis 3:17).

When a person is “born again” he no longer lives under this curse. He works under the blessings of God. So, your first job is to find God’s purpose for your life. What does He want you to do with your day to make this world a better place? What gifts, talents, abilities, and calling has God given you? You must first be able to answer these questions before you pick a career, because when you know what you were created to do your work becomes a blessing to you and to others (rather than being a burden and a curse).

As for me, being a pastor and church planter is a joy and the passion of my heart. I love to preach and make disciples. I enjoy writing books like the one you’re reading now. I know God has called me to do this; therefore, I am good at it, and at the end of the day I feel great because I know I have been successful.

Find out what God has called you to and do it. Start working a job that works for you and do it unto God. Remember, life is not about making money and trying to achieve the “American Dream.” It is about living a blessed life and doing what God made you to do. Be encouraged by the following verses to always make time to work a job that works for you!

Ecclesiastes 3:12-13, “12 I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. 13 That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil – this is the gift of God.”

Colossians 3:17, “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

PRIORITY #5: *Eat Less, Workout More*

If you want to live a long healthy life consider these four simple words, "Eat Less, Workout More." I like to call them the "Four-Word Health Program." The bottom line is that most Americans eat too much and exercise too little. We literally spend millions of dollars wasting food because we overeat and then spend millions on gym memberships and workout equipment. We truly need the fruit of the spirit which is "self-control."

In the U.S., we have the best gyms, fitness programs, health stores, low calorie foods, and doctors. Yet we are still the most overweight and out of shape generation that has ever lived. Lord have mercy! Make a decision, today, that you will not be mastered by the food you eat. Decide that you are going to live a long and healthy life that can be used mightily by God.

Most experts teach that we should eat about 2,000 calories a day and should exercise at least three days a week for 30-60 minutes. Now, consider that one pound of body weight is equal to 3,500 calories. So if you want to lose one pound a week all you would have to do is either, (a) Burn 500 extra calories a day or (b) Eat 500 less calories each day ($7 \times 500 = 3,500$). This means either eating one less Big Mac or adding one hour of exercise daily. If you lose just one pound a week for one full year (52 weeks) you could lose 52 pounds!

Take a look at your schedule and make time to be healthy. How can God use you if you're sick and tired all the time? For the sake of your health and family, get in shape and stay in shape. Be encouraged by the following verses to always make time to eat less and workout more!

1 Corinthians 6:19-20, "19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies."

1 Timothy 4:8, "For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come."

PRIORITY #6: *Enjoy a Day of Rest Each Week*

A four-door minivan was not made to be driven in the Indy 500 at 210mph for hours and days at a time. If you subject the family minivan to racecar conditions, you will harm the engine and transmission. Your life was not made to go 100mph seven days a week, 365 days a year. And, for many to keep up with the American dream, they're in fifth gear all week-long and the result is physical stress and mental "burnout."

Burnout happens when you have nonstop activity all the time. Eventually your body and emotions run out of gas. Then you have to take weeks or months off to get healed and restored. God gave you a very simple solution to spare you from getting burned out in life. It's called "a day off!"

A "day off" is not a suggestion. It's a command. Make one day out of every week a day when you park the car and just rest. Shut off your cell phone and take off your cape and boots. You're not Superman. Who cares if the Jones pass you up? Let them. It's not worth it. Stop worrying about what people around you may think. You don't need their permission to rest. God gave your life to you. You have the power to bring yourself in for a pit stop for repairs whenever you need. God said it, and that settles it. Rest!

Some believe the "enemy" of their free time is "church and devotional time." When they get too busy and tired, the first things they quit are church and their devotions. This makes no sense. To find time and a balanced life they exclude God and His kingdom. My friends, this will never work!

If you want to know the secret to success in life here it is; "Always keep God and church in your life" (Matthew 6:33). The real "enemy and time waster" is not church and devotions. It's "wasted time!" Find where you're wasting time - at the

movies, with all the kid's activities they can live without, etc. Then you will have enough time to rest and live a godly life.

My wife and I try to take off every Friday. We sleep in, hang out around the house, watch movies, go out for long walks, go shopping, and spend time with the kids. We do whatever we feel like doing and answer to no one but God and each other. When we have meetings or things scheduled that we cannot change, we take Tuesdays. If our schedule is temporarily out of our hands, we take a half-day for rest. We do what it takes, each week, to have our time of rest with the family.

Be diligent to take a day where you can rest your body and emotions. Trust me you need it. When you do, God will bless the other six days more than you can imagine. God will do more in your six-day week than you could ever do in a seven-day week. Be encouraged by the following verses to always make time to rest and be refreshed each week!

Exodus 20:8-10, "8 'Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.'"

(Note: Though we are not under the Jewish law for the Sabbath, it is still good to recognize the principle of the Sabbath that God gave to the Israelites and take a day to rest and honor God.)

Matthew 11:28-30, "28 Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

PRIORITY #7: *Make Healthy Friendships*

David and Jonathan were two great friends in the Bible who were closer than brothers (1 Samuel 20 & 2 Samuel 1:26). God wants you to have godly friendships that are that close. Though most friendships will just be acquaintances, and others only for short periods of companionship, there will be a select few that will be close and intimate.

If you consider your life like a book, some friends will be sentences, pages, chapters, and very few will go the whole way to the end. Also, think of your closest friends being in your inner circle and the other kinds of friends being in the outer circles. Often times people who start close will move out into the circle of companionship while others you started out as acquaintances with will move to your inner circle and be closest to your heart. Therefore, whether you consider friendship a book or circles, let God bring the right ones in and out of your life. Sometimes you have to give the “gift of goodbye” to old friends to make new ones.

Seek out those special friends that do more than just tolerate you. Seek those who celebrate and accelerate you. You need close and intimate friends who will help you in your weaknesses and who will stay with you until you get strong. You need friends who celebrate your strengths, and help them grow and flourish. Good friends will not only tell you when you’re wrong, they will also help you make things right. They will stand by your side when everyone else leaves, and they will fight your battles with you. Real friends don’t just say they love you. They show you their love with their actions.

If the devil can use people to hurt you, God can use people to heal you. Don’t let past hurts and broken relationships keep you from finding good friends. Pray and ask God to give you healthy friendships that will encourage and strengthen your faith. Remember, you have to be a friend to make friends. Be encouraged by the following verses to always make time to hang out with your friends!

Proverbs 17:17 (NLT), "A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need."

Proverbs 18:24, "One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."

Live the Balanced Life!

Make time to make time. Start right now, and begin to reorganize your life so that you will live a balanced life. God made you for more than the American Dream. Your life is meant to bless God and to bless others. You will love life when you live the life God intended you to live. Live the God-kind-of-life!

Review Questions

1. Why has the American Dream become so destructive?
2. How does God define success? Give two scriptural references.
3. What are some things that Peter teaches that we should possess?
4. Name and describe the seven priorities of a balanced and healthy life.
5. Why is it important to have devotions every day and to be committed to the local church?
6. What do some people call the "enemy" of their free time and rest? What is the real "enemy" of rest?

7. Write the things you are now going to do differently in each of the seven areas of life.

Prayerfully Meditate and Memorize

John 10:10, *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*

LESSON 7

Disciples Possess a Great Devotional Life

Just One Hour A Day

The night of Jesus' arrest, He asked His disciples if they could pray for just an hour, but they ended up falling asleep. The Bible says in Mark 14:37, *"Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. 'Simon,' he said to Peter, 'are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour?'"*

I still believe Jesus is asking us as His disciples, "Can you pray with me for an hour?" We sit down and watch a two-hour movie and time flies by. We watch our favorite sports and three hours pass like seconds; and, we get even more excited when the game goes into overtime. However, when it comes to daily private prayer with the Lord, hardly any Christian spends an hour or more in devotion with God. Plus, when they do, it becomes a "chore" instead of a joy.

We, as disciples, should be ashamed and embarrassed that the Lord, Himself, has asked us to pray with Him for an hour, yet we still put everything else before our time alone with Him. If we give Him anything at all, it is often just the last seconds of our day. We come to Him when we please and often feel like our prayer time is a burden we want to be done with as soon as possible. Lord please forgive us!

Is it any wonder we don't see our lost family members saved? Is it any wonder our schools are full of violence? Is it any wonder our church services are weak and powerless? Is it any wonder our marriages are falling apart? Is it any wonder that liberalism is taking over our universities and country? Is it any wonder most Christians feel weak and beat up? Is it any wonder there is corruption in our government and big businesses? Is it any wonder our children have more in common with MTV than the book of Acts? When one looks at

the prayer life of most Christians, is it any wonder we are the way we are? If Jesus, God in the flesh, made time to pray for hours at a time, how much more should we pray for at least an hour a day?

Twelve Reasons to Pray an Hour a Day

1. Your soul is filled with the Holy Spirit.
2. You are given strength to overcome every obstacle.
3. You are convicted of sin and given a clean heart.
4. You receive wisdom and understanding.
5. God's power can flow through your life.
6. The lost are convicted of sin and saved.
7. The nations are changed and brought to God.
8. Your faith is made strong.
9. God's presence comes into your life, home, community, and church.
10. Healing comes to the hurting.
11. Peace and joy comes to the depressed.
12. Your mind is renewed.

Jesus, Teach Us to Pray

One day the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. Why? Because they had seen Jesus wake up early to pray, and on some occasions they watched Him pray all night. They also

knew He had spent 40 days in the desert praying and fasting before He started His ministry. They wanted to pray like Jesus.

They wanted to see God's power operate in their life just as they had seen it operate in the life of Jesus. They wanted to see the dead raised, demons cast out, and the gospel preached with boldness. They also saw how Jesus was always at peace and full of joy. They wanted to have that same inner peace, confidence, joy, and self-control. The disciples knew the secret to Jesus' life was His prayer life. They could see Jesus always devoted Himself to personal prayer and the study of God's Word.

Read the following scriptures that describe Jesus' devotional life and ask yourself these questions. "Do I pray like Jesus prayed?" If not, ask yourself, "Do I think I'm better than Jesus? Am I busier and more important than Jesus? Is my personal time too important to give God as prayer time?" Be honest with yourself and remember Jesus was always busy. He was always in the spotlight. He had more responsibility than any other human being ever has had or will have. Yet, He always made time to pray!

Four Verses Concerning Jesus' Prayer Life

1. Matthew 14:23, *"After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone."*
2. 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."*
3. Luke 9:28, *"About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray."*
4. Mark 9:29, *"He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer."*

Decide today that you will make time to pray a minimum of an hour everyday. Make spending time with God a top priority.

You might think that you are too busy to pray, but the truth is you are too busy not to pray. God must be the source of your life and joy. He must be what you rely upon and where you get your direction in life. You will rise and fall based on your prayer life.

Read the scriptures that describe the disciple's life of prayer and begin to follow their example. Are you better than them to not pray like they prayed? Do you feel God wanted them to pray but wishes you to avoid Him? Do you think your life does not need God's presence and power? Are you busier than they were? Brothers and sisters, pray like Jesus prayed. Pray like the disciples and early Christians prayed.

Five Verses Concerning the Disciple's Prayer Life

1. Acts 1:13-14, *"13 When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. 14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers."*
2. Acts 2:42, *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."*
3. Acts 3:1, *"One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer – at three in the afternoon."*
4. Acts 10:30, *"Cornelius answered: 'Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me.'"*
5. Acts 14:23, *"Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."*

Three Ways to Pray an Hour Every Day

The key to spending an hour a day with God is passion. You have to keep your love flame for God burning bright. Even though life may get busy, you should make spending time with Jesus a priority. Here are three ways to help you enjoy spending an hour a day with Jesus: (1) Be Focused in Your Prayers, (2) Incorporate Reading the Bible, and (3) Make Time to Worship.

On one hand, I don't believe we should let the clock rule our prayer life. True fellowship and communion with God should be "24-7" throughout the day, and spontaneous, because Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "*pray continually.*" On the other hand, I still believe there is great benefit from being disciplined and committed in your prayer life.

As you read these three keys to a healthy prayer life, remember that the most important part of prayer is your relationship to God. If you miss your hour with God there is "no condo-bondo" (*condemnation or bondage*). Just plan to do better moving forward and try to make better use of your time. If there are seasons where your best is less than an hour a day, be effective in whatever time you give God and remember to stay connected to Him throughout the day.

1. Be Focused in Your Prayers

One of the most common pitfalls in prayer is that people don't pray with focus. Imagine if you were to stand before a judge to plead a case for your wronged loved one. You would not come before the judge talking about the weather or the meal you ate last night. You would be pleading for him to see the facts in the case and to bring justice to your loved one.

Your time with God should be focused in the same way. When a person prays he should not allow his mind to wander and think of all types of various subjects. The mind should be fixed on the Word of God and the promises it contains. As a result, our prayers should be direct and specific. When we

come to God asking for specific things to be done according to His Word He will answer us (1 John 5:14-15).

When you pray for specific requests, pray using the Word of God. When I pray for the church, I bring to the Lord very specific needs, such as finances, and I begin to pray the Word of God. For example, I will pray, "Lord you said in your Word that you will supply all my needs according to your riches in glory (Philippians 4:19). I therefore ask you, in the name of Jesus, to bring in \$16,000 this month to the church so that we can do all that you have called us to do for your Kingdom." When I pray like this my heart is filled with the assurance of God's promises because I know He will answer me! Spend time in prayer focused on the specific needs in your life and be sure to base your requests on the will of God revealed in the Bible.

Though your mind may be racing with so many thoughts that it takes the whole hour just to get focused don't give up, because you will receive power and faith from the Holy Spirit to see your prayers answered. Make praying "focused" prayers the goal and don't just pray for an hour. Stay in prayer for as long as it takes to be successful. In other words, don't leave your prayer closet until you get what you came for.

In the parable of the "Persistent Widow," found in Luke 18:1-8, Jesus said that if an unrighteous judge can be swayed by the constant pleading of a widow, how much more so will God, our Father, answer our cries when we are persistent in our prayers to Him. Don't give up if God's promises are delayed in your life. God's delays aren't always denials. Sometimes He is simply testing your faith.

The "*Tabernacle Prayer*," as taught by Pastor David Cho, is a helpful tool to stay focused in prayer for an hour. Consider each item in the Old Testament tabernacle as a station of prayer. It will help make your time of request effective because you do it last, after clearing your mind and focusing on God. Even if you don't follow the exact tabernacle pattern, praying like this will help you stay focused and effective.

1. **THE BRASS ALTAR (10 min.):** Thank God for Jesus' sacrifice on the cross that He made for you. Pray and acknowledge everything the cross did and will do in your life.
2. **THE BRASS LAVER (10 min.):** Examine your life by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Ask God to show you your faults, weaknesses, and sins. Then repent of each one and ask God to wash you clean.
3. **THE SEVENFOLD CANDLE STICK (10 min.):** Begin to welcome and acknowledge the Holy Spirit by praying for the nine manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit to be developed in your life. Ask for the nine spiritual gifts to be active in your ministry and pray in tongues.
4. **THE TABLE OF BREAD (10 min.):** Find three to five verses in the Bible to bring you strength and blessing for the current season in your life and begin to speak the Word over your life and confess each of the promises. This is a great time to pray by making declarations found in the Bible. For example, Psalm 23, *"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want!"*
5. **THE ALTAR OF INCENSE (10 min.):** Begin to offer God the many different forms of praise that are described in the ancient Hebrew Bible. For example, "towdah" in Hebrew means to "raise your hands" and "shabach" means to "shout for the victory." Also, you can praise God by reciting His Hebrew names like, "Jehovah Jireh," which means, "the Lord will provide" or "Jehovah Rapha," which means, "the Lord is my healer." Or simply sing worship songs you've learned in church or make songs up from your own heart (Psalm 96:1).
6. **THE ARK OF THE COVENANT (10 min.):** Last, be specific in your areas of need and speak the Word of God over every prayer request. Be sure to remember to always add thanksgiving to your prayer requests because God is not

“Santa Claus.” He is your loving heavenly Father (Philippians 4:6). Hopefully you will notice that you now only need 10 minutes to make your requests because your heart is so full of faith after spending 50 minutes glorifying God!

For another example of an effective hour-long prayer workout, consider the Lord’s Prayer found in Matthew 6:9-13:

1. **WORSHIP GOD (12 min.):** *“Our Father in heaven hallowed be your name,”* glorify God with praise and worship.
2. **PRAY FOR GOD’S KINGDOM TO COME (12 min.):** *“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,”* pray for God’s will to be done in your life.
3. **PRAY FOR PROVISION (12 min.):** *“Give us today our daily bread,”* ask God to bless you to be a blessing.
4. **PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS (12 min.):** *“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors,”* ask God to forgive your sins as you forgive those who have sinned against you.
5. **PRAY TO REMAIN HOLY (12 min.):** *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one,”* pray for God to keep you from sin and guide you on the path of righteousness for His namesake (Psalm 23:3).

2. Incorporate Reading the Bible

Another way to enjoy spending an hour with God in prayer is to pray the various prayers that are found in the Bible. There are literally hundreds of prayers found all throughout both the Old and New Testaments, especially in the book of Psalms. Plus, you can spend time meditating on the Scriptures that God has spoken to you and begin to search for a deeper understanding of the Word. I love spending time in prayer

before I preach, mediating on the Word of God. I ask the Lord, "What does this mean to you?" Or, "God reveal your knowledge to me. I want to know you more."

Remember, studying your Bible should be done at its own time, too. However, praying with your Bible and speaking the Word of God is an effective way to pray for long periods of time and will increase your success at getting answers. Below are three verses to encourage using your Bible in your prayer times.

1. Ephesians 6:17-18, *"17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints."*
2. Romans 10:17, *"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."*
3. Hebrews 4:12, *"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."*

3. Make Time to Worship

Worship is a form of prayer that is effective to keep your love for God burning strong. Find some worship music that expresses your heart for God and sing to the Lord from your heart. The presence of God will begin to fill the room and you will have deeper times with the Lord than you even have at church. Starting your prayer time with worship is a great way to get your heart and mind focused on the Lord.

Try to sing in the Spirit from your heart. Allow God to speak through you. Also, begin to prophesy or speak words of wisdom and knowledge as the Spirit leads you. God desires to bless you in your times of worship. You can encourage yourself

just like you were at church with a pastor and worship leader. God can use you to bless and speak His very Words into your own life.

John 4:23-24, "23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth."

Read and Study the Bible Everyday

The next important part of having a great devotional life is to make time to study the Word of God. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 2:15, *"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."* Every true disciple must make time to read and study God's Word everyday.

One of the best ways to get to know your Bible is to follow a Bible reading program. I recommend starting with a Bible reading program that will take you through the entire Bible in one year. Each day you will read something in both the Old and New Testaments. If you don't desire to follow a specific Bible reading program, do your best to still read one book at a time. Try not to "hop around" too much until you get a good grasp of all 66 individual books of the Bible. It is good to read from start to finish so that you are not just reading "popular verses" out of context and jumping from one book to another.

Another great way to enjoy studying your Bible is to take notes as you read and prepare outlines of the material. This will help you organize the information you are getting so that it will be easier to remember. Your notes and outlines will be helpful when you want to share the Word of God with others. Also, one of my favorite ways to read the Bible is with Bible literature tools; for example: Bible dictionaries, commentaries, and lexicons.

Try not to read the tools first. It is always good to consult the tools after you have read a chapter because the tools can help you pull the most knowledge out of each passage. A Bible dictionary gives basic definitions of words and teaches you the different ways a word can be used. Commentaries are comments and explanations scholars have written on each chapter. They draw from their education in Biblical languages, world history, and the culture of the Bible. Lexicons are simply dictionaries for the original languages of the Bible. If you want to learn why the translators chose a certain English word to explain the Greek and Hebrew concepts, lexicons are the perfect tools. You will be able to see the very colorful and unique ways the original Greek and Hebrew languages speak the Word of God.

So each day, as you make an hour to pray and be alone with God, try to add another 30-60 minutes of Bible reading and studying. Consider it a "tithe" of your day to God. Your life will never be the same!

2 Timothy 3:16-17, "16 All Scripture is God-breathed and 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."

Review Questions

1. Why should a Christian spend an hour in prayer with the Lord everyday?
2. Give some reasons why it is hard for people to spend an hour in prayer but easy to spend two hours watching a movie.
3. List and describe three ways to make spending an hour in prayer easy and effective.

4. How much time a day do you spend in prayer? If needed, describe the changes that you are going to make to increase this time.
5. Why is reading the Bible everyday important?
6. List some tools that can make studying the Bible more informative.
7. How often do you read and study the Bible? What study tools do you use?
8. On a scale of 1-10, 10 being the best and 1 being the worst, how do you rank your devotional life? What changes are you going to make to bring it to a 10?
9. Write out a prayer to God describing your heart and passion to have a great devotional life. Use two Scriptures from this lesson.

Prayerfully Meditate and Memorize

Psalm 27:4, "One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple."

LESSON 8

Disciples Possess a Lifestyle of Giving

God, the Father, is a Giver

If I were to choose one attribute of God's love that is the most visible and easiest to see on the earth, I would choose the attribute of generosity. God is a giver. God created the earth and gave it to man. He created Eve and gave her to Adam. He created the animals and the garden and gave them to man. He gave man his five senses: touch, taste, smell, hearing, and seeing. He gave man free choice. He gave man a spirit and a soul. Even when man sinned against Him, He gave them clothes and the first blood sacrifice.

Throughout the Old Testament, God was a giver. He gave Cain a second chance at life. He gave Noah warning of His judgment and the knowledge and ability to build the ark. He gave the new world to Noah's children. God called Abraham and gave him a child, and the title, "Father of many nations." God gave Jacob twelve sons so that the nation of Israel would have twelve tribes. He gave Joseph the ability to interpret dreams so that he could be made a ruler of Egypt. God gave Moses the ability to do miracles and lead the nation of Israel to freedom.

God gave the Israelite people riches from Egypt and protection from the death angel. He gave them water from a rock, manna in the desert, and His presence in the form of a cloud by day and fire by night. He gave Israel His laws so that His presence could dwell in the tabernacle. He gave them victory over all their enemies and forgiveness of all their sins.

He gave Israel the "Promise Land" that was flowing with milk and honey, and He gave them protection from all their enemies. When Israel sinned and broke their covenant with Him, He still gave them prophets and godly kings to lead them. And when they repented, He always forgave them. When Israel

sinned even more against God, He sent Jesus, His Son, to be their redeemer and the Savior of the world.

James 1:17, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."

God, the Son, is a Giver

When Jesus came and walked on the earth, He was a giver like His Father. He gave wine to guests at a wedding feast so they could celebrate the marriage. He gave bread and fish to over 5,000 people so they could eat and not faint. He gave three years of His life to serve mankind in every way they needed.

He gave healing to everyone who was sick and came to Him for help. He gave sight to the blind, healing to the lepers, and compassion to all around Him. He gave Lazarus another chance to live. He gave a woman freedom from twelve years of bleeding.

Jesus also gave deliverance to those who were oppressed by the devil. He gave freedom and a sound mind to a man who had been possessed with a legion of demons. He gave an older woman healing from back pain caused by an evil spirit. He also gave a healthy soul to a young boy who had a demon which made him throw himself into fire. Jesus loved to give freedom from the devil's oppression.

Jesus also did what no other person could ever do. He gave His perfect, sinless life to be a blood sacrifice for the sins of the world. He gave his flesh to be beaten and whipped. He gave His face to be punched and spat upon. He gave His hands and feet to be pierced with nails. He gave His forehead to be gouged with thorns, and He gave His blood to be poured out on the earth for the forgiveness of the sins of mankind. Jesus gave His life so that others could have eternal life.

Jesus then gave the world a church built upon twelve apostles. He gave His church the Bible. His Word has been preserved for over 2,000 years without any contradiction or

corruption. He also gave His church the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead.

Romans 5:15-17, "15 But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! 16 Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.

17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ."

God, the Holy Spirit, is a Giver

The Holy Spirit came to earth to give gifts to all men. The Holy Spirit gives conviction to sinners so they can repent of sin and be saved. He gives new spiritual birth to all who call upon the name of Jesus, and He gives daily transformation and sanctification to all believers so they can be renewed in their minds and live a God-kind-of-life. He also gives every believer the fullness of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

He gave the early church the Word of God so it could be written down and read by everyone. He gave the church the ability to preserve and handle it accurately so that His Word could be passed down for over 2,000 years.

He gave the apostles the same anointing that was on Jesus so they could preach the gospel with power, heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out devils. He gave the nine spiritual gifts to the church with the evidence of speaking in other tongues. And, since the day of Pentecost, He still gives every believer who believes in Jesus, His power and spiritual gifts.

He brings comfort to every believer's hurting heart. He brings wisdom to all who ask for God's knowledge, and He

gives the people of God His presence so they will know the Father and Son are always with them.

1 Corinthians 12:7-11, "7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines."

Are You a Giver or a Taker?

Now that you have been reminded of God's great and outstanding generosity, the question you need to answer is, "Are you a giver or a taker?" Be honest with yourself and answer the question, not just based on your beliefs or good intentions but on your current actions and past record.

Are you a tither? If you do not tithe and give God 10% of your total income, you are a taker. How could you consider yourself a giver when you are stealing from God? To be a giver, you must first be a faithful tither.

Malachi 3:8-12, "8 Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?' In tithes and offerings. 9 You are under a curse – your whole nation – because you are robbing me. 10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. 'Test me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

11 'I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,'

says the Lord Almighty. 12 'Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,' says the Lord Almighty."

Your first responsibility, as a giver, is to be a giver to God in your tithes and offerings. You should be able to give God your tithe with a smile on your face because you understand, in comparison to all He has done for you, that a tithe is just a drop of water compared to God's ocean of blessings in your life.

Do you give offerings? If you do not give generous offerings to missionaries, evangelistic outreaches, and to the poor and hurting around you, you are a taker. How could you call yourself a giver if you do not actively share with those who are in need of money? You might be thinking that you cannot afford to tithe and give offerings, but the truth is you cannot afford not to give. The Bible is very clear on how God feels about those who do not give their tithes and offerings.

Biblical Evidence for Giving the Whole Tithe to God

Here are three Scriptures that teach the need to give your tithe and offerings to God through the local church. Prayerfully read these Scriptures and allow God to teach you His ways. Remember, these are not the words of "greedy ministers" or "shady TV preachers." These are the very words of our great and generous God.

- 1. BEFORE THE LAW OF MOSES:** Genesis 14:18-20, *"18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, 19 and he blessed Abram, saying, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. 20 And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.'"*
- 2. THE WHOLE TITHE:** Malachi 3:10, *"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. 'Test me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open*

the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.'"

- 3. COLLECTION FOR GOD'S PEOPLE:** 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, *"1 Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made."*

- 4. UNTO CHRIST:** Hebrews 7:8-10, *"8 In the one case, the tenth is collected by people who die; but in the other case, by him [Jesus] who is declared to be living. 9 One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, 10 because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor."*

The Old Testament Scriptures, above, simply teach that the whole tithe is to be given unto God, and the New Testament verses show that God's people kept this pattern in the church. Therefore, I believe a person should tithe off the "gross," not the "net." This means we should tithe off of the portion that gets taxed, not the portion after the taxes. Just because the government takes their "first cut" doesn't mean that God shouldn't get the "whole tithe." As a result, be obedient to tithe 10% from your total income, before taxes, and receive all of God's promised blessings.

Biblical Evidence for Giving Your Offerings to God

Below are three passages that teach the habit and benefit of giving God offerings above your tithe. May these verses inspire you to be generous like God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

- 1. THE NEW TESTAMENT PATTERN:** Acts 4:32-35, *“32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all 34 that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.”*

Here we see that the early Christians were very generous in their giving. They shared all that they had and sold their homes to give the money to the church. As a result there were no needy persons among them. I believe when a church is really blessed they can say the same thing. Instead of saying, “Our pastor drives a Rolls Royce,” offerings should be given so that there are no needy persons in the house of God. God is a good host in His house because there is always enough for everyone

- 2. CHEERFUL GIVING:** 1 Corinthians 9:6-7, *“6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”*

By these verses we understand the proper way to give offerings to God and that is cheerfully! You should always give as the Lord speaks to your heart and never feel like you have to give because of what a man says. Only give to God because of what God, Himself, personally says to your heart. So when you give, give with a smile on your face and joy in your heart because you are imitating God who is a great big giver!

- 3. SOWING GENEROUS SEED:** 1 Corinthians 9:8-11, *“8 And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 9 As it is written: ‘They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever.’ 10 Now he who*

supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God."

By the standards of the world, Americans are rich. We have cars, houses, clean water, education, food, technology, and hospitals. Restructure your budget so that you can be rich in your giving, instead of being in debt because you are rich in your spending! Also, remember that as you give, give according to your need. If what you have in your hand does not meet your "need," prayerfully give it to God as your "seed." The best way to get out of debt and poverty is by generously giving to God's Kingdom. So give to the Lord what is in your hand, and He will give to you what is in His.

Three Things to Remember When Giving

There are a variety of ways to give your offerings to God. For example, you could give offerings to a missionary, an evangelistic outreach, a needy family in your community, a church building fund, a guest speaker, a local Christian charities, or to bless your local ministers. Whatever you give, give in the name of the Lord with joy in your heart because your gift can make a tremendous difference in people's lives. Consequently, when giving your offering try to remember the following three things:

1. *Always give your tithe, first, to your local church. Then give your offerings above your tithe:* In other words, don't place another ministry or need above your local church. Your local congregation is the place where you are regularly ministered to and discipled. So your tithe should always be given, first, into the ground where you have been reaping your spiritual food.

2. *Never give offerings out of pressure or manipulation:* There are literally thousands of good ministries where you can give but you need to only give to those the Lord asks you to bless. For example, just in our church alone, we have many different ways to give offerings on any given week: missions, building fund, and special outreaches to the needy. Every church member should prayerfully ask God what ministries they should give to without guilt or compulsion.

3. *Give your offering like a farmer plants seed, as an investment into the future:* Think of your offering more as an “investment” instead of only being a gift. Ask God, in prayer, to give you a bountiful harvest so that you can be rich in your giving. God desires you to be blessed to be a blessing. Just imagine what would happen if everyone gave their best to God to help others. The world’s needs would be met because His people would always have more than enough!

Giving to the Poor is the Heart of Missions

Today, in America, we spend more on pet food (\$40 billion per year) than we do on supporting missions (\$30 billion per year). If we spent as much money on feeding the world’s hungry as we do on just on fast food (\$120 billion per year), we could feed all the starving people in the world and end world hunger. There is enough wealth in the world (\$200 trillion) to give the 7 billion people on the earth around \$28,000 each!

Our problem is not with money. Our problem is with the human heart. For America to change, you and I must change. Start, today, by reading these Scriptures and ask God to give you a heart for the poor and hurting. Rebuke the spirit of greed, selfishness, and envy so you can demonstrate your heart of giving by helping others in need!

1. **GIVING TO THE POOR IS GIVING TO JESUS:** Matthew 25:41-43, *“41 Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’”*

When we neglect the needs of the poor we will suffer punishment from Jesus because He identifies with the poor and needy. So, consider giving to the poor a very serious matter and be generous with your giving. Also, learn wisdom when you are personally helping people who are in need so they do not use the money or gifts for drugs or other harmful things. You don't want to empower bad habits, so if you are not sure, give to ministries that help the poor in a godly and constructive way.

2. **HELPING OTHERS IS TRUE RELIGION:** James 1:27, *“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”*

Being truly spiritual and practicing true “religion” is to help others who don't have anyone to help them. In the U.S., you can help with the foster care program, the local “Boys and Girls Clubs,” nursing homes, the homeless, drug addicts, prostitutes, and those who live in low income neighborhoods. Outside of the U.S., you can help support orphanages, feeding programs, disaster relief, those who are persecuted for their faith, and victims of sex trafficking.

- 3. GIVING TO THE POOR IS LENDING TO THE LORD:**
Proverbs 19:17, *“Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward them for what they have done.”*

When you give to the poor God will repay and bless you. God always rewards those who look after the poor. If you want to be blessed and rewarded give to the poor and needy.

- 4. NEVER SHUT YOUR EARS TO THE POOR:** Proverbs 21:13, *“Whoever shuts their ears to the cry of the poor will also cry out and not be answered.”*

God said, if you don't hear and respond to the cry of the poor, you will pray in your time of need and He will not hear you, nor answer you. If you feel like you are struggling financially seek out the poor and meet their needs. Do for them what you want God to do for you!

- 5. THOSE WHO HELP THE POOR LACK NOTHING:**
Proverbs 28:27, *“Those who give to the poor will lack nothing, but those who close their eyes to them receive many curses.”*

The Bible makes the point very clear that if you help poor people you will be blessed, but if you neglect poor people you will be cursed. It's that simple. So, decide to stop making excuses and start giving to the poor and be blessed!

- 6. LOVE WITH YOUR ACTIONS AND DEEDS:** 1 John 3:16-18, *“16 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 and sisters. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”*

This is how you can know if you truly love God. If you see people in need and help them, you are displaying love. Don't just talk about love, show love, and one of the greatest ways to

show people that you love them is to give in their time of need. I believe giving to the poor is the heart of missions, both local and foreign!

Be a Generous Giver like God!

Decide, right now, that you are going to be like your Father in heaven and be a big, generous giver. Start today, and repent if you have not been faithful in giving your full tithes. Start, this week, to be a tither. If you have not been giving offerings above your tithes, start today and ask God where you should invest your money so that you can be made rich on all occasions. And for those who have already been generous in giving, begin to ask God for more seed so that you can sow more into the Kingdom of God.

I challenge you to pray and set an amount of money you would like to be able to give to a certain ministry. Begin to be faithful with what you have. Watch and see, in six months, what God will do. Also, determine in your heart that you will be mindful of the poor, both in local and foreign missions, and begin to set patterns of giving to those who are in need.

Always remember not to love money, but to love giving money away for the kingdom of God. The best way to break the attitude of greed is to be a giver because, when you give your money to others, you show God you love Him more than you love yourself. Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, *“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”* Therefore, shun greed and exalt generosity in your life.

In 1 Timothy 6:10, Paul warned, *“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”* Be on your guard against even the smallest hint of greed. I believe, as you do these things, you will see that the Word of God is true when it says that you will be blessed to be a blessing, and that, *“It is more blessed to give than to receive”* (Acts 20:35). God will open

for you the windows of heaven and pour you out blessings that you do not have enough room to receive!

Review Questions

1. List and describe three ways God, the Father, is a giver.
2. List and describe three ways God, the Son, is a giver.
3. List and describe three ways God, the Holy Spirit, is a giver.
4. Why is it important to tithe off of the gross?
5. Are you a consistent faithful tither? Describe why or why not.
6. Explain with one scripture from both the Old and New Testament why tithing is a command for all believers.
7. Why is it important to give offerings after the tithe?
8. What are the three things to remember when giving your offerings?
9. Where do you give your offerings? Why?
10. Why is it important to give to the poor in the form of local and foreign missions?
11. Write out a prayer that asks God to bless you so that you can be a blessing. Use three Scriptures from the lesson.

Prayerfully Meditate and Memorize

Luke 6:38, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

SECTION THREE: *Disciples DO*

This third section of the book describes four things that disciples do in their lives to impact others. These are the things that bring God's Kingdom to the earth.

Disciples do build the local church for God's glory, operate in the gifts of the Spirit to change the world, defend the faith against the lies of the devil, and go and make other disciples who make disciples to the end of the age.

*John 13:17, "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed **if you do them.**"*

LESSON 9

Disciples Do Build the Local Church

I Will Build My Church

When Jesus was on this earth, He had a two-part mission. His first mission was to redeem lost mankind by His death on the cross, and His second was to build a living organization that would remain after His departure to heaven and represent His Kingdom upon the earth. This living organization is called the "church."

The Greek word for church is "*ekklesia*." Ekklesia means "called out ones who gather together." The church refers to people who have been called out of the world and gather together to know God and to make Him known. The main purpose for Jesus making disciples was so they could be the foundation of His church and spread the Word of God to all the nations.

One day Jesus asked His disciples who they thought He was. Peter received a revelation from the Father and said that Jesus was the "Christ" or the "Anointed One." After Peter said this, Jesus said the following in Matthew 16:17-19,

"17 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'"

Jesus declared, upon the revelation of who He was, that He would build a church that Satan, himself, could not stop. Gates are meant to keep people out, and since the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden, Satan has had power over this earth. But

now for anyone who believes Jesus is the Christ, they will invade the devil's territory and establish the Kingdom of God!

When Jesus came, the cross totally destroyed the works of the devil and established His church by His disciples. He told the disciples to go into the entire world and make more disciples. Today, because of the first disciples, Jesus is the most well known name in the world, the Bible the most read book, and Christianity is growing rapidly in places like China, Nigeria, and Brazil.

The church has been growing for 2,000 years and the gates of hell have not been able to stop it. The devil tried to use the ancient Roman Empire to stop the early church, but the disciples kept spreading the gospel despite being publicly tortured and fed to lions. The devil tried to use division in the church and bring in false doctrines through the Roman Catholics, but the gates of hell did not prevail because the Reformers invented the printing press to put the Bible in every Christian's hands. Communism has tried to conquer the church by banning religion and the Bible, but the church of Jesus Christ has outlasted every communist regime. Even more recently, Islam (founded 500 years after Christianity) has tried to stop the church, but today Christianity is growing and moving forward in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Northern Africa, Indonesia, Pakistan, and every Muslim nation!

Jesus boldly declared in John 12:32, *"When I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."* As a result, you should be compelled to join Christ's church and co-labor to build it with Him by the power of God. When you help build your local church, with the knowledge of who Jesus is and with the Word of God, the gates of hell will not prevail against it. The gates of hell will not prevail in your home, community, city, or nation, because Jesus promised He would build His church upon disciples in every nation until the end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20)!

The Universal and Local Church

There are two ways to look at the church. First, the church is universal. The “universal church” is considered to be all the believers around the world who love God and are called to help build the one true church of Jesus Christ. Believers belong to many different congregations, live in various parts of the world, and are part of many diverse denominations. However, they are a part of the one universal church because they all believe the same revelation of Jesus Christ that Peter shared.

Good churches and denominations hold to the core doctrines and commandments that Jesus taught and are united through their love and devotion to Jesus. The following doctrines are the foundational beliefs of the true church of Jesus Christ.

1. **THE BIBLE:** The 66 books found in both the Old and New Testaments are the only inerrant and inspired Words of God.
2. **THE TRINITY:** There is only one God, revealed in three coequal and co-eternal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
3. **JESUS’ TWO NATURES:** Jesus, the eternal divine Son of God and equal to the Father, took on flesh to be the Savior of the world. Therefore, Jesus is both fully human and divine.
4. **SALVATION BY FAITH ALONE:** Salvation from sins can only be received by having faith in Jesus’ death on the cross, burial, and bodily resurrection.
5. **THE TWO HOLY PRACTICES:** The two holy practices of the church are baptism in water, for the evidence of forgiveness of sin, and communion, with the fruit of the vine and unleavened bread, representing the body and blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

6. **JESUS' SECOND COMING:** Jesus, who is fully God and man, will physically come back to earth to rule and reign forever as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
7. **THE ETERNAL JUDGEMENT:** After the judgment seat of Christ, those who have received salvation and borne the fruit of good works will receive eternal rewards in the presence of God upon the new earth. Those who have rejected Jesus and practiced sin will be cast into the lake of fire to be tormented for eternity.

The second kind of church is called the "local church." The local church is the unique congregation where individual disciples belong. Since there are so many disciples, all around the world, they cannot all go to the same building to worship God and hear His Word. So, there are many different places with a plurality of leaders for Jesus' disciples to gather together and serve God.

Though each good church will have its unique characteristics that make it special from other local gatherings, it will always agree on the core fundamental beliefs and obey all that Jesus commanded. Each and every disciple of Christ should prayerfully join a good local church that teaches the truth and fulfill their God-given call.

The Bride of Christ

Being a part of the church is a great honor and privilege because Jesus considers the church to be His bride. Carefully read the following verses from Paul in Ephesians 5:22-33 to see the wonderful comparison he makes between a husband and wife, and Jesus' relationship to the church.

"22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the

Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church – 30 for we are members of his body. 31 ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’

32 This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.”

Basically, Paul is teaching that Jesus views His church like His bride and loves His church and takes great care of her. Also, Paul taught that Jesus becomes one with His church and joins Himself to her, as a husband becomes one with his wife. Being a part of the church is like being married to Jesus.

Consequently, how could someone ever say they love Jesus and hate His bride? Imagine if you came to my house and my wife came to the door and you said, “What are you doing here? I hate you! I don’t want be around you. I only came over to hang out with your husband.” How do you think I would react to your disrespect toward my wife? The truth is, you wouldn’t stay in my house very long because you would’ve offended me by mistreating my wife. I would probably say something back like, “You either treat my wife with the same respect you treat me or you can leave because my wife and I are one!”

The same is true with Jesus and His bride, the church. Many, today, say they are Christians but do not belong to a church nor help build a church. They think they can love Jesus

and at the same time disrespect and ignore His bride. Wrong! No real disciple can truly love God and not be a part of a local church. Every disciple must find a good local church and help build it because Jesus loves His church like a husband loves his wife. This is why the author of Hebrews teaches the believer to never forsake the gathering together of the saints because it is for the disciple's own good and for Christ's glory.

Hebrews 10:24-25, "24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

The Body of Christ

The Bible also refers to the church as the "body of Christ." Read the following verses and discover how the church is considered the body of Christ.

1. Ephesians 4:11-13, *"11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."*
2. 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, *"12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body – whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many."*
3. 1 Corinthians 12:26-27, *"26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."*

Just like the human body has many different parts but all work together as one body, the same is true with the body of Christ. The church is one body of believers, each disciple performing a different assignment, but all are working together as one. Jesus has created each of His disciples with special gifts and talents that work together as one healthy body. So, it is the job of every local church to connect, mentor, and send out each disciple to fulfill their calling to grow and expand the Kingdom of God.

Can you now see how important it is that every disciple is committed to his or her local church? Imagine if your hand said to the rest of your body, "I'm tired today. I don't feel like going to work. I'm just going to stay home." You wouldn't be able to get any work done. Likewise, when disciples say; "I don't feel like going to church today. I think I'll just stay home," the whole body suffers because the individuals are not doing their part. God has a place for every disciple in local churches to build His Kingdom. When every disciple does his or her part in the body of Christ, the church and community are blessed and God will do great things upon the earth.

However, when members of the body of Christ stay home and are not committed to their church, the local body can become sick, weak, and ineffective. Today you must decide that being a part of the church is not an option, but a must. Place church at the top of your priorities because you understand the vital role you play on God's team. Honor God, today, by being a strong and effective part of His body.

Anointing and Appointing Leadership in the Church

The five-fold ministry gifts are the resources that Jesus gave the church to be its foundation and structure. In today's church, these would be the disciples who desire to be in the ministry of the church and serve the people of God by building up the church for its works of service to the world. The word "ministry" means "the act of serving God," and "ministers" are "people who serve God in the ministry" (Colossians 4:7).

For someone to be in the five-fold ministry, they have to be both anointed and appointed by God. To be anointed for ministry means God, through the Holy Spirit, gives a person a specific calling in the five-fold ministry, and then gives them the gifts and abilities to go along with that calling. To be appointed, or ordained, simply means that God uses other trusted leaders in the church to see the five-fold ministry gifting in a person and recognizes that the character of the person is in agreement with his calling. As a result, local church leadership then gives the minister the church's approval to go forth and fulfill his calling.

Take, for example, the calling of Paul to be an apostle. The Bible records, in Acts 9, that when Paul was saved, Jesus personally called him to be an apostle. This act would be considered his "anointing." However, Jesus didn't want Paul doing ministry all by himself, so he eventually brought Barnabas into his life to help him be received into the church so that the other apostles could give him his ministerial "appointing." Certainly, as Galatians 1 reveals, he was not dependent on men to give him his calling, but at the same time he humbled himself to receive fellowship and appointment from the local church. Like Paul, every minister needs both a God-given anointing and a church approved appointing.

1. **PAUL'S ANOINTING:** Galatians 1:15-16, *"15 But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and **called me by his grace**, was pleased 16 to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being."*
2. **PAUL'S APPOINTING:** Acts 13:1-3, *"1 Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 2 While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, **they placed their hands on them and sent them off.**"*

As seen in the above passages, Paul received an anointing (calling) from God and an appointing (laying on hands) through the church. Then Paul, along with Barnabas, began to travel and appoint new disciples who were called and anointed, by God, for the ministry. Luke records in Acts 14:23 that after the church approval and appointment, *“Paul and Barnabas **appointed elders** for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.”*

We can see the pattern is as follows: (1) Jesus anointed and appointed the first disciples; (2) The first disciples then recognized the calling and anointing of Paul and Barnabas and sent them out to make new disciples; (3) Paul and Barnabas then appointed newly anointed leaders in the church; and last, (4) Paul commanded Timothy (one of his disciples) to appoint and raise up new leaders (2 Timothy 2:2).

The church was able to rapidly grow, both in quality and quantity, as the newly anointed and appointed ministers preached the gospel and made new disciples.

Descriptions of the Five-Fold Ministry

The five-fold ministry can be easily understood in the example of a hand. Even though you consider the hand to be one part of the body, it is made up of five individual fingers. Each finger is separate and has its own distinctive purpose. The same is true with the five-fold ministry gifts. They come from the same source, the Holy Spirit, but each has a different purpose. Together, however, they make one complete ministry team to win the world for Jesus! Consider Paul’s teaching concerning the five-fold ministry gifts given to the church by Jesus in Ephesians 4:11-13:

“11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the

Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

The five-fold ministry gifts are: (1) Apostles, (2) Prophets, (3) Evangelists, (4) Pastors, and (5) Teachers. Here is a brief description of what each minister does in his or her ministry position.

1. **APOSTLES:** Ministers that are sent out to start and oversee new churches. Today's missionaries and church planters can be considered modern day apostles. Paul is a biblical example of an apostle (Romans 1:1).
2. **PROPHETS:** Ministers that speak on behalf of God and give spiritual guidance to the church. They are used in the gift of prophecy and are given dreams and visions that help direct the local church. Agabus is a biblical example of a prophet (Acts 21:10).
3. **EVANGELISTS:** Ministers that are sent out from the church to win souls and train new soul winners. Philip is a biblical example of an evangelist (Acts 21:8).
4. **PASTORS:** Ministers that shepherd and care for the disciples in the local churches by preaching and teaching. The elders in 1 Peter 5 are biblical examples of pastors and shepherds (1 Peter 5:1-5).
5. **TEACHERS:** Ministers that work in the local church and instruct in doctrine and Christian living. Barnabas is a biblical example of an appointed teacher in the church (Acts 13:1).

Leadership Offices and Ministry Gifts

As you read in the above passage of Ephesians 4, Paul refers to the five-fold ministries as "gifts." This is why we do not see

requirements for these ministries in the Bible, because God gives them as free gifts to whomever He calls. Therefore, the requirements or qualifications of these gifts come from the lists found for the offices of bishop (elder) and deacon. Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 3:1 & 10 (KJV), *"1 This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless."*

The above passage gives the two main leadership positions in the church, "bishop" and "deacon." The first position mentioned is "bishop." The Greek word for bishop is, *"episcope,"* and means, "overseer." The words bishop and elder (Greek, *"presbuteros,"*) are used interchangeably in Titus 1:6-7 and 1 Peter 5:1-2; so, they refer to the same position in the church. Also, the book of Acts, in places like 14:23, 15:2-16:4, 20:13-17, and 21:18, all use the word "elder" to describe the leadership role in the church. Therefore, I feel it is best, and clearer, to use the term "elder" as the title for the main office for those who lead in the church.

The second office mentioned is "deacon." Deacon comes from the Greek word, *"diakoneo,"* which means, "to serve or wait on tables." The deacon position was first developed in Acts 6, as a response to the widows needing the church to give them food and wait on their tables. The term became popular in the New Testament where it described the role of those who served alongside the elders as their "helpers" in the church.

The five-fold ministry gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:11-13 are: (1) Apostles, (2) Prophets, (3) Evangelists, (4) Pastors, and (5) Teachers. However, over time, the ministry gift of "pastor" has been used to be the main title for the leadership of modern churches; for example, "Senior Pastor," "Youth Pastor," etc.

Here are five points to better understand the biblical way of viewing leadership, as elders and deacons, versus the all-encompassing title "pastor," which I believe simply refers to a "ministry gift."

1. *None of the leaders in the church used their office or gift before their name.*

One will never find the phrase "Apostle Paul" in the Bible. It is always, "Paul, the Apostle" (Gal. 1:1, Eph. 1:1, Col. 1:1, & 1 Tim. 1:1). Additionally, the idea to call everyone in the church "Pastor" is a modern invention that is not found anywhere in the Bible or the early church. Though it is acceptable, however, the better title is, "elder."

2. *The Greek word "poimen" is only translated one time as "pastor" in the New Testament, and that is when it is listed in the five-fold ministry (Ephesians 4:11).*

However, it is translated 17 times as "shepherd." So, if the title is used properly it should be "Shepherd Bob" not "Pastor Bob."

3. *Everyone in the book of Acts, after the original apostles (Paul included), was known as elders or deacons, first, and operated in their ministerial gifts, second (Acts 14:23).*

We know that Jesus called Peter to be an apostle. That was his five-fold ministry gift from God. However, as the church model of elders and deacons developed further, even Peter began to refer to his official office over the church as an elder.

Then, from his office of elder, he commanded all the other elders to be good shepherds (or pastors). Therefore, it is clear that elders pastored (shepherded) the local church. As a result, the offices of elder and deacon can be seen as the "positions" for the leaders in the church. Whereas the gifts, such as "pastor," "evangelist," "prophet," etc., can be seen as the "works" or the "actions" that the elders and deacons do in the church.

Read how Peter described what he thought of himself, as a fellow elder, in regards to his office in 1 Peter 5:1-4,

“1 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.”

4. *Biblically speaking, elders are those who operate in the five-fold ministry gifts (1 Peter 5:1-2).*

For example, elders who are gifted as teachers, teach. Elders, who are gifted as evangelists, evangelize and win the lost. Elders, who are gifted as prophets, prophesy and give prophetic direction to the church. Elders, who are gifted as apostles are sent out to start new churches; and, those who are gifted as pastors, shepherd and care for the sheep.

5. *Not only do we see in the Bible that elders are used in the five-fold ministry gifts, but so are deacons (Acts 21:8).*

Take for example, Philip, who was appointed by the twelve apostles to be the first of seven deacons. Note; he is later referred to as an “evangelist.” Therefore, he was in the office of a deacon and had the ministry gifting of an evangelist.

Acts 6:2-6, “2 So 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. (This is the first time the Greek word for Deacon, "diakoneo," is used.)

3 ‘Brothers, 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 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.’

5 This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them."

Acts 21:8, "Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven [deacons]."

I believe that discipleship-based churches should use the simple model of "elders and deacons" for their church government and team development. For further study and evidence on the matter, I would recommend the following:

1. Read Acts 14:23, 15:2-16:4, 20:13-17, 21:18, 1 Timothy 3:1-16, & Titus 1:5-16.
2. Study the church father, Ignatius, and his letter to the Ephesians as a practical understanding of leadership in the first century church. Ignatius, a powerful leader, was a disciple of John and a first century martyr for the cause of Christ. All his letters, especially the one to the Ephesians, give great insight in to how the early church was led and governed by elders and deacons.
3. Consider reading David W. Bercot's book, "*A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*," under the section, "Church Government."

Requirements for Elders and Deacons

Paul, in 1 Timothy 3:1-13, gives the clearest and best requirements for the disciple to be an elder or deacon.

"1 Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Now the overseer

must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. 5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of Gods church?) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devils trap.

8 Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. 9 They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. 11 In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. 12 A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. 13 Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus."

I believe the qualifications of elder and deacon are one and the same, and that each existing church leadership should determine, with the leading of the Holy Ghost, how each trained disciple should be appointed and ordained. Below is the complete list of requirements, with definitions and examples, so that you can have a clear and sound understanding of how to live if you desire to lead in the church as an elder or deacon.

1. **ABOVE REPROACH:** Elders and deacons must always be in good standing with the church and community, obeying both the laws of God and man. Nothing in the Bible, or elsewhere, should be able to prove them of sin or wickedness.

2. **HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE:** Elders and deacons cannot be polygamists or in sexual perversion; for example, “adulterers, homosexuals, or participants in sexual impurities” (Galatians 5:19).
3. **TEMPERATE:** Elders and deacons must have their emotions under control. They cannot be easily angered, depressed, or full of pride. They must have a balanced emotional life.
4. **SELF-CONTROLLED:** Elders and deacons cannot be addicted to anything in this world: “sports, entertainment, dress, food, drink, etc.”
5. **RESPECTABLE:** Elders and deacons must live their lives worthy of respect in the areas of finance, integrity, speech, time management, and overall lifestyle in the community, church, and home.
6. **HOSPITABLE:** Elders and deacons must have a home and heart that is always open to fellowship, discipleship, and comfort for the people they minister.
7. **ABLE TO TEACH:** Elders and deacons must be able to teach the sound doctrine of the Apostles, including, “passionate love and worship for God,” “the true Gospel of faith and repentance,” “self-sacrificing love for people,” and “instructions for spiritual growth and discipleship.”
8. **NOT GIVEN TO DRUNKENNESS:** Elders and deacons must not be addicted to alcohol or the like; for example, “illicit drugs or other substances.”
9. **NOT VIOLENT, BUT GENTLE:** Elders and deacons must be kind and loving to a world that opposes them, and they must be patient with those they are leading.

10. **NOT QUARRELSOME:** Elders and deacons must be able to learn, under submission to other elders, and teach with humility, not with an attitude of pride or division.
11. **NOT A LOVER OF MONEY:** Elders and deacons must be tithers, generous givers, and not indebted to the lusts of their eyes. They must be an example of a wise steward of God's financial blessings and not pursue dishonest gain in any way.
12. **MANAGE THEIR HOME WELL:** Elders and deacons must keep their home in order. Their children should serve God and be submitted to their parents. This rule also includes the marriage order as seen in Ephesians 5:22-33. Thus, the husband should love his wife as Christ does the church, and the wife should submit unto her husband as the church submits to Christ. Plus, the wives are given a special command in 1 Timothy 3:11 to be, *“worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.”*
13. **NOT A RECENT CONVERT:** Elders and deacons must be thoroughly trained and proved faithful before they are given their appointment. They must be tested and approved, i.e., *“a graduate from the discipleship process.”*
14. **MUST HAVE A GOOD REPUTATION:** Elders and deacons must have a good name in their community, on their job, and with their extended family. There can be no provable evil thing said about them, as seen in the Bible, whether in their character or conduct by non-Christians and Christians alike.

The Role of Women in the Ministry

Our church doesn't withhold the office of elder or deacon from women because we believe that women are able to lead in the church according to Scripture. We see that women in the New

Testament were given the same baptism of the Holy Spirit, the same five-fold ministry gifts, and were used in the same offices. In light of this, I would suggest that all discipleship-based churches recognize this biblical truth and appoint women into the offices of elders and deacons. Here are some verses that show the equality of men and women in the ministry.

Acts 2:17-18, "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy."

Acts 18:24-26, "Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately."

Romans 16:1 (NLT), "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deacon in the church in Cenchrea."

Acts 16:7, "Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was."

Four Reasons for Women Elders and Deacons

Since I know that the "women in ministry" issue is debated in many churches and denominations, I will present my best case for their right to the offices and let you, the reader, make the final decision. Here are the basic premises and conclusion summarized:

1. Women have the same salvation as men according to Galatians 3:28.
2. Women have the same Holy Spirit baptism as men according to Acts 2:18.
3. Women have the same spiritual gifts as men according to 1 Corinthians 12:28.
4. Therefore, women must have the same offices as men according to Romans 16:1; 7.

Now, note the premises with their detailed explanations and conclusion: First, women have the same salvation as men according to Galatians 3:28, "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*" Nothing could be more obvious according to Paul. Second, women have the same Holy Spirit baptism as men according to Acts 2:18, "*Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.*" Peter made it clear, by quoting the prophet Joel, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit was for both, "*men and women.*"

Third, women have the same spiritual gifts as men according to 1 Corinthians 12:28, "*And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.*" Since the "gifts of administration" (a role that all women are allowed to serve in within the church) are given without gender restriction, the "ministry gifts" of apostle, prophet, and teacher should likewise be given to all women without gender restriction. Therefore, with both Acts 2:18, "*they shall prophesy,*" and 1 Corinthians 12:28, it is transparent there is no gender distinction in spiritual gifts.

Fourth, therefore, women should have the same offices as men according to Romans 16:1;7. Romans 16:1;7 proves that Paul appointed women in leadership roles. The verses state, Romans 16:1, "*I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant*

(deacon) of the church in Cenchrea," and in v. 7, "Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was."

This is the debated issue. However, if the above premises are correct, then the conclusion is true regardless of how one feels about it. The main issues brought by the opposing side come from the gender restrictions found elsewhere in the Bible, mainly 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. However, in these restrictions the opposing side is not consistent, for other issues are brought up, as well, that are not taken literally in most of the opposing side's churches, like the following: (i) No braided hair (1 Tim. 2:9); (ii) Women are not allowed to talk at all in church (1 Tim. 2:11); and last, (iii) Women are said to be saved specifically by the good work of childbearing (1 Tim. 2:15).

Therefore, both sides have to draw practical applications and conclusions within the biblical culture and other passages to justify and comply with the very awkward commands of Paul to Timothy, and the Corinthians, in determining how these relate to the modern woman. For those of us who have determined that women are, in fact, intended by God to hold an equal role with men in the ministry, the above restrictions are viewed as pertaining to a specific culture, people, and time, rather than being enduring universal teachings. This conclusion is validated by the Bible's documentation of godly women speaking and leading men at various times and locations.

In conclusion, Douglas Moo, in his commentary on Romans, conceded that Phoebe, according to the Greek definition (and context) is most assuredly a "deacon," an official position of leadership in the church. Plus, Eldon Epp in his book, *Junia the First Woman Apostle*, cites that both he, and the renowned scholar Richard Bauckham, can prove vigorously from the Greek verbiage and context that Junia was indeed a female apostle. As a result, dissenters have serious defects in their methodology to prove otherwise.

Find Your Place to Grow in the Local Church

Every good local church has ministries and places that you can serve and do your part. Remember, the church is the body of Christ. God anointed you to play a unique and special part in it, but first you have to be properly trained so you can be appointed. The job of good elders and deacons is to help prepare you for the work of the ministry in hopes that you, too, will become a disciple who makes disciples.

Joining a discipleship class and coming to church faithfully are steps in the right direction. Now you need to pray for the Lord to show you the place you best fit so you can successfully build the local church. Here are ten examples of ministries where you can serve, with the proper permission and on-hands training of your local church:

1. **SMALL GROUPS MINISTRY:** A meeting in a person's home where the group studies the Bible, prays for each other, and reaches out to the lost in the community.
2. **YOUTH MINISTRY:** A service dedicated to reaching the youth. Here you can win teenagers for the Lord and disciple them.
3. **CHILDREN'S MINISTRY:** A service dedicated to reaching children and bringing them up in the teachings of God.
4. **EVANGELISM MINISTRY:** A time when disciples go out and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost.
5. **PRAYER AND ALTAR MINISTRY:** A time at the beginning and end of every service when you pray for people to be saved, healed, and delivered.
6. **WORSHIP MINISTRY:** A time when you use your singing and musical talents to lead people into the presence of God.

7. **COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY:** A time when you can serve your community in nursing homes, shelters, food banks, low income communities, after school clubs, and the like.
8. **MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY:** A service that ministers to people who speak another language or come from another country.
9. **DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING:** A time when you train others to be disciples of Christ.
10. **HELPS MINISTRY:** Serving people by doing acts of service such as remodeling their home, cleaning their yard, helping around the house, babysitting their children, etc.

This is just a basic list of things you can do at most churches so that the church will be strong and able to grow. Prayerfully ask God where you can serve, and begin to ask Him to make you a leader. Whether it's being an elder or a deacon, God has a call for your life and ministry gifts to pour out. Seek His face until you know what you are called to do. Jesus said that true disciples would make other disciples. Now it's your turn to make a difference in other people's lives. Go and build the church of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Review Questions

1. What does the Greek word "*ekklesia*" mean?
2. Why does hell have gates? What will break down those gates?
3. Describe the universal church and the local church.
4. Describe what the Bible says about the bride of Christ.

5. How should Christians treat the bride of Christ?
6. Describe what the Bible says about the body of Christ.
7. Why is every part important to the body of Christ?
8. Describe what it means to be “anointed” and “appointed?”
9. List and describe each of the five-fold ministries.
10. What is the difference between the “gifts” and the “offices?”
11. List and describe the two offices in the church.
12. List five qualifications of being an elder or deacon.
13. Give two reasons, with Scripture references, why women should be given equal access to the church’s gifts and offices.
14. Give an example of a husband and wife team found in Romans 16.
15. List the areas of ministry where you believe the Lord is calling you to serve.

Prayerfully Meditate and Memorize

1 Timothy 3:15, *“If I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.”*

LESSON 10

Disciples Do Operate in the Gifts of the Spirit

From Pentecost until Now

After Jesus left for heaven, the early church went out in power and preached the gospel with signs following. However, around the 4th century, the church began to suffer from inward conflict and division. A political church began to arise and work with evil governments and oppress people all over the world. This church was and is the Roman Catholic Church.

For many years good Christians had to live in constant conflict and turmoil because of this church. Basically, from 500-1400 A.D., the power of God was only seen in a select few dedicated disciples who maintained the basic teachings of the apostles. During these “Dark Ages” the leadership of Rome was often times so wicked that they persecuted, tortured, and murdered those who opposed them (known as the “Inquisitions”).

However, around the 15th century the true disciples rallied together and broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. This event was called the “Great Protestant Reformation.” They earned the name “Protestants” because they “protested” the Roman Catholic Church, and it was called the “reformation,” because they were “reforming the Christian church to be like the Bible.”

From the 1400’s until the early 1900’s, the Reformers were not as active in the gifts as the early church once was. However, in 1906, on Azusa Street in Los Angeles California, the Holy Spirit fell on the people like it did on the day of Pentecost, and for three straight years people came from all over the world to be filled with God’s Spirit with signs and wonders following.

Since 1906 there are now over 500 million “Spirit-filled” believers all over the world. The largest and fastest growing churches around the world are Spirit-filled. Charismatic disciples, worldwide, outnumber all other protestant churches combined. In South Korea, alone, there is a Spirit-filled church with over 700,000 members and many churches in India, Africa, and China number over 100,000.

The Spirit-filled church grows rapidly and is the fastest growing major belief system in the world. Over 75% of all Protestants in Latin America speak in tongues. There are 3 times more Spirit-filled believers in Brazil (79 Million), than there are Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses in the whole world combined (25 million)!

This is why, when we look back at church history, we see that no matter how hard the devil has tried to extinguish the gifts of the Spirit, the hearts of true disciples have always hungered for the real manifestation of God’s power upon the earth. As a result of this godly heritage spanning from the church fathers to the radical early missionaries and monks, to the Waldensians, Moravians, Methodists, and now Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, worldwide, God is truly moving across the earth like never before. You are alive at the greatest outpouring of God’s Spirit. It’s your turn to operate in the gifts of the Holy Spirit as all the other true disciples have been doing throughout the centuries and around the world!

Jesus Never Took Back His Spiritual Gifts

Before Jesus went back to heaven, He told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem. God, the Father, had promised them the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Why? Jesus wanted His disciples to do the same kind of things, in the Spirit, as He had done. He wanted them to heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out devils, prophesy, and perform miraculous deeds.

However, some misinformed Christians have tried to say that Jesus “ceased” pouring out His gifts after the New Testament was written and the last apostle died. Not only is

this belief not taught in the Bible, the exact opposite is clearly shown. Below are just some of the passages that teach the continuation of the spiritual gifts.

1. Mark 16:15-20 Teaches that These Signs Will Follow Those Who Believe.

Jesus said, in Mark 16:17 that, *“these signs will accompany those who believe.”* He never gave the signs a “time limit,” nor did He separate preaching from the signs. According to Jesus, “signs” will follow the “preaching” of those who believe. The “Great Commission” found in Matthew 28:18-20 complements the passage in Mark 16, and adds the time frame for the preaching church, to *“the very end of the age.”*

So, if someone takes serious the charge of preaching the “good news to all creation” as stated in Mark 16:15, they should also take serious the challenge to believe in Jesus and have signs, including speaking in tongues, follow the preaching of the word.

2. Acts 2:17-18 Proclaims that the Spirit Will be Poured Out on All People.

Inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter quoted Joel 2:28-30 to express the desire of God to *“...pour out [His] Spirit on all people...sons and daughters.”* The declaration is two-fold, (a) No longer will a few; like kings, priests, and prophets or judges have the temporary overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. All people will now receive God’s permanent power in the same way, and (b) The Holy Spirit will not just be for male Jewish people, but for all people: male and female, from every nation, tribe, and tongue.

Dr. Horton stated in his book, *What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit*, that, “The way Peter looked at Joel’s prophecy shows he expected a continuing fulfillment of the prophecy until the end of the “last days.” This means that Joel’s outpouring is available to the end of this age. As long as God

keeps calling people to salvation, He wants to pour out His Spirit upon them. What the Holy Spirit gave Peter and the disciples on Pentecost is for all people until the end of the age.

3. Acts 2:38-39 States that All Whom the Lord our God Will Call Can Receive Spiritual Gifts.

Peter ends his preaching at Pentecost with this powerful statement in Acts 2:38-39, “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. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off for all whom the Lord our God will call.’” Therefore, if one believes that there is to be a continuation of “repenting” and being “baptized in water,” then there is to be a continuation of receiving “the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Speaking in tongues was seen by Peter to be the all-around evidence of the outpouring of Joel, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of the Father. Peter’s belief that speaking in tongues encompassed all the above-mentioned experiences can be seen in his response to the “Roman Pentecost.” Peter stated in Acts 10:47, “Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” Peter knew that Cornelius and his household had received the “outpouring of Joel,” “the gift of the Holy Spirit,” and the “promise of the Father” because Cornelius’ household spoke in tongues just as they had. Therefore, speaking in tongues and all other spiritual gifts should continue until the “last day” is over, the very “end of the age,” and until God is done calling people to salvation.

4. 1 Corinthians 12-14 Clearly Teaches to Not Forbid Speaking in Tongues and to Eagerly Desire all the Spiritual Gifts.

In 1 Corinthians 12:1, Paul commands for the people not to be “uniformed” about spiritual gifts. “Now about the gifts of the

Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed." Next, to end the confusion he describes each of the gifts in detail, including speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 12:12-30). Afterwards, in chapter 13, Paul reinforces the foundation of love, not to the neglect of the gifts but for the sake of properly using the gifts.

His connecting statement, from love to operating in the spiritual gifts is found in 1 Cor. 14:1, *"Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy."* He not only assumed the reader would have the chance to receive the gifts, but that they would also be able to pursue all of them, especially prophecy (which is the same as tongues with interpretation).

As a result, at the end of all his discussion about spiritual gifts and them being grounded in love, he does not warn of a time when speaking in tongues and other spiritual gifts will cease, but rather warns against the church "forbidding" speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 14:39)! It is painfully obvious that Paul taught the continuation of the gifts, including speaking in tongues, for generations to come. If one were to doubt the continuation of the spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12-14, they would then be forced to disregard all of the things spoken about in the rest of the letter, including "love" found in 1 Cor. 13.

In conclusion, according to Jesus and the apostles, speaking in tongues and spiritual gifts were never to cease, but rather be a common experience for all believers at all times. There is not one single passage in the entire Bible that even hints at the idea of the gifts of the Spirit being removed from the church and her mission. The exact opposite is true. The gifts are connected by God to the signs of the gospel and are even protected with commands against their ceasing.

Not a Matter of Talk but of Power

Paul boldly wrote in 1 Corinthians 4:20, *"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power."* Why? Because Jesus always

wanted His church to operate in the gifts of the Holy Spirit so that the gospel would come, not just with words, but with power and demonstration. Jesus never wanted His church to be powerless and void of spiritual gifts.

Sad but true, some “spirit-lite Christians” believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit were just for the first disciples and that the power of the Holy Spirit stopped sometime in the first century. However, Jesus never said that, and there is no Scripture that says the gifts stopped. What Jesus did say to the first disciples regarding the Spirit’s power still stands true for every disciple today (Matthew 10:7-8). Jesus always intended the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be on the earth with His church.

If, 2,000 years ago, Jesus saw the need to cast out devils, do you think the power of Satan is less now than it was 2,000 years ago? If the first disciples saw the need to pray for the sick and crippled, do you think we have less sick people, today, in need of a miracle? No!

We need the power of God in these last days more than ever before. We need the power of God to cast out devils, heal the sick, and raise the dead. The people, who teach that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not for today, actually believe a lie from the devil. Why? Because the only thing that can truly defeat the devil on the earth is the power of God. Jesus always intended for you and I to operate in the gifts of Holy Spirit so that the works of the devil would be destroyed (Luke 10:19). Decide in your heart, today, to always eagerly desire God’s power to be manifested in your life!

The Gifts of the Spirit are For Everyone

In 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, Paul wrote the most extensive and detailed list of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit. Please take a moment to read his teachings and the explanatory comments below.

v. 1, "Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed."

Here, Paul states that we cannot be ignorant or uninformed about spiritual gifts and still be successful in using them. We have to be taught and trained in the gifts. Just like in the Old Testament's "School of the Prophets," we should be teachable and humble so that we can be trained in the gifts (2 Kings 6:1).

vs. 2-3, "2 You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. 3 Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus be cursed,' and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit."

Paul made it very clear, in using spiritual gifts, what the test should be to see if a person is being used by the Spirit of God or by an evil spirit. Only by the Spirit of God can a person say, "Jesus is Lord." Thus, those who operate in the "gifts," but do not believe Jesus is Lord, are getting their powers from evil spirits (Acts 16:16-18).

vs. 4-6, "4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work."

Notice the reference to the Trinity. Gifts are from the Spirit, service is from the Lord (Jesus), and the working of them is from God (the Father). Here we see God revealed in three distinct persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). Also, each person in the Trinity is doing a specific task in the disciple's life so he or she can fulfill their purpose and walk in divine power.

v. 7, "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

In this verse, Paul plainly teaches that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to everyone. His use of the phrase "each one" literally means in the original Greek language, "to every person" or "to everyone." Paul is stating that the manifestation of the Spirit is potentially given to every single disciple, without exception, for the common good. However, like any gift from God, it must be received by faith.

vs. 8-10, "8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues."

In the following section we will define each of the nine gifts.

v. 11, "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines."

Here we see that Paul clearly believes that the gifts are for everyone, and that the Holy Spirit will "turn them on and off" whenever He desires. However, we as disciples must be willing and ready for God to use us. The question is not, "Are the gifts for today?" But rather, "What gifts does the Spirit want to use in your life today?" Spirit-filled believers are not "super-human," they are simply humans working in the supernatural power of God. The devil is a spirit; and, he must be defeated by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Also, although you cannot "turn on and off" these gifts, you can be "open or closed" to them. Later, in 1 Corinthians 14:1, Paul teaches all disciples to eagerly desire and pursue

spiritual gifts. So, you can either, disobey God and pretend these gifts do not exist and live without God's power, or you can earnestly seek God to use you and see His mighty works upon this earth. Remember, the Holy Spirit will not force His gifts on anyone. He is looking for willing vessels.

Two Different Applications for Tongues

Due to some people's confusion regarding the initial sign of speaking in tongues, and the gift of tongues with interpretation as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12, please consider the following four points.

1. None of the examples of people receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, in Acts, had a separate interpretation given with a message of edification.
2. Paul wrote that when people "prayed in tongues," no one understands them because they utter mysteries (1 Cor. 14:2).
3. Paul also stated that praying in tongues is for personal edification (1 Cor. 14:4). The gift of tongues with interpretation is for church edification which is equal to prophecy (1 Cor. 14:5).
4. Paul wrote that just as he could sing and pray with his mind and understanding whenever he desired, he could also pray and sing with his spirit (1 Cor. 14:15). However, the gift of tongues with interpretation could only be given when the Spirit willed (1 Cor. 12:11).

Therefore, the baptism of the Holy Spirit as described in Acts 2 is given with the sign of speaking in other tongues. These languages are unlearned and are generally used for private prayer and personal edification. However, the gift of tongues with interpretation is given after the baptism of the Holy Spirit, for use in the public church, and is likened unto prophecy. It is

to be a word of encouragement for all of God's people.

Descriptions of the Nine Gifts of the Spirit

As a young believer, I was so hungry to learn all that I could about the gifts that I read many books and listened to many sermons and lectures about the gifts. My favorite, out of all the authors and speakers, was a humble preacher who came from Louisiana and started a worldwide ministry that is still in operation today in South Bend, Indiana. His name is Lester Sumrall. I owe the vast majority of all I know and understand about the gifts to him.

I recommend that every believer have his book, *The Gifts and Ministries of the Holy Spirit*, in their library. It truly is a great resource to help you understand and operate in the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit. Most of what I have written in this next section comes from my study of that book.

I believe, as Dr. Sumrall taught, that the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit could be placed into "three categories of three" for easy learning and clear understanding. First is "*The Revelation Gifts*" that reveal knowledge about God and man. Second is "*The Power Gifts*" that demonstrate God's power upon the earth. And last, is "*The Inspiration Gifts*" that give God's words of exhortation and encouragement.

The Revelation Gifts

- 1. THE MESSAGE OF WISDOM:** A supernatural revelation of the future concerning God's divine purposes. God can give someone wisdom about future events. A biblical example would be God telling Agabus that a famine was coming. The disciples responded by saving money and started to send relief to the area (Acts 11:28-30).
- 2. THE MESSAGE OF KNOWLEDGE:** A supernatural revelation of God's knowledge of the past or present. A biblical example of this gift would be when Jesus sat down

at the well and knew all about the Samaritan woman's past relationships with men and used that knowledge to guide her to salvation (John 4).

3. **THE DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN SPIRITS:** A supernatural revelation about the origin of a spirit. This gift reveals whether something is from the Spirit of God, an evil spirit, or the spirit of a man. A biblical example of discerning of spirits would be when Paul knew that a young girl, who was following them, was possessed by an evil spirit, and based on that spiritual discernment, he cast the spirit out in Jesus' name (Acts 16:16-18).

The Power Gifts

1. **THE GIFT OF FAITH:** A supernatural infilling of faith to accomplish the divine will of God. This is a gift to do things that would normally be impossible, but God gives a person the faith needed to respond to the situation and see the miracle manifested. A biblical example of the gift of faith would be when Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water to Jesus. No person in their right mind would have ever done such a crazy thing, but because Peter heard, and received the faith-filled word of Jesus, he did the otherwise impossible (Matthew 14:22-33).
2. **THE GIFTS OF HEALING:** A supernatural manifestation of God's healing power. This gift comes in many forms because it responds to the many ways a person can be sick. This gift can be used to cast out an evil spirit that brings sickness or it could be to heal emotions that have been hurt because of past traumatic events. The gifts of healing are pluralistic and are able to meet any and every need. A biblical example of this gift would be the many times in the Bible the disciples healed the sick, raised the dead, and made the lame walk (Acts 9:32-34).

3. **THE GIFT OF MIRACULOUS POWERS:** A supernatural display of God's infinite power. This gift can come in many different forms but, in every way, the response is always the same; people acknowledge that God is real. A biblical example of this gift would be when a poisonous snake bit Paul and he did not die. Everyone knew that God had given him special powers (Acts 28:3-4).

The Inspiration Gifts

1. **THE GIFT OF PROPHECY:** A supernatural message that brings edification, exhortation, and comfort (1 Corinthians 14:3). Prophecy is speaking a message, on behalf of God, to people who need to hear His voice. It is not man's opinion or his thoughts. It is literally a Word from God. A biblical example of the gift of prophecy would be when Peter preached on the day of Pentecost and quoted Joel to the people listening. When they heard that God was speaking to them about their generation, they were encouraged to draw near to God and receive salvation (Acts 2:37).
2. **THE GIFT OF SPEAKING IN DIFFERENT KINDS OF TONGUES:** A supernatural message given in an unknown tongue that brings edification, exhortation, and comfort. Here the tongue (or language) must always be interpreted because it is being spoken to the congregation as a message, not just a private prayer. Hence, the difference between the "gift of tongues" and the "message in tongues" is the way in which the tongue is used. The gift of tongues is a personal prayer language between you and God. And a message, in tongues, is a prophecy in an unknown tongue that needs interpretation for the benefit of all.
3. **THE GIFT OF INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES:** A supernatural ability to interpret the message given in tongues. The interpretation can either, come from the same person, or a different person. Either way, the prophetic

message in unknown tongues will be interpreted in a language that everyone listening can understand. Though there is not a biblical example for the two gifts of “tongues,” and “interpretation of tongues,” Paul gave us more practical instructions for these gifts than all the other gifts! Below are Paul’s guidelines and instructions that will help ensure that both gifts are used in a *“fitting and orderly way”* (1 Cor. 14:26-40).

- a. There should only be two or three words given in tongues in one service (1 Corinthians 14:27).
- b. The leaders of the church must approve the interpreted messages given to ensure sound doctrine and godliness (1 Corinthians 14:29).
- c. The one being used in the gift of the message in tongues always has the ability to be in control and in order.
- d. If the person acts disruptive and says, “The Spirit is making me act this way and I cannot stop,” then an evil spirit, or their flesh, is actually influencing them (1 Corinthians 14:32-33).
- e. Once the messages in tongues have been properly interpreted and approved, they are to be treated like prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:21; 39).

You are a Vessel God Can Use

God is looking for people He can use to display His power on the earth. The Old Testament prophet, Hanani, said in 2 Chronicles 16:9, *“For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him...”* Begin to earnestly seek the gifts of the Holy Spirit and ask God to use you. Start by making sure your heart is pure before God.

If you have any hidden sin or doubt confess it and be transformed (Romans 12:1-2). Then, ask God to show you your motives, and if you have any selfish motives ask Him to give you a pure heart that truly desires to be used for His glory and not your own.

The Bible records in 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.”* Too often, in modern times, greedy false prophets and charlatans have abused the gifts for their own selfish gain. When they did this, they turned many people away from the true power of God. However, the proper response to spiritual abuse isn't disuse; it's proper use. Get your heart and motives right, and let God's pure river of heaven flow through you to dry and thirsty people!

God does not have favorites, but He does favor those who walk by faith. You have the same opportunity to operate in the gifts of the Holy Spirit as did Paul and the first disciples. God said in James 5:17, *“Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.”* If God could grant Elijah, a human being just like you, the gift of miraculous powers to stop the rain for three years, He can also grant you the ability to operate in the nine spiritual gifts. Start, right now, by praying this prayer and begin to expect God to use you in mighty ways!

“Father, I come to you in the mighty name of Jesus, and ask you to baptize me with the Holy Spirit and fire. I accept the gift of tongues and all the nine gifts of the Spirit in my life. Dear precious Holy Spirit, I willingly submit to you and eagerly desire your gifts in my life for the glory of God.

Please grant me your gifts, at the proper time and place, so that the name of Jesus would be known throughout the world today. I declare I am your willing vessel! In Jesus name I pray, Amen.”

Review Questions

1. Why did the gifts of the Holy Spirit begin to suffer in the local church? When did they begin to resurface in a powerful way?
2. Briefly describe the growth of the Spirit-filled church.
3. Explain, with Scripture, the position that teaches, "The gifts of the Spirit are still for today."
4. Explain what Paul meant by the phrase, "*The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.*"
5. Describe how the gifts of the Holy Spirit are for "everyone."
6. Explain the differences between the "gift of tongues" and the "message in tongues."
7. List the three categories of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
8. Briefly describe each of the nine gifts.
9. Recall a time when you were used in one of the nine spiritual gifts. Recall a time when someone else was used. Write the outcome you witnessed when God's power was displayed.
10. From your heart, write a prayer in your journal that expresses, to God, how you wish to be used in the gifts of the Spirit.

Prayerfully Meditate and Memorize

1 Corinthians 14:1, "*Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.*"

LESSON 11

Disciples Do Defend the Faith

A Ready Answer

Today, the Christian faith is being attacked in many different ways and on many different levels. The educational system, both on the college and grammar school level, is undermining the very foundation of the Bible, claiming that it is nothing more than an inaccurate book filled with ancient myths poorly handed down over 2,000 years ago.

The media primarily presents fundamental Christians as “backwards” and “intolerant” when it comes to social issues such as “gay rights,” “abortion,” and “freedom of speech.” The media loves to distort issues such as “intelligent design versus evolution” to make Christians look “unintelligent” and blinded by “religious fanaticism,” rather than looking “scientific” and “rational.”

At the same time angry atheists and antagonistic agnostics are fighting against the Christian faith, thousands of cults and counter Christian’s groups have risen up and begun to teach their interpretation of the Bible. This brings confusion to the average religious seeker. In the last 150 years, alone, there have been thousands of new religious sects started, and though they differ on many things, they all agree that the fundamental Christian faith is wrong.

Today, like never before, Christians must study to show themselves approved so that they can defend the Christian faith against this onslaught of evil (2 Timothy 2:15). The Bible clearly teaches that Satan is our enemy, and that we are not fighting against flesh and blood. So the devil must be defeated with spiritual weapons (Ephesians 6:10-20). Satan is the one who wants people to reject Christianity because, in doing so, mankind will have rejected its only chance at eternal life.

Consider the words of Peter in the following passage and ask God to use you in this generation to defend and properly explain the Christian faith.

1 Peter 3:15-16, "15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander."

In light of Peter's words, all disciples should be properly trained in the faith so that we can give an answer to defend our beliefs when asked. This chapter is designed to give you, the disciple, a fundamental knowledge of the core Christian doctrines and a brief overview of the different attacks trying to destroy these truths. The goal is to equip you with resources and information that will stand up against any scheme of the enemy. Therefore, let us hold up the shield of faith and use the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, to destroy the lies of the devil (Ephesians 6:17)!

The Fundamentals

The Christian faith has been passed down for 2,000 years, and has withstood every attack known to mankind. The Christian faith has withstood attacks from governments, other religions, persecutors, even heresies from within. Heresies are "beliefs about Christianity that are not in agreement with right doctrine." Some of the most cunning heresies came right at the beginning of the Christian church. Most of the heresies that are around today were defeated in the first three hundred years of the church.

Jesus knew that His church would be attacked, so He gave His Holy Spirit to be with those who would love Him and love the truth. The Holy Spirit has worked with the church to preserve these truths as Jesus and the first disciples originally

taught them. The truths that will be presented to you, now, are the truths that have come down from the disciples throughout the ages.

The Bible and church history can prove these truths to be accurate and reliable. Despite some misinformed heretics, or deceived teachers who teach that the original truth was lost and can never be known, these simple truths have been passed down through every generation.

Prayerfully consider memorizing and purchasing the following fundamental truths, with their scriptural references. It would be helpful to purchase some of these scholarly resources so that you will be able to teach them to all who questions their validity. By doing this you are also helping to ensure that another generation will know Jesus and the truth of His gospel.

1. **THE BIBLE:** The 66 books found in both the Old and New Testaments are the only inerrant and inspired Words of God. **Scriptural References:** 2 Timothy 3:15-17, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, & 2 Peter 1:21. **Scholarly References:** *“Reinventing Jesus,”* by Daniel Wallace and *“New Evidence That Demands a Verdict,”* by Josh McDowell.
2. **THE TRINITY:** There is only one God, revealed in three co-equal and co-eternal persons, who are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Scriptural References:** Deuteronomy 6:4, Isaiah 43:10-11, Matthew 28:19, & Luke 3:22. **Scholarly References:** *“The Forgotten Trinity,”* by James White and *“Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,”* by Bruce Ware.
3. **JESUS’ TWO NATURES:** Jesus, the eternal divine Son of God and equal to the Father, took on flesh to be the Savior of the world. Therefore, Jesus is both fully human and divine. **Scriptural References:** John 1:1-18, Philippians 2:9-11, Titus 2:13, & Revelations 7:9-11. **Scholarly References:** *“The Case for the Real Jesus,”* by Lee Strobel and *“The Real Kosher Jesus,”* by Michael Brown.

4. **SALVATION BY FAITH ALONE:** Salvation from sins and being born again can only be received by having faith in Jesus' death on the cross, His burial, and His bodily resurrection. **Scripture References:** John 3:16, Romans 5:1-19, & Romans 10:9-17. **Scholarly References:** *"Justified by Faith Alone,"* by R.C. Sproul and *"How to be Born Again,"* by Billy Graham.

5. **THE TWO HOLY PRACTICES:** The two holy practices of the church are baptism in water for the evidence of forgiveness of sin, and communion with the fruit of the vine and unleavened bread representing the body and blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ. **Scriptural References:** *Baptism* – Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:16, & Acts 10:47-48. *Holy Communion* – Luke 22:19 & 1 Corinthians 11:25-26. **Scholarly References:** *"The Great Doctrines of the Bible,"* by William Evans and *"Systematic Theology,"* by Wayne Grudem.

6. **JESUS' SECOND COMING:** Jesus, who is fully God and man, will physically come back to earth to rule and reign forever as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. **Scriptural References:** Matthew 16:27, Jude 1:14, & Revelation 1:7. **Scholarly References:** *"The King is Coming,"* by Erwin Lutzer and *"Systematic Theology,"* by Wayne Grudem.

7. **THE ETERNAL JUDGEMENT:** After the judgment seat of Christ, those who have received salvation and born the fruit of good works will receive eternal rewards in the presence of God upon the new earth. Those who have rejected Jesus and practiced sin will be cast into the lake of fire to be tormented for eternity. **Scriptural References:** Matthew 25:46, Mark 9:43-48, 2 Peter 3:13, & Revelations 20:11-22:21. **Scholarly References:** *"The Great Doctrines of the Bible,"* by William Evans and *"Erasing Hell,"* by Francis Chan.

Such doctrines as the "rapture," "spiritual gifts," and "divine healing" are not included in this list because they are not considered fundamental to being a Christian. Fundamental

doctrines are the truths that are required to be a Christian. These doctrines literally determine whether someone is following Jesus' narrow path which leads to eternal life or the broad path which leads to everlasting destruction.

Fundamental doctrines are the truths on which every Christian must agree. This is true for every nation and generation. Though different churches and denominations may differ in other areas, they can never differ in these areas. If they do, they cannot be considered a true church.

Know How to Spot Fakes

Just as bank tellers are told to study real money so that they can easily spot fake money, you should spend time studying your Bible and learning the fundamental doctrines so that when someone comes with heresies or false doctrine, you will be able to defend the core doctrines of the Christian faith and spot a counterfeit.

Also, just as a basketball player spends hours in practice before a game to get ready for his competition, you should spend time in private prayer and study so that you are ready with an answer for those who challenge what you believe. Read the following Scriptures that Paul wrote to Timothy concerning preaching God's Word in the light of heresies. Let them inspire and guide you to defend the truth in every situation.

1 Timothy 4:1-7, "1 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. 2 Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. 3 They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. 4 For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, 5 because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

6 If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. 7 Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly."

2 Timothy 4:1-5, "1 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction.

3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry."

What Others Believe

The three main categories of attack against the Christian church come from: (1) Skeptics, (2) Christian Cults, and (3) World Religions. Each group attacks and brings arguments to the Christian faith in a unique way, but they all have one goal in common – to falsify the beliefs of fundamental Christianity.

As you learn of these assaults against Christianity, always remember that the battle is not against "flesh and blood," but against Satan and his evil demons that hate the souls of men and wish them to be damned forever. So, when engaging those who oppose the Christian faith, do so with love and patience, not anger or violence. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, "*4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."*

These sections will require you to do some outside learning. I recommend that every disciple study the resources mentioned for a more in-depth defense.

(1) Arguments from the Skeptics

People who fit into this category are generally those who are atheists (don't believe there is a god), or agnostics (don't believe anyone can really know for sure if there is a God). They tend to use supposed intellectual arguments to try to disprove the claims of the Bible and Christianity. Their main arguments come from; (1) *Darwinian Evolution* and (2) *Relativism*.

1. DARWINIAN EVOLUTION

Darwinian evolution teaches that life came from non-living things billions of years ago, and that it has evolved into mankind by natural selection and survival of the fittest. Though there are some Christians who believe God used evolution in His creative process, this argument in the hands of the non-religious, tries to disprove the need for God by explaining everything with natural causes. Charles Darwin made this kind of belief system popular in the late 1800's. The following are the four main arguments from Darwinian evolution:

ARGUMENT 1: God did not create the world because science cannot prove that He did.

Response: What can be proven is that everything that is designed had a designer. A watch did not come from an explosion in a factory and come together over millions of years with time and chance. Nor did Shakespeare's plays come from a big bang in a printing press that resulted in their formation from random mutations. In the same way, mankind is more complex than all the computers at NASA, combined, and evolution fails to explain our complexity (not to mention our

origins and matter, itself). Therefore, the best explanation for a creation is a Creator. So, until science can prove nothing can create something, I will choose to believe everything was created by "Something;" God!

ARGUMENT 2: If God did create the world, He did a terrible job because the world is full of death, evil, suffering, and flawed creations.

Response: The world was not originally created the way we see it now. At first it was without pain, death, and disease. It was wholly perfect. However, because of sin the world is now in its present condition. Therefore, man choosing to live without God made the world what it is today.

Also, you would not be able to recognize "evil" in the world without a moral standard. The real problem is that you, an evolutionist, have a problem with suffering. If evolution is true, pain and suffering is good because it eliminates the weak. Since you do have a problem, you should seek God's solution to suffering and evil in Jesus Christ.

ARGUMENT 3: The scientific proof for the age of the earth and the universe is billions of years old, and thus disagrees with the Biblical belief that it is only 6,000 years old.

Response: When God created the universe He created it full grown and mature to sustain life. When He placed Adam and Eve in the Garden they were adults, not babies. The same is true with the earth, it was lush with living plants and animals. The "supposed age" of the universe and earth really only indicates that God created them mature to sustain life.

Not to mention that many of the dating methods for the earth have been shown to have serious flaws with contradictory findings. Whether it's testing ice cores, rocks, or fossils, there is no unified age of the earth in science. Therefore, trust God and His date because He was the only one there!

ARGUMENT 4: *The fossil records show, without a doubt, that today's modern species have evolved from other lesser species over millions of years. Thus, the Biblical view of creation in six literal days "as is" is absurd.*

Response: There is not one shred of evidence that one kind of animal has become another kind of living thing. Though there is evidence of variations within every species, this does not prove all species evolved from other kinds of animals. For example, all dogs and wolf-like creatures can be shown to have come from a dog-like ancestor. But this does not prove a dog came from a rock millions of years ago.

More importantly, all properly interpreted scientific data still shows that, basically, the way man is now, is the way he has always been. Any other differing beliefs can and will lead to behavior like Hitler and racial genocide. Hitler believed that the Arian race was the superior race and that other lesser human races needed to be exterminated. That is what "natural selection" and "survival of the fittest" looks like in modern times. Without a belief in God, who created mankind in His own image, there is nothing in nature that stops the "weak from becoming meat" and "might being right."

RESOURCES REFUTING DARWINIAN EVOLUTION: (1) **WEB:** Videos, books, and articles from "Answers in Genesis" at www.answersingenesis.org and "Creation Ministries International" at www.creation.com. (2) **BOOKS:** "Lie" by Ken Ham and "The Greatest Hoax on Earth," by Jonathan Sarfati.

2. RELATIVISM

This is the belief that absolute truth does not exist. Relativism simply means, "All truth is relative." Basically, a "post-modernist" or "relativist" believes there is no way to tell one statement is truer than another unless it can be proven by science, and even then, science is considered just the "best guess." Therefore, every person defines what they believe is

actually true. The following are the five main arguments of relativism:

ARGUMENT 1: How can you prove absolute truth exists? Everyone has his or her own perspective of every "truth," thus it can never be seen as "truth," but just as an opinion.

Response: Ask if their statement, "No absolute truth exists" is an absolutely true statement. If they say, "Yes," they have just contradicted themselves and absolute truth does exist. If they say, "No," to the statement "no absolute exists," then the opposite can be true!

After you have shown them the folly of denying absolute truth in logic, ask them if math has absolute truths. They will have to admit either, $2+2=4$, or some other simple truth exists, thus proving that everything cannot be relative. If they still don't admit it, ask them if life exists relatively or absolutely. If they say relatively, ask them what would happen if they jumped off the Sears Tower. Then say, "Would your death be relative or absolute?"

Once you establish that truth does exist, you must show them that perspective does not change the truth. Gently explain to them that just because they do not "believe" in absolute truth, does not mean it does not exist. Ask them to stand on a chair and tell you that they do not believe in gravity. Then ask them to jump off of the chair. When they fall to the ground, show them that if they did the same thing, 100 times, that the outcome would be the same. The point is that absolute truth does exist, whether they admit it or not.

ARGUMENT 2: How do you know your God is the only true God? There are millions of gods in the world and thousands of religions.

Response: First, testify and share with them your personal experience with Jesus. Ask, "How many of you exist?" Then say, "Just like there is only one of you, there is only one God."

Ask, "How would a person prove to the world that you exist?" There would be personal testimony and eyewitness accounts. In the same way, God came to the earth, spent time with man, and sent out followers to tell the world that He is real. If you do not believe His followers you will suffer the consequences for rejecting Him. It would be no different than someone trying to tell other people that you exist and them not believing it.

When you study every religion you will find that there has to be a true God, because so much of what is believed is the same. Meaning, if there are 100 copies of something, there has to be an "original." When a person studies Christianity, especially the life of Jesus, the truth seeker will find that all the incomplete pieces of the world's religions come together into one masterpiece.

ARGUMENT 3: If the Bible is true, whose interpretation of the Bible is correct? Every person can see something in a different way.

Response: The truest or best way to interpret the Bible is the way Jesus interpreted the Bible. You can find out the way Jesus interpreted the Bible by studying His teachings as seen in the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). For example, Jesus taught about a literal Adam and Eve, a six-day creation, a worldwide flood, Jonah living three days in a whale, and Moses meeting with God to receive the Law (the commandments). Though churches may disagree on smaller, less important truths, anyone who truly studies the Bible with an open heart will see the core fundamental truths just as Jesus taught them.

ARGUMENT 4: If Jesus loves everybody, why does He still send people to hell? Humans treat their disobedient animals better than God treats His disobedient creation.

Response: God sends people to hell because they reject His salvation. Hell exists because God cannot dwell with sin. The

reason a person does not understand “eternal punishment” is because they do not understand the perfect holy nature of God and the wicked rebellious heart of man.

To compare man’s sin to a holy God, with an animal’s disobedience, you would have to make the example extreme just to get close to the point. So, imagine if your dog went into a nursery, grabbed little children by the neck, and tore their little bodies limb from limb, how you would then treat that dog? How much more severe would you punish that dog if you knew it “chose” to be that way.

All sin is evil and wicked in God’s eyes, and what makes it even worse is that man “chooses” to be sinful. Even after man is given a choice to repent and accept the new life of God, he still refuses and lives in sin. It is only then that God sends people to hell, because they have willingly lived in sin and rejected the only way of salvation. Remember, for an eternal soul to reject an all-loving God has eternal consequences.

ARGUMENT 5: If God really exists, why doesn't He reveal Himself to everyone, in person, to remove all doubt? If I were God, I would want everyone to see and believe in me.

Response: The divine Son of God did come to this world and take on flesh. Many people still did not believe in Him. They beat Him and crucified Him on a cross. If God did come to you, should He then come to everyone all the time? And, when man doubts, must He come again? If so, man has become the God, and God has become the servant of man.

The reality is the other way around. We are here to serve God and place our faith in His Word. His words can be tested and proven true. For example, just examining the prophecies Jesus spoke in Matthew 24 regarding the destruction of the temple, famines, and earthquakes give us reason to believe He is who He said He was.

Plus, it is because of man’s wickedness that God does not physically dwell on the earth. The Bible records that it is actually His mercy that keeps His full presence from mankind.

He does this so men will repent of their sins and be cleansed, because when He does come to earth He will have to judge sin. It will be too late to repent once His full glory is revealed on earth. So, if anyone wants to know if Jesus is real they can seek Him and will find Him because the Holy Spirit, whom He sent in His name, is here and ready to answer our prayers for us to know Jesus personally.

RESOURCES REFUTING RELATIVISM: (1) *WEB:* Articles, videos, and books from “Cross Examined” at www.crossexamined.org and “Got Questions” at www.gotquestions.org. (2) *BOOKS:* “*I Don’t Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*,” by Frank Turek and “*The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*,” by Josh McDowell.

(2) Arguments from the Christian Cults

These attacks come from groups that are considered Christian “cults” because they have diverted from the core fundamental truths of Christianity and teach heresies. The most popular cults started in the last 120 years, and their members believe it is their job to correct the church. They teach that the “original truth” of Jesus was lost in Christianity sometime after the first disciples, and that, because of their supposed new dreams, visions, and revelations, their organizations have been given the “original truths.”

They now feel it is their job to teach all of the fundamental Christians that they are wrong. And, they are doing a decent job converting people because they are growing faster than many Christian churches in the U.S. However, they generally only do well with uninformed, lukewarm Christians. Just like with a disease, when you have the vaccination, the sickness will not spread to you. The same is true if you learn the lies before they try to spread them to you. You won’t fall for them.

The two biggest and fastest growing cults in America are (1) *Jehovah Witnesses* and (2) *Mormons*. We must be ready to take

our stand and fight against their attacks. Do not be scared or shy when they knock on your door. Be ready to give them the truth in love!

One of the easiest ways to defend against their attacks is to know the “real” gospel Jesus and the disciples preached 2,000 years ago. So, before we get started, read what Paul described would happen when people preach another gospel because of visions or angelic visitations.

Galatians 1:6-9, “6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.

8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God’s curse! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: ‘If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God’s curse.’”

1. JEHOVAH WITNESSES

Charles Taze Russell founded this group in the late 1800’s and now they have over 7 million members with their headquarters in Brooklyn, New York. Jehovah Witnesses believe they are the only true church of Jesus Christ, and that to be saved you must join their church and be baptized by their leaders. They publish a magazine called “The Watchtower,” and the place they meet for services is called, “The Kingdom Hall.”

Some of the major issues Christians should have with them are: they have distorted the Bible, changed the doctrine of God, misinterpreted heaven and hell, and added “works” to salvation. They also have “suppositious” practices such as: they do not allow blood transfusions, the pledging of allegiance to the American flag, service in the military, or holiday celebrations (including birthdays).

Jehovah Witnesses believe that for a person to be saved, they must do good works. This is why they go door-to-door every week and follow the strict guidelines taught by The Watchtower. They derive their name from the German translation of tetragammaton, which are the consonants, "YHWH." The tetragammaton (YHWH) is the name of God used in the Old Testament. However, the vowels were never written because the Jewish people felt that the name of God was so sacred, that they never fully wrote it out. So no one really knows how to write or pronounce God's name given to Moses in vowels.

However, both Christian and Jewish scholars believe the best fitting vowels to be "a" and "e." So, the name with vowels becomes, "YaHWeH." Martin Luther and the early reformers then translated Yahweh, being Hebrew, to "Jehovah" in German in the 1500's. When the JW's (Jehovah Witnesses) formed in the late 1800's and wanted to, supposedly, restore the name of God, they chose the word, "Jehovah."

Throughout their early history, JW's were famous for their false prophecies about the end of the world, and their silly beliefs such as "miracle wheat." However, in more recent times they have tried to distance themselves from their shady past and focus, only, on spreading their basic message. JW's primarily gain their converts by grossly misinterpreting the Scriptures and convincing Roman Catholics or uninformed Christians that they are the only true church. As a result, they are also one of the boldest cults in their attack against fundamental Christianity. Here is list of some of their main doctrines:

1. The only true version of the Bible is The Watchtower's "New World Translation."
2. There is only one God, in one person, called "Jehovah."
3. There is no such thing as the Trinity because it is a pagan concept.

4. The Holy Spirit is just the force or energy of God and is not a person.
5. Jehovah's first creation was his "only-begotten Son" (Jesus). Then, Jehovah used Jesus in creating all other things.
6. Before Jesus came to earth he was Michael the archangel.
7. Jesus is only a "god," which to them means, "Mighty being," but is not God (Jehovah) in the flesh.
8. Jesus didn't die on a cross but on a stake.
9. Jesus didn't rise from the dead in His physical body. He was raised just as a spirit.
10. Jesus began his invisible rule over the earth in 1914.
11. The Watchtower Organization (their church) is their self-proclaimed prophet of God, the only channel of God's truth, and only their church members will be saved.
12. Good works are necessary for salvation.
13. The soul of the wicked ceases to exist after death. They don't believe in hell or the lake of fire where the wicked are forever punished.
14. Only 144,000 Jehovah's Witness are actually born again and get to go to heaven.
15. The reward for the rest of all the good JW's is to be resurrected and live on the new earth with Jesus, forever, while 144,000 of them remain in heaven.

The following is a list of their four main arguments:

ARGUMENT 1: How can Jesus be "God" when He said that "God" was His Father?

Response: First, the Bible clearly teaches that there are three distinct persons who make up the Godhead: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Jesus and the Father are both equally God. Matthew 28:19 says to baptize in the "singular" name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It does not use the "names" in the plural. So, Jesus and the Holy Spirit both bear the same divine name of "The Father" which is Jehovah.

Second, when Jesus took on flesh He humbled Himself to serve God, the Father, just as a man would. However, the Bible says that He was still equal with God (Philippians 2:6-7). None can be equal to God, but God. Third, the Bible also clearly teaches that Jesus is uncreated and has no beginning or end, so the only person who is "uncreated and without beginning or end" is God. Notice how God, in Isaiah 44:6, calls Himself the "first and the last." So does Jesus in Revelations 22:12-13. There can only be one "first and last."

Each person in the Trinity is equal in nature but has different roles. A man and woman are both equally human in their nature, but in marriage the role of the husband is over the wife. The same is true with God. The Son submits to the Father, and the Son sends the Holy Spirit, yet each person is fully "God" and shares the same divine name (Jehovah) and qualities (all knowing, all powerful, and ever present).

ARGUMENT 2: How can three people be one God? The idea of three in one comes from ancient pagan nations like Babylon and India.

Response: Though there are pagan references to three different gods sharing the same essence or purpose, there is no pre-Christian reference to three divine persons making one God. The Trinity teaches that there is only one God revealed in three persons. In other words, the first Jewish Christians were not following pagan myths to invent a new god. They were being

faithful to both the Old and New Testaments, describing the God of the entire Bible.

For example, God said in Genesis 1:26, *“Let us make man in our own image.”* Here we see God talking to Himself in the plural. Then, when He made mankind in His image, He made a plural race – male and female. Genesis 1:27, *“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”* Therefore, when man and woman come together they become “one.” So, just using the first chapter of the Bible when one has the full revelation of Jesus’ teaching, it is clear that God is a complex unity – three in one.

Now, concerning the JW’s concept of God, there are actually many pagan religions that believe in one “main” God who created smaller gods. If JW’s were to be consistent, they would have to reject their own concept of god and anything else they believe that is found in paganism including, “baptism rites, prayer, and so forth.”

ARGUMENT 3: If Christianity is true, why are there so many Christians living un-Christian lives? Jehovah witnesses live pure and holy lives.

Response: Though it may be true that many who claim to be Christians don’t follow the Bible, this doesn’t mean the Christian doctrines are wrong. It simply means that people are not living like they should. There are many people who attend Kingdom Hall services and don’t live according to their teachings either. Even Judas pretended to be a disciple of Christ while stealing money from Jesus. This doesn’t mean Jesus was a false teacher!

All organizations and churches will have half-hearted followers. Judge the Christian church by its doctrines and those who live by them, and you will see their fruit is incredible and verifiable throughout history.

ARGUMENT 4: *If fundamental Christianity is true, why are there so many different doctrines and denominations? JW's have the exact same doctrine and the exact same way of doing things; therefore, we are the true church.*

Response: First, JW's had their first split in the early 1900's (and many others since then), so they haven't always been unified, either. Second, even Peter and Paul disagreed on some things, but that didn't mean they were polar opposites (Galatians 2:11). Likewise, the vast majority of all Protestant churches agree on the main fundamental truths.

Third, the Roman Catholic Church is ruled from the top down, just as the JW's, and can make the same claim of supposed unity. Why? Because they rule with an iron fist and excommunicate all who disagree with them. There are literally tens of thousands of people who have left The Watchtower over disagreements and many, today, are Christians!

RESOURCES REFUTING JEHOVAH WITNESSES: (1) *WEB:* For videos and articles visit "Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry" at www.carm.org/jehovahs-witnesses and, for Scripture refutation, visit "Blue Letter Bible's" JW's page at www.blueletterbible.org/resources/articles.cfm (2) *BOOKS:* "Kingdom of the Cults," by Walter Martin and "Reasoning from the Scriptures with Jehovah Witnesses," by Ron Rhodes.

2. MORMONS

In the mid 1800's, Joseph Smith founded the Mormon Church, also called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He claimed to have been visited by Jesus, the angel Moroni (where the word "Mormon" comes from), and John the Baptist. Allegedly, they told him that the true church had been lost for 1,800 years and needed to be restored.

Then, the angel Moroni supposedly told him where to dig up ancient tablets of gold, which taught that Jesus had come to North America after His resurrection and preached to the

Indians. He also claimed that these Indians were actually the lost tribes of Israel. Smith could only translate the lost “golden tablets,” which were written in an unknown Egyptian language, when he wore “magic glasses.” The translated golden tablets became known as the “Book of Mormon.” However, no one today can see the golden tablets or the magic glasses, because God told him to destroy them after he translated the message so that people would not worship them.

The Mormons recognize four main books to derive their doctrines: (1) The Bible, (2) The Book of Mormon, (3) The Pearl of Great Price, and (4) Doctrines and Covenants. The following is a list of some of the Mormons main teachings:

1. The Book of Mormon is more accurate than the Bible.
2. There is one supreme God for this universe, Elohim, but all obedient children can become gods with their own planet to rule just as He reigns over the earth.
3. Elohim (God, the Father) used to be a man on another planet who became a god and then created this universe.
4. Jesus and Satan are spirit brothers who came from Elohim having sexual relations with one of his heavenly wives (a mother god).
5. The Trinity is defined as three separate gods: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.
6. All mankind was first begotten as spirit children in heaven by Elohim having sex with his wives. Then they were born naturally on earth.
7. The birth and incarnation of Jesus came about because Elohim had sex with Mary to conceive Jesus.

8. If it had not been for Joseph Smith, and the restoration of the Mormon Church, there would be no salvation for mankind today.
9. There is no real salvation and exaltation to godhood outside the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.
10. Salvation was needed for the people of earth, so Jesus and Satan offered differing plans to the Father. The Father accepted the plan of Jesus. In effect, Satan then became the devil and convinced spirit children to leave heaven, in rebellion, with him.
11. Jesus' sacrifice was not able to cleanse us from all our sins, thus good works are necessary for salvation, and there is no salvation without accepting Joseph Smith as a prophet of God.
12. An appointed person can be baptized for the dead, thus giving them better status in the afterlife.

The following is a list of the Mormons' four arguments:

ARGUMENT 1: How do you know that the Bible still teaches the same original truth after it has been translated so many times, and has been in the hands of evil Christians like the Roman Catholics? You need a better "Bible" like the "Book of Mormon" which comes directly from the Prophet Joseph Smith and does not have any errors.

Response: The Christian Bible can be proven to be sufficient because of the 20,000 ancient manuscripts which have been found and preserved. All of today's modern versions are directly translated from these ancient texts. Plus, anyone can verify the Christians' claim of the Bible's accuracy because the manuscripts are in museums and online. However, though Smith claimed to have only needed to translate the Book of Mormon, once, from the magic tablets, there have been

hundreds of errors found in the Book of Mormon (just comparing the newer versions to the older ones).

Even though the LDS church has changed these errors to cover up Smith's mistakes the problem still remains, because if Joseph Smith perfectly translated the Book of Mormon, the first time, there would be no need for revisions. This simply proves that the Bible is more reliable with its 20,000 manuscripts than the book of Mormon that supposedly came from golden tablets that no longer exist.

ARGUMENT 2: If God said we are His children, doesn't that make us "little gods?" I'm a human being because my father was a human being. I will become a god, because my father is a god.

Response: Though we are children of God, we will never be God, because there is only one God according to the Bible. God clearly said in Isaiah 43:10, "Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me." Therefore, when man was originally created, he was created in the "image" of God, not as a god (Isaiah 44:8, 45:5; 21 & 1 John 5:20).

We are God's children because He is the Father of creation and the Father of our spirits. We are like Him because we have a spirit and God is a Spirit. But, we are not equal to Him. Man will always be man and God will always be God (Psalm 8:4-5). David said in Psalm 86:10, "For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God."

ARGUMENT 3: Does your church have a prophet sent by God with true apostolic authority? We have a church with a true prophet that can be traced all the way back to the first restored Prophet Joseph Smith.

Response: First, Jesus said He would build his church with "disciples" in Matthew 28:19, not "prophets." Second, according to Paul, in Galatians 1:6-9, Joseph Smith was a false

prophet because he changed the gospel. Third, Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that the Scriptures were all one needed to be a servant of God “*thoroughly equipped for every good work.*” Fourth, since Paul taught that God still uses apostles and prophets in the offices of elders and deacons, there are many in the universal church today. And last, yes, our disciples and Bible can be traced back to a Prophet; Jesus Christ!

ARGUMENT 4: Have you prayed and asked God if the Book of Mormon is true, and if Joseph Smith was a true Prophet? If you do not ask, then you can never really know.

Response: First, no, because the Bible teaches us in 2 Timothy 4:1-3 to discern truth not by prayer, but the infallible Word of God. Second, have you searched the Bible and studied the facts that prove the Book of Mormon is a lie and Smith was a false Prophet? Third, if not, I will choose to follow the Bible while you choose to follow your “prayers” and false prophet.

Fourth, people prayed and thought David Koresh, Jim Jones, Mohammed, and Charles Russell were prophets, too. So, how can you tell which “new” prophet is right if the only way you test them is to pray about them? You will have to pray about 1000’s of “prophets” to see if they are true or not. And last, we use the Bible as our final guide, not feelings or “burning in our bosoms.”

RESOURCES REFUTING MORMONISM: (1) *WEB:* For videos and articles visit “Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry,” at www.carm.org/mormonism and “Mormon Research Ministry,” at www.mrm.org (2) *BOOKS:* “*Kingdom of the Cults,*” by Walter Martin and “*What Mormons Really Believe,*” by John Ankerburg.

In conclusion, regarding the cults, the best defense against their arguments can be summed up by the following three points; (1) Know the fundamental doctrines of the true Christian church and resist heresy; (2) Know the history of false teachings and

prophecies; and, (3) Know the history of the Christian church. It has not been corrupted. It has been preserved.

(3) Arguments from other World Religions

Other world religions are those that have their own set of beliefs about God, religious practices, and believe their way is superior to basic Christianity. Ever since the fall of man, there have been people trying to make God in their own image and worship Him the way they feel is best. Whether it was the people trying to build a tower to heaven in Babel, or the Israelites worshipping a golden calf; sadly, much of the world, throughout history, has been misguided in their religious endeavors.

The Bible teaches, in both the Old and New Testaments, that the true God is close to all people and is waiting for us to reach out to Him and find Him (Acts 17:26-27). When God, the Son, came in the flesh, he came to bring mankind back to the Father, and because of His disciples preaching His gospel around the world, everyone has the chance to repent and be born again. However, many still try to come to God in their own way or the way of their ancestors.

At the root of this religious deception is the devil, because he desires to lead people astray to follow him into hell. It was in the Garden of Eden when he first tempted man to question God's commands. The devil said to Eve in Genesis 3:1, "*Did God really say...?*" At that moment he exposed his strategy of deceit, to get mankind to question God's Word. Even today, he is trying to deceive people into believing that Jesus is not the only way and that there are many other ways to God, the Father. Satan loves to take worship from God and turn it toward himself, because when a person is not worshipping God, through Jesus, he is actually giving his worship to the devil.

In the next section we will discuss the two most popular world religions that are attacking the fundamental Christian faith: (1) *Islam* and (2) *The New Age*.

1. ISLAM

The Islamic religion was founded in the early 600's, A.D., by a man named Muhammad, from Mecca. During this time the Arab pagans were ruling the land of Saudi Arabia and worshipping many gods. One day, when Muhammad was looking for answers about the one true God, he allegedly received a visit from the angel, Gabriel. From that time on, Mohammed received revelations from the "spirit," and after his death, these recitations were gathered into one book now known as the Quran (or Qur'an).

From the time of his first alleged revelations, Muhammad began to unify the Arab people under his one god (Allah) by killing and oppressing all those who resisted him. After the death of Mohammed, Islam continued to spread, through conquest, until it was stopped during the Crusades by Christian armies.

Today, some 1500 years later, Islam is the second largest religion with over 1.2 billion followers. And though some Muslims believe in peace, many still believe it is their God-given duty to fight and kill all those oppose them, because they believe false religions have deceived the world and have taken true worship away from their one God, Allah, and turned it toward other things. The following is a list of Islam's main doctrines:

1. There is only one God, Allah.
2. Muhammad is the last and greatest Prophet of Allah.
3. The Quran is the last and greatest revelation from Allah.
4. Allah will judge everyone, one day, and someone can only be saved if their good deeds outweigh their bad ones.
5. Paradise is for all good Muslims, and eternal hellfire is for unbelievers and those who have not done enough good deeds.

6. A Muslim must live by the *Five Pillars of Islam*, which are:
- I. *His confession (Shahada)*: "There is no true God except Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."
 - II. *Prayer (Salat)*: Pray five times a day facing Mecca.
 - III. *Fasting (Saum)*: Fast during the month of Ramadan.
 - IV. *Alms Giving (Zakat)*: Give to the poor.
 - V. *Pilgrimage (Hajj)*: Make at least one trip to Mecca in one's lifetime.

The following is a list of their four main arguments:

ARGUMENT 1: How can Jesus be God, when the Bible says God is a Spirit and Jesus had a body?

Response: First, Jesus is God, the Son, not God, the Father. God, the Son, and God, the Father, are two separate persons. Second, the Bible teaches that God is a complex unity. So Jesus can come to earth and have a body while the Father remains solely a spirit residing in heaven.

Third, there is nothing illogical about the Trinity. It simply is a distinct attribute concerning God. Just like God can be in- and outside of time at the same moment, God is not limited in His nature because He is God. God has a nature that is different from man. The Bible also says that His nature is beyond our mind to figure out (Psalm 89:6 & Isaiah 46:5). Ask a Muslim if he or she can explain how God can be both in- and outside of time. Ask how God can be both "the first" and "the last" at the same time.

Last, all one has to do is look to Jesus, in the Bible, and see that He claimed to be God (Revelations 22:12-13); forgave sins like God (Mark 2:5); and, others worshipped Him as God (John 20:28). Therefore, God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

ARUGMENT 2: *How do you know you have the Word of God when the Bible has been changed so many times? We have just one Quran that has never been changed; it is perfect and flawless.*

Response: The Muslims, under the rule of Uthman, destroyed all their manuscripts in the 600's so there would be no contradictions in their manuscripts. Thus, they only have one main version because they burned the rest. Since then, despite a massive attempt at preservation, the Hadiths (the official historical writings of Islam) states that many of the original passages are missing from today's version. No one can really know for sure because all the evidence has been destroyed!

Christians have different versions because scholars continually find new ancient manuscripts (more in modern times than ever before) and try to make the translation as close to the believed original as possible. However, the Muslim will never know what the exact wording was of the Quran because all of the different manuscripts, except the one they chose to be the "official" one, were deliberately destroyed by fire.

We, as Christians, could do the exact same thing if we wished to be dishonest and extreme in our claims of preservation. For example, we could choose the Codex Sinaiticus (from around 330 A.D.) as our "only" New Testament manuscript and burn all the rest. Then we would have just one "version," too! Instead, we are honest and forthright with our manuscripts, over 20,000 of them (more than any ancient book of antiquity), and work hard to have the best collaboration of God's Word.

Not to mention, in Mohammed's day, he never stated nor believed that the Christian's gospel or the Jewish Torah was corrupt. As a matter of fact, Mohammed stated in Surah 10:94, *"So if you (O Muhammad SAW) are in doubt concerning that which We have revealed unto you, [i.e. that your name is written in the Taurat (Torah) and the Injeel (Gospel)] then ask those who are reading the Book [the Taurat (Torah) and the Injeel (Gospel)] before you. Verily, the truth has come to you from your Lord. So be not of those who doubt (it)."*

According to the Quran itself, Mohammed was supposed to not doubt God's "previous" revelations to the Jews and Christians! So, if a Muslim was to be consistent, they would have to search the Bible to test the claims of Islam, and in so doing, discover that Mohammed was, indeed, a false prophet.

ARGUMENT 3: How can you say Christianity is true when Christians have done many evil things in history?

Response: Christianity is true because of what Jesus said, not because of how "supposed" Christians have lived. We admit that some so-called "Christians" have oppressed people at different times in history, but true Christians live by the Bible's "Golden Rule" and hate evil. The same is true with Islam. Just as there are two main branches in Islam: Sunni and Shiite, there are two main branches in Christianity: Roman Catholic and Protestant. We, as Protestants, don't agree with what the Roman Catholic Church has done in the past; just as a peaceful Muslim wouldn't agree with the acts of terror done in the name of Islam.

However, the difference between peaceful Christians and peaceful Muslims is that peaceful Christians are acting like Jesus, their Lord and Savior; whereas, peaceful Muslims are acting the opposite of Mohammed and his violent teachings. For example, Jesus said in Matthew 5:44, *"But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."* Mohammed said in Surah 9:29, *"Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued."*

If you truly desire a religion of peace and love, choose and submit to Jesus. He is the "Prince of Peace" and "Love!"

ARGUMENT 4: *How can you prove Jesus died on the cross and rose again from the dead? We believe someone else was killed who looked like Jesus' and was taken to heaven like Elijah.*

Response: The crucifixion is one of the most well-established facts about Jesus' life upon which almost all historians agree. In other words, if there is one thing the majority of all historians are sure about, it is that the Romans crucified Jesus. Despite the denial in the Quran about Jesus' death on the cross (Surah 4:157), eyewitnesses who actually saw the crucifixion take place accurately wrote about it in the Bible. You have a simple choice. You can either believe a "supposed" prophet's revelations 600 years after the fact, or you can believe the written testimony found in the gospels by first-hand accounts recorded within 30 years of the event.

Not to mention, the event following the crucifixion, Jesus' resurrection, is the most verified and important miracle in all of history. All you have to do is study the history of the church and you will find that over 500 people saw the resurrected Lord, and that many of those eyewitnesses died a gruesome death because of what they testified to seeing. Therefore, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus is more attested and verified by history and evidence than any other theory devised by non-Christians and Muslims.

RESOURCES REFUTING ISLAM: (1) *WEB:* For great articles and books visit "Answering Islam," at www.answering-islam.org and for debates, lectures, and articles visit "Answering Muslims," at www.answeringmuslims.com (2) *BOOKS:* "Answering Islam," by Norman Geisler and "Helping Muslims See Christ in Christianity," by Joe Wrostek.

2. NEW AGE RELIGIONS

The Western world has been infiltrated with the old religious ideals of the orient. Many new religions are starting in America with "self-proclaimed" gurus and enlightened sages. These

men (and some women) claim to be another Jesus, and they teach people that if they look within themselves, they will find their true “god-selves.”

Many like to refer to this kind of new age philosophy as “buffet style religion.” Meaning, you can take a little Buddha, a little Jesus, add a little of the Hindu gods on the side and have a complete “spiritual meal.” Some of the more popular new age religions are: Transcendental Meditation, the Hare Krishna’s, Vipassana, and Sant Mat. Though every new age religion has its own unique qualities, they do share many things in common. The following is a list of some of the New Agers’ shared beliefs:

1. Their belief in god is more like a force than an actual person.
2. Jesus was just a man in touch with His “god-self,” and everyone has a “god-self” on the inside.
3. When you die you go back to the light, or energy of god, and then are reincarnated.
4. There is truth in every religion; however, what their “new” teacher is revealing is the best guidance for the people of today.
5. There is no real heaven or hell, just light and darkness, and you will continue to be reincarnated until you can achieve oneness with your “god-self” and be brought back to the light of God.
6. Meditation and yoga are used to find one’s god-self.
7. There are many “god men” who have lived. They are called, “gurus,” “christs,” or “enlightened ones.”
8. The main moral code is to do no harm to others. Most also require vegetarianism.

The following are some of their main arguments:

ARGUMENT 1: Didn't Jesus say the "Kingdom of God" was within all of us? We believe that God is literally in all of us and that makes us all gods.

Response: First, Jesus taught that all men were sinners on the inside and needed to repent to God to be cleansed. He never taught that people were "good" on the inside or that they were "little gods" (Mark 6:12 & Luke 13:3). Second, Jesus never taught that people had the Kingdom of God within them until they were "born again" or "saved" by specifically believing in Him (John 3:3-16). He taught that until people were "born again," they were literally children of the devil. Therefore, Jesus did not teach that everyone was a child of God (John 8:44).

Third, Jesus never taught that God was a force living on the inside of man, but rather revealed in three divine persons; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). Last, there are no other gods beside the one God and there are no other persons who are God other than the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Also, there is no other way to God, the Father, except by believing in Jesus Christ (John 14:6). When Jesus came to earth He was called, "The only begotten Son of God," meaning He is a one of a kind. There are no other God-men who can perfectly reveal the Father and save mankind from their sins (John 1:1-18).

ARGUMENT 2: Jesus said we had to be "born again" and we believe that means to be reincarnated.

Response: This is a distortion of the teachings of Jesus found in John 3:3. Jesus never taught reincarnation. He taught that everyone is given only one life to live for God, and that after their death He would judge them. Based upon His judgment, they would either spend eternity with Him or in the lake of fire (Matthew 25:31-46).

To be “born again,” according to John 3:3-8, is to be made new in one’s spiritual nature. This rebirth is necessary because man’s nature is sinful. Being born again is God’s way of being cleansed from the curse of Adam and the sins one has committed. The Bible also speaks about this in the terms of being made a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17). As a result, being born again has nothing to do with reincarnation, but salvation (1 Peter 1:23).

ARGUMENT 3: Have you ever studied other religions and seen the vast amount of similarities? Wouldn't it be evil and selfish of God to say only Jesus was a good man? What about Buddha, Krishna, and Gandhi?

Response: First, Jesus clearly taught that all the other ways to God, outside of His way, were evil and brought by false prophets that were thieves and robbers (John 10:1-11). Second, He said that He was literally the only way to the Father and no one could get to heaven but through Him (John 14:6).

Third, He said that He was the One and Only Judge who would judge the entire world, and that every knee would bow before His throne (Daniel 7:13-14 & Matthew 25:31). Last, He commanded His disciples to only teach His commands until the end of the world. He also said that He, personally, had all the authority in heaven and earth and would be with them forever (Matthew 28:18-20).

RESOURCES REFUTING NEW AGE PHILOSOPHY: (1) **WEB:** For great articles visit “CARM,” at www.carm.org/new-age-what and “Got Questions,” at www.gotquestions.org/new-age-movement.html (2) **BOOKS:** “Kingdom of the Occults,” by Walter Martin and “Jesus Among Other Gods,” by Ravi Zacharias.

Go and Defend the Faith!

Now it's your turn to take all that you have studied and share it with those who differ with you. Begin to spend time in private prayer to gain a heart for God's lost creation. Remember to view them with compassion and treat everyone in the same way you would want to be treated. It was only by God's grace that you were saved and His grace extends to them as well (Ephesians 2:8).

When witnessing to a person who is attacking the Christian faith, remember your battle is not against them, but the devil, so be patient and kind in your defense. At the same time, it is good to be bold and straightforward with your beliefs, so the Holy Spirit can use your words to convict them of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). The Bible teaches that Jesus came full of "grace and truth." This should be our method as well (John 1:14).

Review Questions

1. List and explain three ways Christianity is being attacked.
2. What are the "fundamental" Christian doctrines? Briefly explain each one.
3. Name two ways evolutionists attack the Bible and give the proper response from Scripture.
4. Name two ways those who believe in relativism argue against the Bible and give the proper response from Scripture.
5. Briefly explain the history of Jehovah Witnesses.
6. Name two ways the JW's come against the Bible and give the proper response from Scripture.

7. Briefly explain the history of the Mormons.
8. Name two ways Mormons deny fundamental Christianity and give the proper response from Scripture.
9. Briefly explain the history of Islam and name the Five Pillars of Islam.
10. Name two ways Muslims argue against the claims of Christianity and give the proper response from Scripture.
11. Name two beliefs New Age Religions have in common.
12. Name two ways "New Agers" attack the Bible and give the proper response from Scripture.
13. Write a list of the books that you are going to buy to help increase your ability to defend the faith.
14. Journal some of the extra things you have learned by visiting the websites listed in the lesson.

Prayerfully Meditate and Memorize

1 Peter 1:15, "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."

LESSON 12

Disciples Do Make Other Disciples

Well Done Good and Faithful Servant

Since you have made it this far into the process of becoming a disciple who makes disciples, I would like to personally congratulate you and commend you for your hard work and dedication to living a life like Jesus and walking worthy of your calling. The last section of this book is written to give you a clear understanding of what you are now commanded to do as a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

Luke 12:48 reads, *“From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”* Hopefully, while reading this book, you have been given much through mentorship, hands-on experience, prayer, impartation, and countless hours of studying. Now is the time to put all you have learned into practice so that when your life is over you can hear these words from Jesus found in Matthew 25:21, *“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!”*

Life is not about earthly treasures that rust and wither away, but about heavenly treasures that will last forever in the presence of God. When you get to heaven you will not talk about your job, your favorite sports team, the money you had, or the house you lived in. You will spend eternity talking about the things you did on earth for Jesus and His glorious Gospel.

When Jesus was in heaven, He had riches, power, and fame, but He left it all so that He could have souls in His everlasting kingdom. Decide, today, that you will not pursue riches, power, and fame, but instead will live your life to make other disciples and bring souls with you to heaven!

Since this book has already covered the importance of the church, you will now learn how to specifically fulfill your God-

given calling to be a disciple who makes other disciples (within the church). First, you will learn the “vision” of Christ’s church. Second, you will be instructed in the “strategy” for making disciples. Last, you will be guided into the right “structure” for you to start making disciples as soon as possible!

The Vision, “Loving God and Loving People”

The word “vision” means, “goal or purpose.” The goal and purpose of all churches and discipleship is to “Love God and Love People.” We get this vision directly from Jesus, Himself. Jesus said in Matthew 22:35-40 that loving God and loving people were the greatest commands given by God.

“35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36 ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’ 37 Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

As a disciple of Jesus Christ, you are commanded to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself. Remember that God would never ask you to do something that you couldn’t do. Consequently, what He commands us to do we should strive earnestly to accomplish. We know that the Holy Spirit will give us all the power, energy, and ability to do all the things that please God (Philippians 4:13).

There are two ways to both, love God, and people. First, we love God by worshipping and adoring Him with passion. Second, we obey all of His commands. We love people by first, helping them in their times of need and, second, by preaching the gospel to them. The following sections will bring depth to each of these main points.

Loving God with Worship and Adoration

True love for God is to desire Him more than anyone and anything else in the universe, and to love and adore Him with everything in your body, soul, and spirit, in total abandonment and surrender. You were made to worship God. You were made to laugh, cry, dance, and shout in His presence. Everything about you was made to worship God; your emotions, your mind and your thoughts, your spirit and your will, everything that makes you who you are is there to be given back to God in wonderful, intimate worship.

Eternity is all about worshipping God. Long after you die and the world has passed away, you will still be in awe of God, your Creator. Out of all the things that John saw in heaven, the most powerful scenes are those that describe the passionate worship of God in His glorious presence with all of His creation.

Revelations 5:11-14, "11 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. 12 In a loud voice they were saying: 'Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!'

13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!' 14 The four living creatures said, 'Amen,' and the elders fell down and worshipped."

You can also see the example of deep, heartfelt worship in the life of David. The Bible records that when David was bringing the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem, he passionately danced with all his might, while praising God, and literally made a fool of himself in the eyes of the people. Why? Because he loved God so much that he didn't care what others thought

about him. He just wanted to adore God with all of his strength in powerful praise and worship.

2 Samuel 6:5;14-15, "5 David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the Lord, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals."

"14 Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, 15 while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets."

The Bible also records that David then made the Levites the worship leaders and the musicians to serve God in the presence of the ark. He assigned them to play and make music to the Lord "morning and night." They were instructed to write songs and lead the people in praise and worship unto God. This kind of passionate worship in the Davidic Tabernacle was a foreshadowing of born again believers becoming the temple of God's Spirit, where He would dwell and manifest His presence in our times of worship.

1 Chronicles 16:4-6, "4 He appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, to extol, thank, and praise the Lord, the God of Israel: 5 Asaph was the chief, and next to him in rank were Zechariah, then Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-Edom and Jeiel. They were to play the lyres and harps, Asaph was to sound the cymbals, 6 and Benaiah and Jahaziel the priests were to blow the trumpets regularly before the ark of the covenant of God."

The heart of worship does not stop with David. It continues all the way to today. When Jesus was on the earth, He taught the woman at the well that she did not have to worship God in in the Temple in Jerusalem. He told her that she could worship God wherever she wanted, because God was looking for worshippers who would worship Him, not only in a certain building, but in spirit and in truth. The same is true with you,

today. You don't have to worship God only on Sundays and only in your church. You can worship God in your home, in your car, or wherever you desire! God is looking for people to come into His presence and spend their lives loving and adoring Him.

John 4:23-24, "23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

God loves you so much! Make a choice to love Him back in heartfelt worship. Think of your life as a love story between you and God. You went away, you cheated on Him, but He did not give up on you. He pursued you and brought you back to Him. Why? Because His love for you is so great. His love is filled with abounding and overflowing grace and mercy.

Now, every day your response to His proposal and actions of love determines whether the love story has a happy or sad ending. If you reject God and love other things in life more than Him, you will spend eternity in hell separated from the love of God. But, if you choose Him, you will spend forever in His presence falling deeper and deeper in love with Him. Therefore, don't let anything ever take away your love for God.

Read the following passage in Song of Solomon 5:2-8 and decide to make time, today, to "chase God" and spend time in His presence falling madly in love with Jesus.

"2 I slept but my heart was awake. Listen! My beloved is knocking: 'Open to me, my sister, my darling, my dove, my flawless one. My head is drenched with dew, my hair with the dampness of the night.' 3 I have taken off my robe – must I put it on again? I have washed my feet – must I soil them again?"

4 My beloved thrust his hand through the latch-opening; my heart began to pound for him. 5 I arose to open for my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with flowing myrrh, on the handles of the bolt. 6 I opened for my

beloved, but my beloved had left; he was gone. My heart sank at his departure. I looked for him but did not find him. I called him but he did not answer.

7 The watchmen found me as they made their rounds in the city. They beat me, they bruised me; they took away my cloak, those watchmen of the walls! 8 Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you – if you find my beloved, what will you tell him? Tell him I am faint with love.”

Loving God by Obeying His commands

Once you settle in your heart that loving God is not a chore or something that you are forced to do, you will be able to freely choose to obey everything that God has commanded with joy. Remember, following God’s commands are for our benefit, as well as God’s glory. He gave us His commands so that we could have eternal life and be filled with joy while pleasing Him. However, if we don’t submit ourselves to God’s laws we will only harm ourselves.

So, if you truly want to be free from sin, receive eternal life, and dwell in God’s presence forevermore, do what Jesus said. Keeping God’s commands are not “hard” or “burdensome,” but rather they are uplifting to the soul. The Bible states in 1 John 5:3, *“This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome;”* so love God and keep His commands! Here are five passages that teach that “true love” for God is to obey His commands:

1. Deuteronomy 11:1, *“Love the Lord your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands always.”*
2. Deuteronomy 30:15-16, *“15 See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. 16 For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.”*

3. John 14:15, *"If you love me, keep my commands."*
4. John 14:23-24, *"23 Jesus replied, 'Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24 Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.'"*
5. 1 John 2:3-4, *"3 We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. 4 Whoever says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person."*

Some immature Christians think that the only commands they are to keep are the ones such as "don't steal or murder." For example, when you ask them if they follow God's commandments they will say, "Yes. I don't kill anyone or commit crimes." They act as if the only thing God wants them to do in life is not be a murderer or criminal.

Though it is true God gave us laws against stealing and murder, those types of laws could be summed up as "God's Don'ts;" however, there are literally hundreds of more laws that can be classified as "God's Do's." As a result, God is just as concerned with what a person does as He is with what they don't do.

For example, imagine if you got a new job working for a lawyer as his assistant. On your first day he brings you into a room with five file cabinets filled with hundreds of folders. He says, "Take out all of these files and put them back in alphabetical order."

Now, imagine he comes back a few hours later and sees you sitting down in a chair looking confident as if you have done your job with excellence. He asks, "Have you finished rearranging all the folders?" And you answer, "No." He responds, "What have you done with all your time?" You say, "Well, I haven't murdered anybody, and I haven't lied about anything. I was thinking about stealing some money, but I didn't do that either."

Can you imagine your boss' response? He would probably say something like, "I didn't hire you just to not steal and kill. I hired you to do whatever I asked! You're fired. Pack up your things and never come back." Now apply that lesson to you working for Jesus as His disciple. He has asked you to do many things in life. He has asked you to do more than just not kill anyone.

He has commanded you to pray, study your Bible, make new disciples, cast out devils, fulfill your purpose, and so much more. How do you think Jesus will react on Judgment Day if He asks you what you did with your life and all you can say is, "Well, I didn't kill anybody!?!"

In Ephesians 2:8-10, Paul wrote that we are saved by grace, through faith, and that it is a gift from God. He also went on to write that we are God's "handiwork," and were "created in Christ Jesus to do good works." Therefore, determine by God's grace to not only believe in Jesus, but to obey His commands and do good works.

"8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

The following are four different categories of God's commands that apply to the disciple's life:

1. **COMMANDS REGARDING SALVATION:** (1) Place your full trust in Jesus and be born again (John 3:3); (2) Repent of your sins and receive forgiveness (Acts 2:38); (3) Receive total sanctification and freedom from the power and presence of sin, by the Holy Spirit, to fully love God and love people (John 8:31-32); (4) Be baptized in water (Matthew 28:19); and, (5) Receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues (Acts 2:38).

2. **COMMANDS REGARDING DISCIPLESHIP:** (1) Deny yourself, including all of your hopes, dreams, and ambitions; (2) Take up your cross and prepare to suffer rejection and persecution on behalf of following Jesus; and, (3) Follow Jesus. Walk, every day, in the path of righteousness that God has for you with your family, church, and career (Matthew 16:24).
3. **COMMANDS REGARDING MORALITY:** (1) Don't lie, but speak the truth; (2) Don't steal, but give to others; (3) Don't curse; speak words of blessings; (4) Don't hold a grudge; forgive those who hurt you; (5) Don't sin sexually. Only have sex in a heterosexual, monogamous marriage; (6) Don't dishonor your parents. Obey them; (7) Don't be addicted to things. Do everything, lawfully, and in moderation; (8) Don't be rebellious, but teachable; (9) Don't be prideful, selfish, or greedy. Be humble, a servant, and generous; and, (10) Don't mistreat others. Treat others the way you want to be treated (Galatians 5:19-26, Colossians 3:5-14, & Ephesians 4:22-5:7).
4. **COMMANDS REGARDING CHRISTIAN DUTIES:** (1) Have a blessed family (Ephesians 5:21-6:4); (2) Be a faithful disciple in your local church (Hebrews 13:7; 17); (3) Be a regular tither and supporter of charity and missions (1 Timothy 6:18); (4) Obey the laws of the land that don't violate your Christian conscience (Romans 13:1); (5) Regularly study God's Word (2 Timothy 3:16); (6) Be a public witness for Christ and make new disciples (Matthew 28:19); (7) Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17); (8) Do all things on your job unto Christ as your Master (Colossians 3:23); (9) Pray for others to be saved (1 Timothy 2:1-2); and, (10) Do all the good you can for as many as you can for as long as can by redeeming the time (Ephesians 5:15-16).

This list is not meant to be an exhaustive list, rather a summary of the main commands that the New Testament Christian should follow. Now that you have the basic understanding

that, to love God is to keep His commands, and that His commands call disciples to action, go out, today, and show the world that your love for God is more than just a feeling. It is a life changing force!

Loving People by Helping Them

Jesus' ministry was marked with compassion and care. Every place He went, He was always helping people in their times of need. If they were sick, He would heal them. If they were hungry, He would feed them. If they were burdened with sin, He would forgive them. If they were demonized, He would set them free. Jesus always met the needs of the hurting people around Him.

Jesus has commanded you to do the very same things that He did. This is why God's second greatest command is to "Love People." One of the best ways to help people is to provide care for them in their time of need, just as the Good Samaritan did (Luke 10:25-37). You may not be able to do something for everyone, but God will lead you to do something good for someone.

In 1 John 3:16, God said that we should love others in the same way that He loved us in John 3:16. It also states that God loved the people of this world so much that He sent His only Son to meet our needs. Jesus did this by giving His life for us. The Scripture also says that we should, now, lay down our lives to meet the needs of others. Read the two passages side by side to see how God's great love should compel us to love others.

John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

1 John 3:16-18, "16 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 and sisters. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has

no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."

Can you see how the true disciple is to love his or her neighbor? We are to love with our actions. We are to show our love to others by meeting their needs. Sure, some people may try to take advantage of our generosity; but, unthankful, greedy, manipulative people didn't stop Jesus from going to the cross. He knew that there would be people who would be thankful and appreciative of His sacrifice; and, for those people Jesus gave all He had.

At the same time, when giving help to people in need you should use wisdom so that you don't wrongly support people's bad decisions. I don't give money to homeless people. I will spend money so they can get food or join a Christian rehab. When people come to me at church and ask for me to pay their bills, I don't max out the church credit card so they can continue in their bad spending habits. I do spend time helping them budget their money, and teach them to start over and help with what we can afford.

Jesus didn't ask one person to meet all the needs of the world. He simply asked all of us to do our part. Once again, you cannot meet the needs of everyone, but you can meet the needs of someone. Ask God to lead you to those you can help. Remember, it is not only important to give your money, but also your time. Jesus did not only give us His blessings. He gave us His life.

Prayerfully read the story of the "Good Samaritan" found in Luke 10:25-37 and ask God to give you fresh ideas on how to help others in your life.

"25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' 26 'What is written in the Law?' he replied. 'How do you read it?' 27 He answered, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind,' and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

28 *'You have answered correctly,' Jesus replied. 'Do this and you will live.'* 29 *But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'* 30 *In reply Jesus said: 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.*

34 *'He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. "Look after him," he said, "and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'"*

36 *'Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?'* 37 *The expert in the law replied, 'The one who had mercy on him.'* Jesus told him, *'Go and do likewise.'"*

Notice how Jesus challenged the man to, not only be willing to give money, but to take the time to personally help another person in need. Many of the Jews in Jesus' day used to hate the Samaritans. However, Jesus chose them in the story to prove it doesn't matter the color of people's skin, or in what part of town they live, or whether they are homosexual or straight. When we see people in need, we are commanded to reach out to them and meet their needs.

The following are two passages found in the historical account of the early church. As you read these records of generosity, ask God to use your church to reach out and help others in your community and around the world.

Acts 2:44-47, "44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to

meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

Acts 4:32-37, "32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all 34 that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

36 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), 37 sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet."

Do you see how the early disciples were passionate about helping others and meeting other's needs? At the end of chapter four, Luke (the writer of Acts) mentions a person by the name of, "Joseph," and writes that he sold land that he owned and gave it to the church. I pray that every church would love people like that today. I challenge you to love people like Jesus loved you, and how the early church loved their community. Do not just love with words, but with action. Go out and begin to meet someone else's needs. Here are some other Scriptures that also teach us about giving to the poor: Matthew 25:31-46, Proverbs 19:17, & James 1:27.

Just One More

I would like to end this section about loving people with a true story about a man in history who loved Jews and helped save many of theirs lives during the Nazi Holocaust. His name was Oskar Schindler, and he lived in Poland during World War II.

He secretly bought Jewish people's freedom and helped them move away from German-held territories. Though he was a rich man, at the end of the war he was poor because he gave all that he had to help over a 1,000 Jews live and avoid Nazi death camps.

In the movie, *"Schindler's List,"* he is shown at the end of the war taking off his watch and saying, "Just one more. This watch could have helped me buy just one more Jewish person's freedom. I wish I could have saved just one more." Around three million Jews lost their lives during the holocaust. He was only able to save 1,000. What if others would have done the same? How many more could have been spared? Thank God for what Oskar Schindler did; but, I wonder how many others just sat by and did nothing?

The same is true with God's people. I wonder how many Christians are watching the world suffer, and are too lazy to help those in need? How much more valuable is one eternal soul compared to the things we spend our money on: TV's, phones, expensive clothes, fancy restaurants, and cars? Right now there are countless millions of souls headed for eternal hell. How much are you willing to give so that others can know Jesus? Meeting people's needs is one of the most powerful ways to help others receive the gospel. *"Just one more."*

Loving People by Preaching to Them

"Loving people" goes beyond meeting only their physical and emotional needs. To truly love people like Jesus, you must be willing to preach the gospel to them so that they might be saved. In 1 Corinthians 9:16, Paul said, *"For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel."*

For example, what if you were sick and went to the doctor for help, and after examining you he found that you had a brain tumor that, if left alone, would lead to your death in less than three months? What if he told you, that with proper help and medicine, you could live and be well? Now, choose from

the following list of doctors. Who you would like your doctor to be?

1. **DOCTOR FEEL GOOD:** “Doctor Feel Good” is only concerned about you feeling good. He will not tell you that you have a tumor because he knows you will be sad and upset. So, instead of telling you the truth he says, “Good news. You’re okay. Go home and enjoy the day. If you feel sick, take an aspirin. There’s really nothing wrong with you.” “Doctor Feel Good” lets you leave his office without hearing the truth about your sickness and the help that you could receive, because he doesn’t want to make you feel bad.
2. **DOCTOR ANGRY:** “Doctor Angry” is a very angry doctor because all of the people who come to him always have something wrong with them. He’s so tired of it that now, every time someone comes, he screams, “You have a tumor. It’s going to kill you and it’s your own fault. You’re going to die in less than three months. Get ready to suffer and die a horrible, painful death!” Because “Dr. Angry” is so upset, he never tells you the other half of the examination, that with proper help you can get well. He only screams at you and kicks you out of his office.
3. **DOCTOR TRUTH:** “Doctor Truth” is simply focused on the truth. He comes in and tells you the truth with honesty and respect. He says, “The reason you are sick is because you have a brain tumor. If you do not get help you will probably die in less than three months. But, if you are willing to receive treatment you could be healthy in just a few weeks.” He then talks to you about the treatments you will undergo and explains the best way to cope with the tumor. At the end of the appointment, he reassures you of the truth and focuses on the hope of you getting better.

Which doctor would you like to have? “Doctor Truth?” Why? Because he tells you the truth and helps you get better. Let’s apply this example to preaching the gospel.

First, some people want to be like “Doctor Feel Good,” and only preach what makes people feel good. They don’t tell people that they are under the wrath of God, and that if they were to die without real repentance, they would spend eternity in hell. All they do is try to be nice to people and let them believe that they are going to heaven. In actuality, they are doing the lost person a great disservice. Because these people are unwilling to confront people or make them feel bad about their life, they let them go to hell feeling good. The following are some passages that rebuke the compromise of “Doctor Feel Good.”

Jeremiah 8:11-12, “11 They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. ‘Peace, peace,’ they say, when there is no peace. 12 Are they ashamed of their detestable conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when they are punished, says the Lord.”

Luke 6:22-26, “22 Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. 23 ‘Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.’” 24 “But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. 25 Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. 26 Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.”

When you go out and preach the gospel, you cannot be focused on people’s feelings. You must be focused on the truth. It would be better for someone to get mad and offended at your preaching, but to hear the truth, than to let them walk away feeling good, thinking that they are going to heaven when, in actuality, they are going to hell.

Second, “Doctor Angry” is only focused on the problem and offers no solution. These are the type of preachers that go

out on the streets and yell at everyone. They see homosexuals and yell, "All gay people are going to HELL!" They are so focused on people's sin that they never offer someone a solution to sin; Jesus Christ.

When you are preaching the gospel, you cannot let your hatred towards sin result in you hating people. You must learn to hate the sin, but love the sinner. The Bible says that Jesus did not come into the world to condemn the world, but to save it (John 3:17). Yes, people need to know the truth about their sins, but they also need to hear the truth about God's love and forgiveness through Jesus' death on the cross. The following are some passages that correct the hard-heart of "Doctor Angry."

Matthew 9:35-38, "35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'"

Jude 1:22-23, "22 Be merciful to those who doubt; 23 save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear – hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh."

Last, "Doctor Truth" is the best doctor because he just focuses on the truth. He is able to talk about the sickness and the cure with respect and honesty, because he is more concerned with the truth than with feelings. He is better than "Doctor Feel Good" because he tells the truth about why you are sick, and he is better than "Doctor Angry," because he doesn't just focus on the sickness but, also, the cure.

Jesus was the perfect "Doctor Truth." He never "sugar-coated" His message to make people feel good, and at the same time, He was never full of wrath and judgment with people

because they had sinned. Jesus knew how to preach to people, with conviction and strong language about their sins. At the same time, He knew how to be kind, loving, and forgiving with those who needed His cure.

So, be a “Doctor Truth” when you preach the gospel. Be a preacher who not only confronts people’s sins, but also offers the cure found in Jesus. Don’t be afraid to offend people or hurt their feelings because you talk about heaven and hell and their sinful nature. Just remember to be compassionate like Jesus was with you, because before you accepted Jesus into your life you were also a sinner damned to hell. The following are some Scriptures that will help remind you of how to love people while preaching the truth.

John 1:14-17, “14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, ‘This is the one I spoke about when I said, “He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.”) 16 Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

Matthew 10:26-28, “26 So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. 27 What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. 28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

The Discipleship Strategy

Now, let’s discuss the three-fold strategy of discipleship. These three parts work together to accomplish the vision of loving God and loving people. By following these three easy steps,

every person in the church can be a true disciple of Jesus Christ and do the work of the ministry. The following is a brief outline for each step in the strategy:

1. **CONNECT:** This step connects people to Jesus and the church. Here people get saved and begin to grow by coming to church regularly and attending a small group.
2. **MENTOR:** During this step, the new disciple is ready to be trained by a leader to be a disciple and minister in God’s kingdom. Here they can study and learn more in depth lessons in both a one-on-one and classroom setting.
3. **SEND:** In this step, the trained disciple is now ready to be in ministry and make new disciples. Each church can train new leaders in the positions of ministry that they have available.

When you read the Bible, it is easy to find this strategy in various places with different people. Consider the following chart with examples listed. Elisha was with Elijah in the Old Testament, Peter was with Jesus in the New Testament, and Timothy was with Paul in the New Testament during the early church. Each one of these examples shows how God used the method of connect, mentor, and send.

Three Step Strategy	Elisha was Mentored by Elijah	Peter was Mentored by Jesus	Timothy was Mentored by Paul
CONNECT	1 Kings 19:19-21	Matthew 4:13-20	Acts 16:1-3
MENTOR	2 Kings 3:11	Mark 3:14	1 Corinthians 4:17
SEND	2 Kings 2:13-14	Matthew 28:18-20	1 Timothy 1:3-5

All of these people had a mentor. They were a tool God used to train disciples and send them out. Some people think they can do it all by themselves, as long as, they have God. This is not

the pattern in the Bible. God's primary pattern is to always use people to be His instruments in training others.

1. CONNECT: *Connect to God, remain connected, and connect to a good church.*

"Connect" simply means to "bring two or more things together." The Bible says to first connect to God in a personal relationship with Him. Second, the Bible teaches that we are to always remain connected, because it is a day-to-day relationship with God, not a one-time decision for God that secures our salvation. Last, you are to be connected to a good church, which is the Body of Christ. Here is a list of Scriptures that teach the importance of connecting to God the Biblical way.

1. **CONNECT TO GOD:** Colossians 1:21-23.

2. **REMAIN CONNECTED TO GOD:** John 15:1-8.

3. **CONNECT TO A GOOD CHURCH:** Acts 2:42-47.

2. MENTOR: *Be in a relationship that challenges you to be teachable, accountable, a servant, and stay hungry for God.*

To be a disciple means to be "trained to live like Jesus." To be trained is the same as being mentored. Jesus never intended people to be discipled all by themselves. He set up a discipleship plan, in His Great Commission, that would allow each and every believer to have the opportunity to be individually mentored.

The easiest way to see this plan in action is to look at the strategy of Jesus when He was on earth establishing His church. Though Jesus loved the whole world, He knew that the most effective way to reach the world would be to have meaningful relationships with just a few people, who, could

then go out and teach others. So, Jesus chose twelve men to go with Him everywhere He went for three years.

After those three years, He sent them out to do the very same thing. Within a few hundred years of Jesus going back to heaven, the whole Roman Empire knew about Him. There were no cars, TV, Internet, satellite, planes, or the like. There was just an intense desire, by the disciples, to multiply and reproduce other disciples like themselves. Nothing could stop them. Christianity is now the largest religion in the world. Jesus is the most popular name on the planet. And, the Bible is the most read book of all time.

However, it came at a price. The disciples had to be willing to lay down their lives. In fact, many of the disciples in the first three centuries did die a martyr's death. Yet they did not stop. In America today, in many ways, Christianity is like a dying religion, because most churchgoers don't dedicate their lives to Jesus and the gospel like the first century Christians did. In the 21st century, many so-called Christians are lazy and only desire comfort and compromise. You must decide to live like the 1st century church instead of the 21st century church.

Here are four attributes you must have if you want to be mentored by another disciple and live the life of a world changer and history maker.

1. **BE TEACHABLE:** 2 Timothy 2:1-2.
2. **BE ACCOUNTABLE:** 1 Corinthians 4:14-21.
3. **BE A SERVANT:** Philippians 2:19-22.
4. **BE HUNGRY FOR MORE OF GOD:** Matthew 5:6.

3. SENT: *To be sent out with a vision of the Lord, the harvest, the need, and your ministry.*

After you have connected to God and the church, and have been mentored by another strong disciple, you are now ready

to be sent out so that the cycle of discipleship can continue. It is now your calling to go and find new people, connect them to Jesus, and begin to mentor them so that, like you, they can be a true disciple of Christ.

When you go, you should always have a vision of why you are a leader, and why it is important to remain a leader who produces good fruit. Here is a list of four things that you should always remember when you are serving the Lord in ministry and making new disciples.

1. **ALWAYS SEE THE LORD:** Remember that you are doing your work for the Lord, not people. No matter how hard it gets or how people treat you, always remember to see the Lord (Isaiah 6:1-9).
2. **ALWAYS SEE THE HARVEST:** Always see the great harvest of lost souls in the world. Sometimes, when preaching the gospel, people will reject Jesus. Remember, there are literally millions more who need to hear The Word. Even if someone you disciple gives up and quits, make sure you never do. If you don't give up, you will eventually see people become disciples like you (John 4:34-38).
3. **ALWAYS SEE THE NEED:** Never take your eyes off the need to help people and serve them. If you don't help and love the people around you, who will? Remember, there is a real devil, determined to bring as many souls to hell with him as he can. Believe that God is using you to make a difference and meet as many needs as you can (Luke 10:33).
4. **ALWAYS SEE YOUR MINISTRY:** Remember what the Lord called you to do and do it. Never quit. Never give up. Remain faithful, and know that what God said He will do, He will surely do. Remember, it was God who called you, and it is God who will strengthen you to accomplish your purpose (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

The Ten-Fold Ministry Structure

Now that you have learned the vision and strategy for discipleship, it is time to learn the ministry structure to serve and work as a trained disciple. The structure is what holds everything together and makes the vision visible for all to see. The structure also provides places where the strategy and vision can be accomplished. Here are the verses where we find the basis for all ten-ministry structures found in the church:

Acts 2:42-47, "42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching [Discipleship and Bible College] and to fellowship [Fellowship], to the breaking of bread and to prayer [Prayer Meetings]. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need [Community Service]. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts [Services]. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts [Small Groups], 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved [Evangelism, Church Planting, and Mission Trips]."

The following is a list of each of the ten ministries with a brief explanation:

1. **SERVICES:** A time of fellowship, prayer, worship, and preaching.
2. **SMALL GROUPS:** A time of fellowship and Bible study in the home.
3. **EVANGELISM:** A time of preaching God's Word to the lost.
4. **DISCIPLESHIP:** A time of being mentored and disciplined to live like Jesus.

5. **FELLOWSHIP:** A time to get together and have fun and fellowship.
6. **COMMUNITY SERVICE:** A time to serve the community with various programs such as “After School Programs,” “Adult Learning Centers,” “Food Pantries,” “Prison Outreaches,” and “Classes in English as a Second Language.”
7. **PRAYER MEETINGS:** A time to pray and worship God together.
8. **BIBLE COLLEGE:** A time to get trained to operate in the five-fold ministry.
9. **CHURCH PLANTING:** A time to plan and plant new churches.
10. **MISSION TRIPS:** A time to travel and preach the gospel.

Now it's Your Turn!

Praise the Lord! You completed the book. Now, prayerfully do what you have been trained to do. I pray that God will use you to go out and make new disciples. If you haven't already, talk to your church's leadership and find a place to serve. God is with you and you will do great things in His name. You are a true disciple who has been trained to make other disciples. May God use you to change the world one person at a time. Be a disciple who makes disciples!

Review Questions

1. What do you want to hear from Jesus on Judgment Day?
2. What does the word “vision” mean?

3. What is the vision of discipleship? Give a Scripture reference.
4. Explain how to love God with passion and adoring worship.
5. Give two verses that teach true love for God is to keep His commands.
6. Explain the difference between "God's Don'ts" and "God's Do's."
7. What part of the vision does the Good Samaritan apply too? Explain why.
8. Describe the three different ways to preach the gospel and tell which way is best.
9. What does the word "strategy" mean?
10. What is the three-fold strategy of discipleship?
11. Name the three people who are used as examples of the three-fold strategy.
12. Name the three most important parts of "connecting" found in the Bible.
13. What are four things that a disciple must have to properly be mentored?
14. What are the four things you must keep your eyes on when you are sent out into ministry?
15. List and describe the ten parts of the structure of discipleship and where they are found in the Bible.

16. Write out a prayer that expresses your heart to God to make new disciples and serve in the ministry.

Prayerfully Meditate and Memorize

Matthew 28:18-20, "18 Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"

APPENDIX A

Accountability and Church Discipline

**This chapter is taken from the book, "Discipleship Based Churches," by Joe Wyrostek. It is addressed to leaders in the church to help them establish good accountability in their discipleship.*

Inspect What You Expect

Have you ever thought about the reason Jesus picked twelve men to eat, sleep, and live life with Him for three years straight? Why didn't Jesus just say, "Hey guys, I'll meet you at the local synagogue every week and give you some life lessons?" It's simple. Jesus wanted to "inspect" what He "expected" from His disciples.

Like any good gardener, the Father wanted His Son to be in the vineyard every day to prune the bad and cultivate the good in His disciple's lives (John 15). However, many in the church, today, are not held to any kind of standard, so their beliefs and their behaviors have become disconnected.

The reason for accountability and church discipline is to make sure that what Christians claim and believe is actually what they live out daily. The disciple's accountability starts with the leadership as Hebrews 13:17 states, *"Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you."*

Take for example, the instructions Paul gave Titus concerning some of the people in Crete who were claiming to be Christians, yet were causing great trouble,

Titus 1:10-16, "10 For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. 11 They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach-

and that for the sake of dishonest gain. 12 Even one of their own prophets has said, Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.

13 This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith 14 and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth. 15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.

16 They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.”

Here is another example of Paul talking with the church in Corinth, concerning sinful things people were doing, including a man who was sleeping with his stepmother,

1 Corinthians 5:1-13, “1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father’s wife. 2 And you are proud! Shouldn’t you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? 3 Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. 4 When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, 5 hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.

6 Your boasting is not good. Don’t you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? 7 Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

9 I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—10 not at all meaning the people of

this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. 11 But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

12 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? 13 God will judge those outside. Expel the wicked man from among you."

In both cases Paul had to use church discipline and accountability to work through the problems in the church. *Accountability* is the act of being responsible for what one says and does. *Church discipline* is the corrective and restorative process for people who have sinned against God and others.

As a result, I like to think about accountability as the preventative action to keep one from willful disobedience, and church discipline as the resulting action needed when someone is not being accountable. Church discipline is when the church leaders take reparative action. This way, if one is truly accountable, they will not be easily led into continual sin and need discipline.

Accountability in the Real World

Everyone on the job is accountable to someone, and if serious problems arise there are consequences in the form of discipline. If the troublemaker on the job wishes to remain, he will have to endure the discipline for his negative actions or be fired. Similarly, everyone in society is held accountable to the laws of the land, and if they break them they have to suffer the consequences. Even parking tickets, if left unpaid, can result in someone being sent to jail.

Today, in many churches, people are not accountable to anyone, so when they sin and cause harm to the Body of Christ there is no godly discipline. Every discipleship-based church

must enforce what Jesus and the Apostles taught concerning accountability and church discipline.

Jesus was so direct with His “problem solving technique,” that He said if a fellow brother didn’t repent of his sin, he was to be treated as a “pagan” or a “tax collector.” Read Matthew 18:15-17,

“15 If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”

Today’s church leadership must take appropriate actions to ensure that the local gathering of believers is holy and in biblical order. Leaders are to “rid the church of yeast” and “judge those within” so God’s people can live without rebellion or willful sin in their midst. No good boss would allow someone to stay at a job if the person continually slandered and discouraged the rest of the workers. The church shouldn’t embrace nor accept that which Jesus has said to rebuke and reject.

Restoration and Forgiveness

At the same time, the Bible teaches us how to restore and bring back into the congregation those who truly repent. When the man in Corinth humbly repented, he was welcomed back by the congregation with a strong affirmation of their love for him, 2 Corinthians 2:5-11,

“5 If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you, to some extent—not to put it too severely. 6 The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is

sufficient for him. 7 Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. 8 I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him.

9 The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. 10 If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, 11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.”

After Jesus’ discussion about treating someone like a tax collector if he didn’t repent, He further taught that we are to forgive each other, without limit, when people truly repent. Matthew 18:21-22 states,

“21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times? 22 Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.’”

Plus, Paul, in Galatians 6, taught that believers should “gently” restore those who sin, and that everyone is to help “carry each other’s burdens.” Galatians 6:1-3,

“1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. 2 Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3 If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”

Therefore, accountability and church discipline are important in the church. However, it should never come at the cost of grace and mercy. Love covers over a multitude of sin and truly desires the best for people (1 Peter 4:8). When people do sin, they should be given a chance to repent and make things right. If they refuse, they should be told, in love, to leave the fellowship; but, at the same time, be given a pathway to return (1 Corinthians 5:13). Last, if they do return and truly repent,

they should be welcomed into the church without embarrassment or being looked down upon (Galatians 6:1).

How Accountability Works

I would like to take the next few sections to give some advice about how to effectively handle accountability in discipleship. I have had the privilege of being in “accountable” relationships, within the body of Christ, since Bible college. I’ve had relationships with those in authority over me, as well as, with my peers.

I can give many testimonies about how God used the accountability principle to bring powerful victories in the important areas of my life. For example, through accountability I experienced and maintained freedom from sexual impurity, smoking, cursing, even drug use. Plus, through godly leadership and the leaders’ investment in my life, I experienced freedom and spiritual growth in deeper areas like anger, selfish ambition, and pride.

As a result of being so powerfully impacted by accountable relationships in my personal Christian life, I have always used them in the ministries God has graced me to lead. In the beginning of my church plant, I used accountability with my students. I had one-on-one Bible studies, where I taught the lesson and then provided time for them to pray, reflect, and do an inward examination.

Also, before every “201” discipleship class, I would start by asking God to search us and show us if there was any wicked way in us, and to lead us in the way everlasting. Then I would have the students meet in groups of 2-3 to discuss and pray about the things God showed them, so that He could change their lives by the power of the Holy Spirit (Psalm 139:23-24).

One-on-One Accountability

I believe one of the best ways to keep people accountable is to have them meet together, with someone of the same gender, who is willing to be honest and grow with them. Then, if a serious issue arises, they can bring the issue to the elders and deacons. However, by having the first level of accountability be with the disciples themselves, it will teach them not to be dependent upon the leader, but to be open with their peers.

In a new church plant, it is always good for a husband and wife team to do the accountability, so that the new disciples can learn the best way to replicate it with others as the church grows. At the same time, I don't believe the disciple should ever "grow out" of accountability, but should "grow into" new accountable relationships.

For example, in the 101 stage, the disciple may be accountable to their leader; in the 201 stage, to a peer; and, when they graduate as a deacon, they should be accountable to the elders. If they later become an elder, they should be accountable to other elders. Every disciple, in whatever stage of spiritual development, should always remain accountable. As a lead elder, I am accountable to the elders on our church staff, and to elders in other churches with whom I am friends.

Now, let's look at the three essential elements of having effective one-on-one accountability, starting with you and your leaders; (1) Have a time of prayer; (2) Ask heart revealing questions; and, (3) Share testimonies and encouragement.

1. Have a Time of Prayer

Make a time to call out, to Jesus, at the beginning of every meeting. Ask that His power and wisdom be with you both. Then, pray at the end for forgiveness of sins, power to live right, and the fruit of the Spirit to be developed greater in your lives.

Matthew 18:18-20, "18 I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose

on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

2. Ask Heart-Revealing Questions

Have your accountability partner ask good questions to really show your weaknesses and struggles. Remember, accountability time is to challenge you to grow and become more like Jesus. Though we are not saved by good works, we are saved by faith unto good works (Ephesians 2:8-10). Because of the inner dwelling and power of the Holy Spirit, you should desire to walk worthy of your calling without any compromises (2 Thessalonians 1:11).

Here are some of the questions John Wesley used in his "Holy Clubs" in the Methodist movement during the 1700's. Any of these questions can be used.

1. Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I'm better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
2. Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?
3. Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence?
4. Can I be trusted?
5. Am I a slave to dress, friends, work, or habits?
6. Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
7. Did the Bible live in me today?

8. Do I give it time to speak to me every day?
9. Am I enjoying prayer?
10. When did I last speak to someone about my faith?
11. Do I pray about the money I spend?
12. Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?
13. Do I disobey God in anything?
14. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
15. Am I defeated in any part of my life?
16. Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy or distrustful?
17. How do I spend my spare time?
18. Am I proud?
19. Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisees who despised the publican?
20. Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold resentment toward or disregard? If so, what I am doing about it?
21. Do I grumble or complain?
22. Is Christ real to me?

A simplified three-question summary I like to ask is: (1) Are you who you say you are? (2) Is there any sin in your life? And, (3) Is there any good you should be doing but are not? The

biblical basis for “probing questioning” can be found in 2 Corinthians 13:5 when Paul wrote, *"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?"*

3. Share Testimonies and Encouragement

After your heart has been laid bare and you have prayed for the issues in your life to come under the blood of Jesus, begin to testify about how you have been seeing God work over the past week (or from the last time you met). Don't allow the time of meeting together to bring condemnation. Have this time be for power and victory in Jesus' name.

Accountability time should encourage you to *"fight the good fight of faith"* (1 Timothy 6:12)! For John said in Revelation 12:11, *"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."* Therefore, we should always be overcoming our sin and keeping the devil under our feet!

Eight Hindrances to Accountability

Having done accountability for many years, I have seen some people have bad reactions to it. So, I made this short list to help expose some people's hearts and ill intentions. Refer to this list, in your church, when people avoid accountability and make excuses.

1. **INCONSISTENCY:** When someone starts and stops accountability because they are not committed to it; or, keep switching accountability partners when they get discouraged.
2. **SHAME:** When someone sins and tries to hide it from their accountability partner because they feel ashamed and embarrassed.

3. **PRIDE:** When someone feels that accountability is not needed in their life; or, they always see the speck in someone else's eye and neglect the one in their own eye.
4. **CONFUSION:** When someone falsely compares accountability and true discipleship to cult behavior and legalism.
5. **BAD THEOLOGY:** When someone says things like, "No one is perfect," they wrongly believe they are incapable of being fully transformed into a new creation.
6. **LOVE OF SIN:** When someone truly doesn't want to change, because they inwardly want the evil desires of their sinful flesh.
7. **HYPOCRISY:** When someone lies, is a hypocrite, and prefers their secret world of sin over living in the light of Christ's righteousness.
8. **OFFENSE:** When someone is easily offended and distracted, because they make Christianity all about their wants, desires, and dreams, and run from anything that brings "death to self."

Ten Biblical Proofs for Accountability

To address any people in your church who try to avoid or make excuses for biblical accountability, I have made this list to teach the validity and benefit of it from the Scriptures. Paul said, *"Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ"* (Romans 10:17). Though the word "accountability" is not found in the Bible, the theology behind the practice is. Similarly, the word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible, but the theology it represents is found throughout it.

1. **COMMUNAL CONFESSION:** Confessing sin one to another (James 5:16).
2. **LIVING ABOVE REPROACH:** Elders and leaders in the church being above reproach, which comes from investigating their life (1 Timothy 3:2-8).
3. **COMMUNAL EXAMINATION:** All Christians gathering together to have their lives examined by the Word of God, in fellowship, as in Acts 2:42-47, and as seen demonstrated in Acts 5 with the divine judgment of Ananias and Sapphira given through Peter.
4. **TRANSPARENCY:** The life of a disciple, being transparent to all those in the church concerning his doctrine and lifestyle, is seen in the corrections of 1 Corinthians 5:1-13.
5. **HONEST RELATIONSHIPS:** Walking together in an open and honest relationship, under a leader, as seen in the life of Jesus and His disciples, as in Mark 3:14, and as is commanded to be replicated in Matthew 28:18-20.
6. **ACCOUNTABLE RELATIONSHIPS:** The example of Paul, with Timothy, in a Father/Son relationship, is supposed to be replicated to other men in the church as found in 2 Timothy 2:2.
7. **BEING KNOWN:** The concept of "*knowing those who labor among you,*" teaches the principle that all workers, whether volunteer or paid, should be accountable to the church leadership (1 Thessalonians 5:12).
8. **CHARACTER REPLICATION:** The idea of obeying and following the examples of the leaders in your home church as seen in Hebrews 13:17.

9. **COMMUNAL SUBMISSION:** All the biblical letters (epistles) from Paul, John, and Peter boldly proclaim the concept of accountability by their very nature. Meaning, the leaders in the local churches were accountable to the Apostles. All the disciples were accountable to the Word of God. And the disciples, in their homes and in fellowship, were to hold each other to the standard of the teachings of Christ.

10. **COMMUNAL DISCIPLINE:** The concept of "*marking those who cause division among you,*" is a clear pattern for every disciple, to avoid those who don't continue in the very things they are being held accountable for, as seen in Romans 16:17.

Twelve Steps for Church Discipline

If accountability doesn't work and someone in the church continues to live in sin, it is the role of the leadership to confront him and give him instruction to repent. If he doesn't repent, or argues with the leadership, the church should meet with him again. If he still refuses to repent, he is to be "dis-fellowshipped." To be dis-fellowshipped means that the body of believers no longer associates with him until he repents.

I would suggest that each church develop its own set of guidelines for the disciplinary process based on the Bible. Below is a suggested guideline to follow with the basic steps that should take place from beginning to end.

1. **ONE-ON-ONE:** According to Matthew 18:15, try to meet with the person, one-on-one, and show him, biblically, his sin, "adultery, drunkenness, slander, etc."

2. **BRING ALONG ANOTHER:** According to Matthew 18:16, if he hasn't listened to you by yourself, bring another person, preferably an elder or deacon, to see if they come to the same

conclusion as you. If the accusation stands, correct him again.

3. **OFFER TIME AND COUNSEL:** At some point, before the final decision is made, the leadership would do well to offer counsel and a certain amount of time for the person to change and repent of his sin. This, time and counsel, can be a good way to help the person realize his sin and receive the needed instruction to avoid being dis-fellowshipped. Some of my greatest errors in church discipline have come from moving too fast. At the same time, more problems can arise if the “yeast” is not removed in a timely way. For this step to work for both the benefit of the church, and the person, prayerful guidance from God and your team will be needed.
4. **TELL THE CHURCH (OTHER LEADERS):** According to Matthew 18:17, key leaders should meet, and if they come to the same conclusion, give the person the final warning.
5. **REMOVE THEM:** According to Matthew 18:17, if after the three meetings the person still doesn't repent, he is to be removed from the church. Then, the rest of the church should be notified to not have a relationship with him until he repents.
6. **PUT EVERYTHING IN WRITING:** From start to finish, have all the meetings and accusations in writing. This way, if the individual desires to repent, there is a clear record of his transgressions should it need to be referenced.
7. **PRAY FOR GOD TO RESTORE:** Certainly, prayers should be offered during the whole process, but specifically at the end, so the dis-fellowshipped person will be saved (1 John 5:16).
8. **RESTORE THOSE WHO REPENT:** If, at any time in the process, the person repents, he should be forgiven and restored (Galatians 6:1).

9. **DISCIPLE THE WEAK:** At whatever stage the person repents, when he finally does, he should be a part of some kind of private mentorship to help restore him and bring him back into a place of growth and effectiveness in the church (Galatians 6:1).
10. **PUBLIC RESTORATION:** If someone has been affected by the person's sin, the affected person should get an apology, with repentance. Usually things like this are good to do by letter, email, or with a group meeting with all involved. Also, public restoration is not only for the person's repentance, but also gives people a chance to reaffirm their love for him (2 Corinthians 2:8).
11. **KEEP ACCOUNTABLE:** The restored person, along with everyone, should see the situation as a reminder of the importance of accountability (Galatians 6:3).
12. **LOVE:** Never forget, from start to finish, to do everything with the love and grace of Jesus. Matthew 18:21-22, *"21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?' 22 Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.'"*

Whenever we have to enforce church discipline, I pray that we all might remember the words of Paul in 2 Thessalonians 3:13-15, *"13 And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right. 14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. 15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother."*

Do All Things in Love

Accountability and church discipline may not always be easy, but if not done right the church cannot grow. When it's done

correctly, the people will grow and be safe, and the world will see the light of the church shining bright! Sometimes the process may seem to drain you, spiritually, and bring unexpected hurt to the Body, but remember Jesus and the Apostles had to deal with the same kind of issues. You're not alone.

Whenever your church faces discipline with its disciples, never lose sight of Jesus' love for them (John 3:16). Also, remember the Bible teaches us in Psalm 30:5, "*For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.*" Last, we should be slow to anger, bitterness, and hurt, and quick to look to Jesus as our example of suffering and receive His strength, love, mercy, and grace (Hebrews 12:1-13).

The Bottom Line: Accountability and discipline is a part of every person's life, so the church should be no different if we want to be successful in making disciples of the nations.

APPENDIX B

Sixteen Fundamental Truths

1. The Scriptures are inspired by God and declare His design and plan for mankind, from Genesis to Revelation (2 Timothy 3:15-17).
2. There is only one true God, revealed in three persons: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, commonly known as the Trinity or God nature (Mathew 28:19).
3. “The deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.” As God's Son, Jesus is both human and divine (John 1:1; 14; 18).
4. Though originally good, man willingly fell into sin, ushering evil and death, both physical and spiritual into the world (Romans 5:12-19).
5. Every person can have restored fellowship with God, through salvation, by accepting Christ's offer of forgiveness of sin through repentance. Thus, faith in Jesus is the only way to be saved (Romans 10:13-15).
6. “The practice of two ordinances:” (1) Water baptism by immersion, after repenting of one's sins and receiving Christ's gift of salvation, and (2) Holy Communion (the Lord's Supper) as a symbolic remembrance of Christ's suffering and death for our salvation (Matthew 28:19 & 1 Corinthians 11:26).
7. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a special experience, following salvation, which empowers believers for witnessing and effective service, just as it did in New Testament times (Acts 1:4; 8 & Acts 2:1-4).

8. The initial, physical evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues, as experienced on the Day of Pentecost and referenced throughout Acts and the Epistles (Acts 2:4).
9. Sanctification initially occurs at salvation, and is not only a declaration that a believer is holy, but also a progressive, lifelong process of believers separating from evil, as they continually draw closer to God and become more Christ-like (Romans 12:1-2).
10. The Church has a mission to seek and to save all who are lost in sin. The Church is the Body of Christ, and consists of the people who, throughout time, have accepted God's offer of redemption (regardless of religious denomination) through the sacrificial death of His Son Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:22).
11. A divinely called, and scripturally ordained leadership ministry, serves the Church. The Bible teaches that each of us, under leadership, must commit ourselves to reach others for Christ, to worship Him with other believers, and to build up or edify the body of believers, the Church (Mark 16:15-20; John 4:23-24; & Ephesians 4:11-16).
12. Divine healing of the sick is a privilege for Christians, today, and is provided for in Christ's atonement, His sacrificial death on the cross for our sins (James 5:14-16).
13. The Blessed Hope is when Jesus raptures His church, prior to His return to earth (the second coming). At this future moment in time, all believers who have died will rise from their graves and will meet the Lord in the air, and Christians who are alive will be caught up with them, to be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 & 1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

14. In The Millennial Reign of Christ, Jesus will return with His saints at His second coming, and begin His benevolent rule over the earth for 1,000 years. At that time, many in the nation of Israel will recognize and accept Him as the Messiah, the Savior who died for them and all mankind (Revelation 19:11-14).
15. A final judgment will take place for those who have rejected Christ. They will be judged for their sin and consigned to eternal punishment in a literal lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15; 21:8).
16. We look forward to the perfect New Heavens and New Earth that Christ is preparing for all people, of all time, who have accepted Him. We will live and dwell with Him there forever, following His millennial reign on earth. "And so shall we forever be with the Lord" (2 Peter 3:13 & Revelation 21-22)!

MORE RESOURCES

Discipleship Books by the Same Author

- (1) *Welcome to Your New Life, Seven Steps to Spiritual Growth*: “*Welcome to Your New Life*” is more than just a book. It is a new way of living. Jesus Christ came to give you a new life and that new life starts now. Have you ever wondered what made Peter live a different life than Judas? Have you ever asked yourself what God’s will is for your life? Do you want to make a difference for God with your life? If you answered “Yes,” this book is for you. Get ready for seven steps that will forever change your life!

- (2) *Discipleship-Based Churches, How to Create and Maintain a Church of Disciples*: “*Discipleship-Based Churches*” is a practical guide for all pastors and church leaders to raise up disciples who make disciples. Filled with great illustrations and compelling points, the reader will be challenged and inspired to make a church of disciples.

- (3) *Life Changing Devotions, 365 Days of Faith Inspiring Lessons*: Do you want to live the kind of life God created for you? Then “*Life Changing Devotions*” is for you! Simply choose from one of the 12 different series, where you desire to see change, and start today. Each lesson contains a Scripture reading, a short informative lesson, a reflection, and practical steps to help you implement what you have learned. If you want what you’ve never had, you have to do what you’ve never done. Start learning from the Word of God, today, and let God change your life one day at a time!

- (4) *Disciples of the First Disciples, Learning Powerful Lessons from the Past*: “*Disciples of the First Disciples*” takes the reader from the early days of the first disciples, through the Great Reformation, to the present outpouring of the Spirit

around the world. This book is a perfect introduction to church history and revival. It's a must for every lover of discipleship!

Other Books by the Same Author

- (1) *Helping Muslims See Christ in Christianity, Understanding Islam in Light of the Bible: "Helping Muslims See Christ in Christianity"* is a fresh, informative, and bold look at the differences between Islam and Christianity. Whether you are already a follower of Jesus or not, this book will challenge you and inform your beliefs in light of what God has said to the prophets in the Bible. You will learn the difference between Islam's and Christianity's view of Jesus, the Bible, and the Trinity. What you read in this book will change your life!

- (2) *Date Like a Christian, Seven Steps to a Godly Marriage: "Date Like a Christian"* is a practical look at dating in the real world, and guides you along a biblical path that will help you find true love and romance. In the midst of all the dating "drama" of the 21st century, this book answers important questions such as: When am I ready to date? As a Christian, how should I get to know someone I like? And, am I in love or is it just lust? Every "single person" should read this book before setting out to find "Mr. or Mrs. Right!" Make a move in the right direction, and get this great book today!

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