

# READINGS ON DISCIPLESHIP

**Purpose:** The purpose of this session is to give you biblical understanding of the nature of discipleship. These two readings will introduce you to the characteristics of a disciple and the primacy of discipleship in your Christian life.



## Objectives

1. The disciple will know the source of our calling.
2. The disciple will understand the characteristics of a disciple according to the scriptures.
3. The disciple will see the importance of producing reproducers in the process of discipleship.
4. The disciple will be challenged by these two readings to obey Christ's call to be active throughout your life in personalized discipling.

## Scripture Memory

*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

Matthew 28:19-20



## Agenda

1. Mutual sharing, accountability, and prayer.
2. Discuss the readings.
3. Discuss the questions.
4. Share Scripture memory.

## THE MARKS OF A DISCIPLE

by

Lorne Sanny

Lorne Sanny headed The Navigator ministry in Seattle, Washington, served as vice-president of The Navigators, and worked closely with Billy Graham. Mr. Sanny became president of The Navigators in 1956, after the death of Dawson Trotman, the founder. Mr. Sanny served in that position until 1986.

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"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:18-20).

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations", or as another translation puts it, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."

Jesus came to this earth to be an example. He came here to show us the Father. He came here to take our sins in His own body on the cross and He came to destroy the works of the devil. And while He went about His ministry, along the way He also gathered up people to follow Him - called disciples.

Jesus was popular. "And there went great multitudes with Him" (Luke 14:25). Yet He told them, "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26-27). He also said, "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33).

He turned to the crowds that were following Him and three times He said to them, "...cannot be My disciple," "...cannot be My disciple," "...cannot be My disciple." It's as if He said, "I am not looking for crowds; I'm looking for disciples."

Columnist Walter Lippman once said, "There are only two kinds of people in the world that really count today, and they are the dedicated Christians and the dedicated communists." And Time magazine reported that the

Note:

These articles may at times seem outdated. They are however, written by pioneers in modern day discipleship, and are worth reproducing for your benefit.

French columnist Roger Garaudy feels that there are only two major forces in the world today - communism and Christianity.

And I know that among the Christians, the ones who really count are the disciples. As a friend of mine, a Christian leader, said, "Lorne, you don't find many disciples. But when you find one, there's almost no limit to what God can do through him."

How do you recognize a disciple? What does he look like? What are his characteristics? Are you a disciple? Am I a disciple?

I have studied seven or eight passages in the Scripture having to do with the characteristics of a disciple. They can conveniently be boiled down to three marks of discipleship. When you see these three, you have a disciple.

### **Identified with Christ**

The first mark of a disciple is that he is someone who is identified with the Person of Jesus Christ - someone who will openly admit that he belongs to Christ. Now whatever else you may think about baptism, it is a public identification with Jesus Christ. When you are baptized, you are saying I take my stand with, I am on the side of, I belong to Jesus Christ.

A friend of mine told me of a Jewish man he led to Christ in Dallas. A few weeks later my friend told another Jewish man, a non-Christian about the first one. Immediately the second man asked, "Has he been baptized yet?" When my friend said, "No, he hasn't," he replied, "Well, he'll never last." It was later, when the first Jew was baptized, that his family cut him off. He had made open identification with Jesus Christ.

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9,10). An open identification with Jesus Christ. Jesus promised, "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32).

A friend told me that when he went with Billy Graham, who was to speak to 500 men at the Jewish Rotary Club of New York City, he wondered what in the world Mr. Graham would speak on to a Jewish club. When the time came, Billy stood up and spoke on "Christ, the Fulfillment of the Old Testament Prophecies". At the close they gave him a standing ovation. He had identified himself unashamedly with Jesus Christ.

On one occasion Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29). It seems everything in His ministry led up to this.

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But the thing that strikes me is that then "He began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31). A little later He called the multitude and His disciples to Him and said, "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me...Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:34, 38).

Some years ago when I was with the Billy Graham team in a crusade, a businessman came forward one night and received Christ. The following Sunday night he went to a church that he sometimes attended. After the service he walked up to one of the leading elders in this church and told him, "I was at the Billy Graham meeting last week out at the ball park. I went forward and received Christ."

"I heard about it and I am delighted," the elder replied.

Then the businessman asked the elder, "How long have you and I been associated in business?"

"About 23 years, I think."

"Have you known Christ as your Savior all those years?" the man asked the elder.

"Yes, I have," he answered.

"Well, I don't remember your ever speaking to me about Christ during those years," the man said. The elder hung his head, and the man continued, "I have thought highly of you. In fact, I thought so highly of you that I felt if anyone could be as fine a man as you and not be a Christian, then I didn't have to be a Christian either."

This elder had lived a good life before his friend, but he had not taken the added step of openly identifying with the One Who enabled him to live that kind of life. Here was a fine man, but he did not have this first mark of a disciple of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus asks you to deny yourself, take up your cross daily and follow Him, what do you think it means? Whatever else it means, I think it means to be identified with Christ, not only when it's popular but when it's unpopular. Not only when it's the thing to do but when it seems as if it's not the thing to do. I like the way the New English Bible puts Revelation 1:9. John writes, "I was on the island called Patmos because I had preached God's Word and borne my testimony to Jesus."

I once talked to the Chief of Police of Stockholm, who was a Christian, and discovered he had been a delegate to Panmunjom back when the Korean truce was first signed. He had interviewed some of the Chinese soldiers as to whether or not they wanted to be repatriated. He told me about a soldier who came through one day and gave his testimony to the interrogators concerning his faith in Jesus Christ. There in the Red Chinese army was a disciple.

A friend of mine traveling by train from Finland to Moscow tried to smuggle in three suitcases full of Bibles. But the Russian colonel at the border took rather unkindly to this idea. In fact, he was a little upset. My friend Jack asked him, "Well, what are you so worried about? Why do you get so upset about someone bringing a Bible into your country?"

"It's a fairy story, nothing but fairy tales," the colonel replied.

"Don't you have fairy story books in Russia?" Jack asked.

"Oh, yes."

"Well, what's the matter with another one?"

"Ay," said the colonel, "if they believe that Bible, they won't believe in communism."

So after warning him not to preach and scaring him a little bit, Jack said they let him go on his way.

A few hours later a couple of conductors came by and began to sell them on the merits of communism. It wasn't long before Jack couldn't stand it any longer. He began to preach back to them. After he'd preached to them for awhile, one of the conductors pointed to another conductor at the other end of the car and said, "Now, he's one of yours. That conductor, he's one of your kind."

Later Jack talked to this conductor. Sure enough, he was a born-again Christian. They asked him if he had a Bible. He replied, "No, the last Bible in our town was owned by my grandmother. She tore it up into segments and distributed it to Christians around the town so it couldn't be confiscated all at once."

They asked if he'd like a Bible. (The colonel had confiscated only two of the suitcases of Bibles they had with them.) When they handed him a Bible, he wept and kissed it. Then he wrapped it in newspaper to take it off the train so it wouldn't be taken away from him.

I believe the striking thing about this story is that not only was there a Christian conductor on that train, but the other conductors knew he was a Christian. There was a disciple, identifying himself with the Person of Jesus Christ.

*"A disciple is also obedient to the Word of Christ — to the Scriptures."*

Do you take an opportunity to admit that you are a follower of Jesus Christ? Why not determine that at the first opportunity this week you will quietly, graciously, but openly identify yourself with Jesus Christ? I believe this is a mark of a disciple.

One morning I spoke to the SWAP (Salesmen With A Purpose) Club in Colorado Springs. They call in various speakers to tell how selling applies to their business. I spoke on how it applies to the Gospel. In the process I explained the Gospel. After I had spoken, they introduced the guests. One of them was a friend of mine, Will Perkins, a Plymouth dealer. It was his first time there. When he was introduced he stood and said, "Gentlemen, two years ago I heard a presentation similar to the one you heard this noon. I bought it, and it has changed my life." Then he sat down. I thought to myself, how many Christians would have taken that little opportunity to identify themselves with the Person of Jesus Christ?

### **Obedient to the Word**

A disciple is not only a believer who is visibly identified with the Person of Christ, he is also obedient to the Word of Christ - to the Scriptures. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

"Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Jesus said, "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed" (John 8:31). If you observe it and apply it to your life, then you are My disciple.

Luke records what happened one day when a crowd of people listened to the Lord Jesus preach. One woman in the crowd was probably middle-aged or a little beyond (I'm interpreting a little bit here.) As she listened to Jesus, something welled up within her. Perhaps she had a son who was wayward, and as she looked at the Lord Jesus, she wished her son were like Him. Or maybe she had never had a son and had always wanted to have one. Anyway she spoke up - she sort of burst out - and said, "Happy is the woman who was Your mother" (Luke 11:27).

Jesus' answer to her was significant. He said, "Yea rather, blessed are they (or happy are they) that hear the Word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:28). That's real happiness. That's real blessedness - to hear what God has to say and to do it.

I enjoyed reading a book by the late Sam Shoemaker, *Extraordinary Living for Ordinary Men*. In it he says that Christians who are half-committed are half-happy. But to be really happy you need to go all the way in commitment. And this means to be obedient to the Word of Christ.

Obedience is necessary also for stability. The greatest sermon ever preached was the Sermon on the Mount. And notice how Jesus concluded it.

He said, "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matthew 7:24-27).

What made the difference between the wise man and the foolish man? It wasn't knowledge, because they both heard the same sermon. They went to the same conference; they had the same knowledge. They both heard the Word. Not only that, they had the same circumstances. It says that the rain descended, the floods came, the winds blew and beat upon the house of the foolish man. The circumstances were the same. One couldn't say, "Well, you don't know how tough it is where I come from." "Well, you don't know what kind of a family life I've got." "You don't know how I suffer down at work." It wasn't their circumstances that made the difference. One thing made the difference between wisdom and foolishness. One obeyed the Word; the other one did not.

Jesus said, "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21). What does that mean? It means Jesus will make Himself real to him. To whom? To the one who has His Word and keeps it.

So a disciple does more than attend meetings. He does more than take notes. (He does that, incidentally, in my opinion, though I don't have any Scripture to prove that.) But he finds out what the Bible says and does it. Suppose he's going through Proverbs in his morning quiet time, and he comes to Proverbs 3:9,10, "Honor the Lord with thy substance; and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."

Early in my marriage, a Christian doctor in Seattle said, "Now let me make a suggestion about handling your family finances. Honor the Lord with your substance, and with the firstfruits of all your increase. Set aside money for the Lord before you pay the rent. Before you buy the food. Even when you think you don't have enough money left to pay the rent and to buy the food. You watch. God will see to it that you have money for the rent and for the food."

Now will He or won't He? Well, the Word promised that He would, and He did.

A friend of mine was looking over the family bills and they looked pretty big. He and his wife prayed and decided that the first thing they ought to do to get out of debt was to increase their giving. And they are out of debt. They proved that God can fulfill His Word.

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*"A disciple has a conscience void of offense toward God and men."*

Another illustration of the truth that a disciple must be obedient to the Word of Christ is in these words of Jesus, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee: leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23,24).

When was the last time you went and made something right with someone else? When did you admit to your wife or your children that that fit of temper was sin? It's amazing to me when couples say that neither one has ever asked forgiveness of the other. If you don't find some times when you've got to make some things right, you're about ready for heaven right now. A disciple has a conscience void of offense toward God and man.

Let's go back to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." I don't know why it is that some people think the day of missions is over. In one recent year, independent missions in America, not the denominational but independent missions, needed 4,000 missionary candidates that they didn't get. Have you ever considered the possibility that obedience to the Word of Christ might mean leaving your business?

Bob Potter owned a supermarket down in Oklahoma City. If he and his wife hadn't sold it and gone into the Lord's work, maybe God would have used someone else. But many people have been blessed by the ministry of Bob Potter through The Navigators.

The Navigators could use double our number of representatives right now. But don't apply. We don't take applications. Many times as I've gone around with the Billy Graham Crusades, young fellows have come up and said, "Mr. Sanny, do you know of any openings in Christian work?"

"Yep, I do."

They'd ask, "Where?"

And I'd say, "Right where you live. Your neighborhood. Where you go to school." I find that God usually leads you to the next step after you take this one. That's where you start.

I'm not speaking of going to the mission field because you're so sick and tired of the office you can't stand it, or because the boss has bugged you for two years and any change would be an improvement. I'm speaking of obedience to the Word of Christ, wherever it may lead and when the going is tough. That's a mark of a disciple.

After Moses died, Joshua had the job of taking three million people into the Promised Land. That included women, children and livestock. God gave him some instructions. You'd think the Lord would say, "Now, look, here's how you'd handle this problem, here's how you do this, here's how you do that."



But, no. He said, "Joshua, one thing above all else is going to take a lot of courage — and it's not leading all these people and facing all the enemies that are in the land. That isn't what's going to take courage." But, "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law" (Joshua 1:7).

You may think it doesn't take courage to be obedient to the Word of God. But I wonder how obedient we really are to the Word. We live in a Christ-rejecting world, and anyone who lives in obedience to this Book is going to come into conflict with it. That's how you recognize a disciple. He does more than hear the Word. He puts into practice what he's heard.

The Navigators are kind of rabid on this subject. Year after year you'll hear us beat certain drums all the time. One is that we need to come to know the Bible and apply it. That's why we publish Bible courses and Scripture memory programs. We need to make up our minds that God helping us with the power of the Holy Spirit, we **are** going to be obedient to the Word of Christ. That's a mark of a disciple. He seeks to follow the Bible and do what it says.

### **Fruitful for Christ**

So a disciple is one who is openly identified with the Person of Christ. Second, he is obedient to the Word of Christ. And third, he is bearing fruit in the work of Christ. "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples" (John 15:8).

Now it seems to me that there are two kinds of fruit here. First, the fruit of character, the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Galatians 5:22,23). And, second, there's fruit by way of influencing the lives of others for Christ. "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16).

I really threw a curve ball to my Sunday School class one Sunday morning. I intended to. We were talking about Jesus sending out the twelve two by two. He gave them authority over unclean spirits. They went out and preached that men should repent. They cast out demons and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them. Then I asked, "Do you think Judas did this? Do you think Judas went out and preached to people to repent? Do you think Judas cast out demons and healed the sick?"

Some feel they can prove that Judas was never saved. Let's assume they're right. Did Judas then preach that people should repent? Did he cast out demons? Did he heal the sick? Could he have?

Look at Jesus's words: "On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and do

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many mighty works in Your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you evildoers!'" (Matthew 7:22,23).

My point was that we get so carried away with the spectacular that we think the spectacular is the supreme evidence that we are real disciples or Spirit-filled. But the real evidence is shown in our character - love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. We're considering here the character of a disciple.

I've heard it said that the Apostle Paul before he was converted, would pray something like this every day, "God, I thank You that I am not a Gentile, that I am not a slave and that I am not a woman." But look at how God changed his attitude. In his first letter he wrote, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Jesus Christ" (Galatians 3:28). Here is evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in the way of character.

This is what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. It includes one's whole attitude, outlook, character and relationship to others. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you can work great miracles? No. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:55).

When Jesus talked about His ministry and what He came to do, He quoted from Isaiah 61:1,3, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound...to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

Take this world in which we live with all of its glitter, and its tinsel and veneer. Strip all of this away, and how would you characterize the real world underneath? Brokenhearted, captive, bound, anxious, sad, depressed.

A disciple is one who gets involved in that kind of world, who is bearing fruit in the work of Christ. He shows the fruit of the Spirit in a Christlike character - love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. How we need that in the world in which we live!

### **The Greatest Is Love**

What did Jesus say was the greatest identifying mark of all in a disciple? Love. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples" — if you do what? "If ye have love one to another."

One of the greatest illustrations of this that I have seen was on the television special "James Emory Bond". It was an entire one-hour interview with a

black man who was an ex-truck driver. He was in his seventies at the time of the interview. Apparently he lived in Baltimore. One night he watched a panel discussion with some of the city leaders, mayor, chief of police and others on television. They discussed the race and juvenile delinquency problems in Baltimore. As he watched, his heart was really moved.

The next day he went down to the television station. He wanted to talk to somebody because he had been so moved by their discussion. He said he knew the answer, but he didn't know whom to tell. At the station they had the good sense not only to interview him, but also to videotape it. All you saw was this gray-haired gentleman as he answered questions coming from off camera.

He said, among other things, that when he was a young fellow growing up on the edge of Baltimore, the white boys would throw rocks at him as he was on his way to school. He began to hate white people. As a young man he started working as a truck driver. One morning when he saw the milk truck go by, he thought how nice it would be if he could just have a little milk before he went to work in the morning.

He stopped the milkman, who was a white man, one day and asked him if he would leave him a quart of milk. He said, "No, I don't deliver milk to niggers."

"So," Bond said, "I called up the milk company, and I asked the man I talked with if this was true, that they didn't give milk to black people. He said, 'No, that's not right. We do deliver milk to black people, and we'll see that he delivers the milk.'"

"So," he said, "the milk came, a quart each morning. Several weeks went by and I realized that he wasn't leaving me a bill, and I wanted to pay for it. So I stopped him one morning and said, 'I want you to give me a bill so I can pay for this.' And the milkman said, 'I don't take money from niggers.' So I said, 'Well, I've got to pay you, you've just got to let me pay you.'"

"Well," the milkman said, "tell you what you do. You put the money on the fence post."

James Emory Bond said, "I thought I'd have a little fun with him, so I said, 'Now I won't feel like I paid you unless I put it in your hand.' 'Nossir,' he said, 'put it on the post.' So I said, 'OK.' And I put it on the post. When the milkman reached out to take the change, I just laid my hand on top of his. And he jerked it away."

Then he said, "Later on, one of God's servants by the name of Billy Sunday came to our town, and he told how Jesus Christ died on the cross to take away man's sin and his enmity of heart toward his fellowman. As I heard that, I realized that I needed this, and I walked the sawdust trail. And you know, God took the hate out of my heart for the white man. He put love there."

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Apparently a few days later, unknown to him, the milkman went to hear Billy Sunday. He went forward in the meeting, received Christ, and a couple of days later pulled up in front of James Emory Bond's little place. With tears streaming down his face, he apologized for the way he had treated him. And this dear old black man said, "I have loved him, and he has loved me ever since."

Now that's what discipleship means. There is a mark of a disciple. Bearing fruit in the work of Christ. By this shall all men know that ye are Christ's. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." When we begin to see more disciples sprinkled around America and around the world, what a difference it will make! Real genuine disciples who will turn the world upside down. There are many already, and we ought to be praying for them.

But not only is there the fruit of Christ-like character, but also the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of others. Jesus said, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16).

Go and bring forth fruit. Paul wrote to the Romans of his desire, "That I might have some fruit among you also" (Romans 1:13). I think he meant lives influenced for Christ.

Once while I was thinking about this, two events took place that drove the truth home to me. One was something I read about Dr. Charles F. McKoy of Oyster Bay, Long Island. After fifty years of fruitful ministry as a pastor and evangelist, this 71-year-old bachelor began looking around for a retirement home. A bishop from India came to his church to plead for missionary help for India. Dr. McKoy prayed earnestly that God might lay it on the heart of someone in the congregation to respond to this call and go to India. After the third message the bishop turned to Dr. McKoy and said, "I don't think God is looking for someone in the congregation. I think he is looking for the man in the pulpit."

Dr. McKoy could hardly believe his ears. He said, "Bishop, are you losing your mind? I'm 71, I've never been overseas; I've never been on the ocean. The thought of flying terrifies me." But soon a new missionary was on his way to India, green and seasick, but on his way - at age 71. Fifteen years later, Dr. McKoy died. Between the ages of 71 to 86 he had gone around the world nine or ten times winning people to Christ in the most difficult places. He was a real disciple in old age also. And I think one reason it struck me was that I was reading in Psalm 92:14, "They still bring forth fruit in old age, they are ever full of sap and green." Your life can be fruitful to the very end.

The same week, we received word from Virginia that a young fellow named Teed Radin, 23 years of age, a graduate of Virginia Polytechnic Institute, who would soon be on The Navigator staff, had been in a head-on collision. Teed was killed instantly and his fiancée died within the hour. One of the

fellows wrote that while at V.P.I. Teed had led 25-30 men to Christ. Among them, five were dedicated, trained, effective men of the Cross who, according to this person, would be willing at a moment's notice to die for the cause of Christ.

Dr. McKoy — an old man, a disciple to the end. Teed Radin — a young man, a disciple early in life. In fact, there's no better time to become a disciple than right now. But deep down in our hearts - that's where real business is done with God — we must determine that by God's grace and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will be true followers of Jesus Christ.

Let's ask ourselves, Am I a true disciple?

Am I willing to be openly identified with the Person of Jesus Christ?

Am I seeking to be obedient to the Word of Christ in my everyday life?

Am I bearing fruit in the work of Christ by way of Christlike character and by influencing the lives of others?

I want to be a disciple. I want to have these marks and characteristics in my life. The only thing I'd like to do beyond that is to help make disciples and to get them to help make others. That's what Jesus wants done. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."

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## BORN TO REPRODUCE

by

Dawson Trotman

Dawson Trotman, converted at age 20, gave 30 years to vigorous pursuit of the goal "to know Christ and make Him known". Daws was a man who believed God, who asked Him for great things and saw God answer. The ministry of The Navigators is one of those answers. It began when another man asked Daws to teach him what he saw practiced in Daws' life.

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A few years ago, while visiting Edinburgh, Scotland, I stood on High Street just down from the castle. As I stood there, I saw a father and a mother coming toward me pushing a baby carriage. They looked very happy, well-dressed and apparently were well-to-do. I tried to catch a glimpse of the baby as they passed and, seeing my interest, they stopped to let me look at the little, pink-cheeked member of their family.

I watched them for a little while as they walked on and thought how beautiful it is that God permits a man to choose one woman who seems the most beautiful and lovely to him, and she chooses him out of all the men whom she has ever known. Then they separate themselves to one another, and God in His plan gives them the means of reproduction! It is a wonderful thing that a little child should be born into their family, having some of the father's characteristics and some of the mother's, some of his looks and some of hers. Each sees in that baby a reflection of the one whom he or she loves.

Seeing that little one made me feel homesick for my own children whom I dearly love and whose faces I had not seen for some time. As I continued to stand there I saw another baby carriage, or perambulator as they call it over there, coming in my direction. It was a secondhand affair and very wobbly. Obviously the father and mother were poor. Both were dressed poorly and plainly, but when I indicated my interest in seeing their baby, they stopped and with the same pride as the other parents let me view their little, pink-cheeked, beautiful-eyed child.

I thought as these went on their way, "God gave this little baby whose parents are poor everything that He gave the other. It has five little fingers on each hand, a little mouth and two eyes. Properly cared for, those little hands may someday be the hands of an artist or a musician."

Then this other thought came to me, "Isn't it wonderful that God did not select the wealthy and the educated and say, 'You can have children,' and to the poor and the uneducated say, 'You cannot.' Everyone on earth has that privilege."

The first order ever given to man was that he "be fruitful and multiply". In other words, he was to reproduce after his own kind. God did not tell Adam and Eve, our first parents, to be spiritual. They were already in His image. Sin had not yet come in. He just said, "Multiply. I want more just like you, more in My own image."

Of course, the image was marred. But Adam and Eve had children. They began to multiply. There came a time, however, when God had to destroy most of the flesh that had been born. He started over with eight people. The more than two billion people who are on the earth today came from the eight who were in the ark because they were fruitful and multiplied.

### **Hindrances**

Only a few things will ever keep human beings from multiplying themselves in the physical realm. One is that they never marry. If they are not united, they will not reproduce. This is a truth which Christians need to grasp with reference to spiritual reproduction. When a person becomes a child of God, he should realize that he is to live in union with Jesus Christ if he is going to win others to the Savior.

Another factor that can hinder reproduction is disease or impairment to some part of the body that is needed for reproductive purposes. In the spiritual realm sin is the disease that can keep one from winning the lost.

One other thing that can keep people from having children is immaturity. God in His wisdom saw to it that little children cannot have babies. A little boy must first grow to sufficient maturity to be able to earn a living, and a little girl must be old enough to care for a baby.

Everyone should be born again. That is God's desire. God never intended that man should merely live and die—be a walking corpse to be laid in the ground. The vast majority of people know that there is something beyond the grave, and so each one who is born into God's family should seek others to be born again.

A person is born again when he receives Jesus Christ. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God...Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13)—the new birth. It is God's plan that these new babes in Christ grow. All provision is made for their growth into maturity, and then they are to multiply—not only the rich or the educated, but all alike. Every person



who is born into God's family is to multiply.

In the physical realm when your children have children, you become a grandparent. Your parents are then great-grandparents, and theirs are great-great-grandparents. And so it should be in the spiritual.

### **Spiritual Babes**

Wherever you find a Christian who is not leading men and women to Christ, something is wrong. He may still be a babe. I do not mean that he does not know a lot of doctrine and is not well informed through hearing good preaching. I know many people who can argue the pre-, the post- and the amillennial position and who know much about dispensations, but who are still immature. Paul said of some such in Corinth, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual (or mature), but as unto carnal, even as unto babes..." (1 Corinthians 3:1).

Because they were babes, they were immature, incapable of spiritual reproduction. In other words, they could not help other people to be born again. Paul continued, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it...ye are yet carnal (or babes): for...there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions..." (1 Corinthians 3:2,3). I know a lot of church members, Sunday school teachers and members of the women's missionary society who will say to each other, "Have you heard about so and so?" and pass along some gossip. Such have done an abominable thing in the sight of God. How horrible it is when a Christian hears something and spreads the story! The Book says, "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto Him...a lying tongue..." (Proverbs 6:16,17). Oh, the Christians I know, both men and women, who let lying come in!

"...he that soweth discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:19) is another. This is walking as a babe, and I believe that it is one of the basic reasons why some Christians do not have people born again into God's family through them. They are sick spiritually. There is something wrong. There is a spiritual disease in their lives. They are immature. There is not that union with Christ.

But when all things are right between you and the Lord, regardless of how much or how little you may know intellectually from the standpoint of the world, you can be a spiritual parent. And that, incidentally, may even be when you are very young in the Lord.

A young lady works at the telephone desk in our office in Colorado Springs. A year and a half ago she was associated with the young Communist league in Great Britain. She heard Billy Graham and accepted the Lord Jesus Christ. Soon she and a couple other girls in her art and drama school were used of the Lord to win some girls to Christ. We taught Pat and some of the others, and they in turn taught the girls whom they led to Christ. Some of these have led still other girls to Christ, and they too are training their friends. Patricia is a

great-grandmother already, though she is only about a year and four months old in the Lord.

We see this all the time. I know a sailor who, when he was only four months old in the Lord, was a great-grandfather. He had led some sailors to the Lord who in turn led other sailors to the Lord, and these last led still other sailors to the Lord--yet he was only four months old.

How was this done? God used the pure channel of these young Christians' lives in their exuberance and first love for Christ, and out of their hearts the incorruptible seed of the Word of God was sown in the hearts of other people. It took hold. Faith came by the hearing of the Word. They were born again by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They observed those Christians who led them to Christ and shared in the joy, the peace and the thrill of it all. And in their joy, they wanted someone else to know.

In every Christian audience, I am sure there are men and women who have been Christians for five, ten or twenty years but who do not know of one person who is living for Jesus Christ today because of them. I am not talking now about merely working for Christ, but about producing for Christ. Someone may say, "I gave out a hundred thousand tracts." That is good, but how many sheep did you bring in?

Some time ago I talked to 29 missionary candidates. They were graduates of universities or Bible schools or seminaries. As a member of the board I interviewed each one over a period of five days, giving each candidate from half an hour to an hour. Among the questions I asked were two which are very important. The first one had to do with their devotional life. "How is your devotional life?" I asked them. "How is the time you spend with the Lord? Do you feel that your devotional life is what the Lord would have it to be?"

Out of this particular group of 29 only one person said, "I believe my devotional life is what it ought to be." To the others my question then was, "Why is your devotional life not what it should be?"

"Well, you see, I am here at this summer institute," was a common reply. "We have a concentrated course. We do a year's work in only ten weeks. We are so busy."

I said, "All right. Let's back up to when you were in college. Did you have victory in your devotional life then?"

"Well, not exactly."

We traced back and found that never since they came to know the Savior had they had a period of victory in their devotional lives. That was one of the reasons for their sterility—lack of communion with Christ.

The other question I asked them was. "You are going out to the foreign field. You hope to be used by the Lord in winning men and women to Christ. Is that right?"

"Yes."

"You want them to go on and live the victorious life, don't you? You don't want them just to make a decision and then go back into the world, do you?"

"No."

"Then may I ask you something more? How many persons do you know by name today who were won to Christ by you and are living for Him?"

The majority had to admit that they were ready to cross an ocean and learn a foreign language, but they had not won their first soul who was going on with Jesus Christ. A number of them said that they got many people to go to church; others said they had persuaded some to go forward when the invitation was given.

I asked, "Are they living for Christ now?" Their eyes dropped. I then continued, "How do you expect that by crossing an ocean and speaking in a foreign language with people who are suspicious of you, whose way of life is unfamiliar, you will be able to do there what you have not yet done here?"

These questions do not apply to missionaries and prospective missionaries only. They apply to all of God's people. Every one of His children ought to be a reproducer.

Are you producing? If not, why not? Is it because of a lack of communion with Christ, your Lord, that closeness of fellowship which is part of the great plan? Or is it some sin in your life, an unconfessed something, that has stopped the flow? Or is it that you are still a babe? "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again..." (Hebrews 5:12).

### **How to Produce Reproducers**

The reason that we are not getting this Gospel to the ends of the earth is not because it is not potent enough.

Twenty-three years ago we took a born-again sailor and spent some time with him, showing him how to reproduce spiritually after his kind. It took time, lots of time. It was not a hurried, 30-minute challenge in a church service and a hasty good-bye with an invitation to come back next week. We spent time together. We took care of his problems and taught him not only to hear God's Word and to read it, but also how to study it. We taught him how to fill the quiver of his heart with the arrows of God's Word, so that the Spirit of God could lift an arrow from his heart and place it to the bow of his lips and pierce a

heart for Christ.

He found a number of boys on his ship, but none of them would go all out for the Lord. They would go to church, but when it came right down to doing something, they were "also rans" (ones who make a weak attempt and fail). He came to me after a month of this and said, "Dawson, I can't get any of these guys on the ship to get down to business."

I said to him, "Listen, you ask God to give you one. You can't have two until you have one. Ask God to give you a man after your own heart."

He began to pray. One day he came to me and said, "I think I've found him." Later he brought the young fellow over. Three months from the time that I started to work with him, he had found a man of like heart. This first sailor was not the kind of man you had to push and give prizes to before he would do something. He loved the Lord and was willing to pay a price to produce. He worked with this new babe in Christ, and those two fellows began to grow and spiritually reproduce. On that ship 125 men found the Savior before it was sunk at Pearl Harbor. Men off that first battleship are in four continents of the world as missionaries today. It was necessary to make a start, however. The devil's great trick is to stop anything like this if he can before it gets started. He will stop you, too, if you let him.

There are Christians whose lives run in circles who, nevertheless, have the desire to be spiritual parents. Take a typical example. You meet him in the morning as he goes to work and say to him, "Why are you going to work?"

"Well, I have to earn money."

"What are you earning money for?" you ask.

"Well," he replies, "I have to buy food."

"What do you want food for?"

"I have to eat so as to have strength to go to work and earn some more money."

"What do you want more money for?"

"I have to buy clothes so that I can be dressed to go to work and earn some more money."

"What do you want more money for?"

"I have to buy a house or pay the rent so I will have a place to rest up, so I will be fit to work and earn some more money." And so it goes. There are many Christians like that who are going in big circles. But you continue your questioning and ask, "What else do you do?"

"Oh, I find time to serve the Lord. I am preaching here and there." But

down behind all of this he has the one desire to be a spiritual father. He is praying that God will give him a man to teach. It may take six months. It need not take that long, but maybe it takes him six months to get him started taking in the Word and giving it out and getting ready to teach a man himself.

So this first man at the end of six months has another man. Each man starts teaching another in the following six months. At the end of the year, there are just four of them. Perhaps each one teaches a Bible class or helps in a street meeting, but at the same time his main interest is in his man and how he is doing. So at the end of the year the four of them get together and have a prayer meeting and determine, "Now, let's not allow anything to sidetrack us. Let's give the Gospel out to a lot of people, but let's check up on at least one man and see him through."

So the four of them in the next six months each get a man. That makes eight at the end of a year and a half. They all go out after another and at the end of two years there are 16 men. At the end of three years there are 64; the 16 have doubled twice. At the end of five years there are 1,024. At the end of fifteen and a half years there are approximately 2,147,500,000. That is the present population of the world of persons over three years of age.

But wait a minute! Suppose that after the first man, A, helps B and B is ready to get his man while A starts helping another, B is sidetracked, washes out and does not produce his first man. Fifteen and one-half years later you can cut your 2,147,500,000 down to 1,073,750,000 because the devil caused B to be sterile.

God promised Abraham "...in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Genesis 21:12), so Abraham waited a long, long time for that son. God's promise to make Abraham the father of many nations was all wrapped up in that one son, Isaac. If Hitler had been present and had caused Isaac's death when Abraham had his knife poised over him on Mount Moriah, Hitler could have killed every Jew in that one stroke.

I believe that is why Satan puts all his efforts into getting the Christian busy, busy, busy, but not producing.

Men, where is your man? Women, where is your woman? Where is the one whom you led to Christ and who is now going on with Him?

There is a story in 1 Kings, chapter 20 about a man who gave a prisoner to a servant and instructed the servant to guard the prisoner well. But as the servant was busy here and there the prisoner made his escape.

The curse of today is that we are too busy. I am not talking about being busy earning money to buy food. I am talking about being busy doing Christian things. We have spiritual activity with little productivity. And productivity comes as a result of what we call "follow-up".

### **Majoring in Reproducing**

Five years ago Billy Graham came to me and said, "Daws, we would like you to help with our follow-up. I've been studying the great evangelists and the great revivals and I fail to see that there was much of a follow-up program. We need it. We are having an average of 6,000 people come forward to decide for Christ in a month's campaign. I feel that with the work you have done you could come in and help us."

I said, "Billy, I can't follow up 6,000 people. My work is always with individuals and small groups."

"Look, Daws," he answered, "everywhere I go I meet Navigators. I met them in school in Wheaton. They are in my school right now. (He was president of Northwestern Schools at that time.) There must be something to this."

"I just don't have the time," I said.

He tackled me again. The third time he pled with me and said, "Daws, I am not able to sleep nights for thinking of what happens to the converts after a crusade is over."

At that time I was on my way to Formosa and I said, "While I am there I will pray about it, Billy." On the sands of a Formosan beach I paced up and down two or three hours a day praying, "Lord, how can I do this? I am not even getting the work done You have given me to do. How can I take six months of the year to give to Billy?" But God laid the burden upon my heart.

Why should Billy have asked me to do it? I had said to him that day before I left for Formosa, "Billy, you will have to get somebody else."

He took me by the shoulders and said, "Who else? Who is majoring in this?" I had been majoring in it.

What will it take to jar us out of our complacency and send us home to pray, "God, give me a girl or man whom I can win to Christ, or let me take one who is already won, an infant in Christ, and try to train that one so that he or she will reproduce!"

How thrilled we are to see the masses fill up the seats! But where is your man? I would rather have one "Isaac" alive than a hundred dead, or sterile, or immature.

### **Beginning of Follow-up**

One day years ago, I was driving along in my little Model T Ford and saw a young man walking down the street. I stopped and picked him up. As he got into the car, he swore and said, "It's sure tough to get a ride." I never hear a

man take my Savior's name in vain but what my heart aches. I reached into my pocket for a tract and said, "Lad, read this."

He looked up at me and said, "Haven't I seen you somewhere before?"

I looked at him closely. He looked like someone I should know. We figured out that we had met the year before on the same road. He was on his way to a golf course to caddy when I picked him up. He had gotten into my car and had started out the same way with the name "Jesus Christ." I had taken exception to his use of that name and had opened up the New Testament and shown him the way of salvation. He had accepted Jesus Christ as His Savior. In parting I had given him Philippians 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "God bless you, son. Read this," I said, and sped on my merry way.

A year later, there was no more evidence of the new birth and the new creature in this boy than if he had never heard of Jesus Christ.

I had a great passion to win souls and that was my great passion. But after I met this boy the second time on the way to the golf course, I began to go back and find some of my "converts". I want to tell you, I was sick at heart. It seemed that Philippians 1:6 was not working.

An Armenian boy came into my office one day and told me about all the souls he had won. He said that they were all Armenians and had the list to prove it.

I said, "Well, what is this one doing?"

He said, "That one isn't doing so good. He is backslidden."

"What about this one?" We went all down the list and there was not one living a victorious life.

I said, "Give me your Bible." I turned to Philippians and put a cardboard right under the 6th verse, took a razor blade out of my pocket and started to come down on the page. He grabbed my hand and asked, "What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to cut this verse out," I said. "It isn't working."

Do you know what was wrong? I had been taking the 6th verse away from its context, verses 3 through 7. Paul was not just saying, "All right, the Lord has started something, He will finish it." But you know, that is what some people tell me when they win a soul. They say, "Well, I just committed him to God."

Suppose I meet someone who has a large family and say to him, "Who



is taking care of your children?"

"My family? Oh, I left them with the Lord."

Right away I would say to that one, "I have a verse for you: 'But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he...is worse than an infidel' (1 Timothy 5:8)."

Paul said to the elders of the church at Ephesus, "Take heed...to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers..." (Acts 20:28). You cannot make God the overseer. He makes you the overseer.

We began to work on follow-up. This emphasis on finding and helping some of the converts went on for a couple or three years before the Navigator work started. By that time our work included fewer converts but more time spent with the converts. Soon I could say as Paul said to the Philippians, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:3-5). He followed up his converts with daily prayer and fellowship. Then he could say, "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). In keeping with this the 7th verse reads: "Even as it is meet (or proper) for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart..."

Before I had forgotten to follow up the people God had reached through me. But from then on I began to spend time helping them. That is why sometime later when that first sailor came to me, I saw the value of spending three months with him. I saw an Isaac in him. Isaac had Jacob, and Jacob had the twelve, and all the rest of the nation came through them.

### **It Takes Time to Do God's Work**

You can lead a soul to Christ in from 20 minutes to a couple of hours. But it takes from 20 weeks to a couple of years to get him on the road to maturity, victorious over the sins and the recurring problems that come along. He must learn how to make right decisions. He must be warned of the various "isms" that are likely to reach out with their octopus arms and pull him in and sidetrack him.

But when you get yourself a man, you have doubled your ministry—in fact, you have more than doubled your ministry. Do you know why? When you teach your man, he sees how it is done and he imitates you.

If I were the minister of a church and had deacons or elders to pass the plate and choir members to sing, I would say, "Thank God for your help. We need you. Praise the Lord for these extra things that you do," but I would keep pressing home the big job—"Be fruitful and multiply." All these other things

are incidental to the supreme task of winning a man or woman to Jesus Christ and then helping him or her to go on.

Where is your man? Where is your woman? Do you have one? You can ask God for one. Search your hearts. Ask the Lord, "Am I spiritually sterile? If I am, why am I?"

Don't let your lack of knowledge stand in the way. It used to be the plan of The Navigators in the early days that whenever the sailors were with us for supper each fellow was asked at the end of the meal to quote a verse.

I would say it this way, "Quote a verse you have learned in the last 48 hours if you have one. Otherwise, just give us a verse." One evening as we quoted verses around the table, my little three-year-old daughter's turn came. There was a new sailor next to her who did not think about her quoting Scripture, so without giving her an opportunity, he began. She looked up at him as much as to say, "I am a human being," then she quoted John 3:16 in her own way. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whosoever** believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." She put the emphasis on the "whosoever" because when she was first taught the verse she could not pronounce that word.

Days later that sailor came over and said to me, "You know, I was going to quote that verse of Scripture. It was the only one I knew. But I didn't really know it, not until little Ruthie quoted it. When she said 'whosoever', I thought, 'that means me'. Back on the ship I accepted the Lord." Today that young man is a missionary in South America.

Until several years after we were married, my wife's father did not know the Lord. Here again God used children to reach a hungry heart. When Ruthie was three and Bruce was five, they went to visit Grandpa and Grandma. Grandpa tried to get them to repeat nursery rhymes. He said, "Mary had a little lamb" and "Little Boy Blue", but the children just looked at him and asked, "Who is Little Boy Blue?" He thought they did not know very much.

Their mother said, "They know some things. Quote Romans 3:23, Bruce." This Bruce did. Then he asked, "Shall I quote another one, Grandpa?"

"Sure," said Grandpa.

Bruce began to quote verses of Scripture, some 15 in all, and Ruth quoted some in between. This delighted Grandpa. He took them over to the neighbors and to the aunts and uncles, showing them how well these children knew the Scriptures. In the meantime the Word of God was doing its work. It was not long before the Holy Spirit, through the voices of babes, planted the seed in his heart. "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength..." (Psalm 8:2).

Soulwinners are not soulwinners because of what they know, but be-

cause of the Person they know, how well they know Him and how much they long for others to know Him.

"Oh, but I am afraid," someone says. Remember, "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe" (Proverbs 29:25). Nothing under heaven except sin, immaturity and lack of communion will put you in a position where you cannot reproduce. Furthermore, there is not anything under heaven that can keep a newly born again one from going on with the Lord if he has a spiritual parent to take care of him and give him the spiritual food God has provided for his normal growth.

Effects obey their causes by irresistible laws. When you sow the seed of God's Word you will get results. Not every heart will receive the Word but some will and the new birth will take place. When a soul is born, give it the care that Paul gave new believers. Paul believed in follow-up work. He was a busy evangelist, but he took time for follow-up. The New Testament is largely made up of the letters of Paul which were follow-up letters to the converts.

James believed in it. "But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only," he said in James 1:22. Peter believed in it. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). John believed in it, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (III John 4). All the writings of Peter, Paul, James and most of John's are food for the new Christian.

The Gospel spread to the known world during the first century without radio, television or the printing press, because these produced men who were reproducing. But today we have a lot of pew-sitters—\*-people think that if they are faithful in church attendance, put good-sized gifts into the offering plate and get people to come, they have done their part.

Where is your man? Where is your woman? Where is your boy? Where is your girl? Every one of us, no matter what age we are, should get busy memorizing Scripture. In one Sunday school class a woman 72 years of age and another who was 78 finished The Navigators Topical Memory System. They then had something to give.

Load your heart with this precious Seed. You will find that God will direct you to those whom you can lead to Christ. There are many hearts ready for the Gospel now.



## Questions for Review and Discussion

1. Consider the three marks of a disciple discussed by Lorne Sanny.

Someone who is:

a. \_\_\_\_\_ with Christ.

How would you describe your identification with Christ?

\_\_\_\_\_

How would you like to see yourself? \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_ to the Word.

Yourself now? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe how you would like to live. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_ for Christ.

How would you portray your fruitfulness? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Is it reasonable to conclude from Scripture that God wants only a few Christians to disciple? Matthew 10:32; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 8:34, 38; John 8:31; Hebrews 5:12a. \_\_\_\_\_

Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Christ calls us to prove to be His disciples in John 15:8. He has chosen believers to “bring forth fruit...[that] should remain,” John 15:16. Think about the calling of believers to discipleship.

a. What can you conclude about being called to a lifestyle of discipling others by the Great Provider? \_\_\_\_\_

b. Of those of us who trust in Christ, He says that His Father is glorified when we bear much fruit. Complete and personalize the logic statement: If God calls us to bear \_\_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_\_ can have the resources to bear much fruit—various references including John 1:12-13.

4. In all likelihood, you received the Lifestyle Discipleship materials because of someone who has become a discipler. As you consider Dawson Trotman's mathematical progression of bearing fruit that will last, what do you think of your personal priorities as reflected in your calendar and your check book? If they are not where you want them, what would be the change you would make to them?

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**Life Application**

This is a significant moment in each person's life. Which way shall I go? Whether I've just met Christ or have known Him for many years, what shall I do with this material? This material is not for everyone at every time. If you are not involved in reproducing spiritually mature Christians, perhaps it is because your own spiritual maturity is not developed. This course may be just what you need. Or, perhaps you already have other commitments—perhaps you are even discipling others. The possibilities are endless yet the calling remains the same: One who trusts Christ is called to make disciples and to bear fruit that continues to produce. Remember the words of Christ in Luke 14: 26, 27 and 33 where we are tested in our faith to count the cost, and upon considering it, to commit ourselves fully to Him and to His commands—or we cannot be His disciple. The materials in Lifestyle Discipleship are for those ready to be disciplined, or put another way, for those ready to know a systematic way of learning about Him and a good method for passing it on to others.

Our goals are as Lorne Sanny said, to be identified with Christ, obedient to his word and bearing fruit that lasts. If you are not ready for one reason or another, please talk with your discipler about it so he can move to someone who is ready. A last thought: Being ready is not the same as being prepared. Your discipler and those who have gone before him or her have prayed for this moment of your decision. We are eager to make disciples for His glory—and eager for you.

Discuss this item with your discipler. How would you describe your readiness to begin the journey of discipling?

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## *Notes*

# THE SIX MAIN POINTS OF THE GOSPEL

## Basic Christianity

- 2 The Six Main Points of the Gospel
- 3 The Bridge
- 4 The New Life I Have in Christ
- 5 Assurance of Salvation
- 6 Positional Truth
- 7 Spiritual Maturity
- 8 What it Means to Grow as a Christian
- 9 Practicing Spirituality
- 10 Flourishing in the Spirit
- 11 The Sources of Temptation
- 12 The Misuse of the Tongue
- 13 Review Questions

**Purpose:** This session is to teach the disciple a formula for understanding and sharing the Gospel of Christ. One must learn and experience the Gospel before sharing it.



## Objectives

1. The disciple will understand the Gospel in an easy outline for learning and sharing.
2. The disciple will practice sharing the Gospel.
3. The disciple will know where to go from the basic sharing of the Gospel to full assurance.
4. The disciple will learn enough Scripture to back up each point of the Gospel shared.

## Scripture Memory

*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.*

John 1:12



## Agenda

1. Prayer together and mutual sharing of requests.
2. Discuss the worksheet.
3. Discuss new terms.
4. Discuss the questions at the end of the worksheet.



*All personal  
righteousnesses are as  
unclean things.*

## Introduction

The Gospel is made up of certain truths that must be heard, understood, believed and acted upon in order for someone to come to saving faith. Understanding each aspect of the Gospel is imperative if one is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. The following are the six main points of the Gospel.

1. The **fact** of sin. Romans 3:10,23; James 4:17; Galatians 3:10; James 2:10.
2. The **penalty** of sin. Romans 5:12; Romans 6:23; Ezekiel 18:20.
3. The penalty **must be paid**. Hebrews 9:27; Hebrews 2:2,3, 9:22; Romans 2:12.
4. The penalty was paid by **Christ**. Romans 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Peter 3:18; Isaiah 53:5-6.
5. Salvation is a **free gift**. Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 3:24; Titus 3:5; John 3:16.
6. You must **accept**. Revelation 3:20; John 1:12; John 6:37; 1 John 5:11-12.

Men may try other means such as good works, ritualism, church attendance, the "sacraments," sacrifice, and morality to earn their salvation, but Isaiah 64:6 says all these are worthless—they are "human goodnesses" and are as unclean things.

There are three things necessary for saving faith:

1. Knowledge—awareness of the plan of salvation: the Gospel.
2. Belief—giving mental assent—accepting it as true.
3. Volition—acting upon what you believe.

New words to learn well:

1. Reconciliation
2. Atonement (the Old Testament word for reconciliation)
3. Mental assent
4. Volition
5. Grace
6. Sacrament

7. Death—the basic meaning of the word "death" is separation. There are at least six types of death mentioned in the New Testament.

- a. Physical death—the separation of the body from soul and spirit.
- b. Spiritual death—the state of man who is unregenerate—apart from God.
- c. Eternal death—the eternal separation of a man from God when he experiences physical death while in the state of spiritual death.
- d. Temporal death—being out of fellowship with God because of sin. This is the opposite of temporal fellowship, Ephesians 5:14, James 1:15. (Remember death means separation.)
- e. Judicial death—Romans 6. This is God's decree that believers are dead to sin.
- f. Sin unto physical death, James 5:19-20.

*One cannot  
understand the  
Gospel until he  
understands his  
natural  
condition.*



## Worksheet

This session will enable you to become somewhat familiar with the plan of salvation, and the Scriptures that support it. Look up the verses and answer the questions as best you can.

### The First Point—the Fact of Sin

The first point in understanding the Gospel is that which relates to the condition of man. Men view themselves in varying ways, depending upon one's self-concept and theological background. The word "understand" is a crucial word. Men think they understand themselves and like to think they understand God or whomever their "supreme being" is.

1. What does Romans 3:11 say about man's understanding of a "supreme being?" \_\_\_\_\_
2. Concerning man's ability to meet the standards of Jehovah God, we are all \_\_\_\_\_ and fail in meeting the standards of \_\_\_\_\_ Romans 3:23.

*“We are not sinners  
because we sin, but  
we sin because we are  
born sinners.”*

3. We think of sin in terms of doing what we shouldn't do. James 4:17 casts more light on the nature of sin and greatly broadens the concept. Here we are told that \_\_\_\_\_ is sin! In this approach to understanding the nature of sin, we can do **nothing** and yet sin.

4. But what if a person tries to keep the Ten Commandments? What is the problem when we approach God in this way, Galatians 3:10? James 2:10?

\_\_\_\_\_  
Where do these Scripture passages leave men?  
\_\_\_\_\_

### The Second Point—the Penalty of Sin

The second and truly significant point is related to the penalty of sin. It is important to understand this, inasmuch as one needs to realize his "lostness" before he can see his true spiritual needs and hopelessness.

1. What was the effect of Adam's sin, Romans 5:12? \_\_\_\_\_

2. How do I become a sinner just because Adam sinned, Romans 5:19?

3. Jesus was born as a result of what promise, Gen. 3:15? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Why was it necessary that He be born of "the seed of a woman" rather than of the "seed of man"? \_\_\_\_\_

The problem relating to the virgin birth of Jesus is involved in this question. The Gospels say that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit rather than through a human father. Mary contributed 23 chromosomes through the egg she held, and the Holy Spirit gave the other 23 in a miraculous way. In this way, she bore One who was the God-man without sin. This was apparently necessary to keep Christ from having a sinful nature. We are not sinners because we sin, but we sin because we are born sinners; we were born with a sinful nature.

5. What is the penalty for sin, Romans 6:23? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is the meaning conveyed in the concept of "death" as stated in this verse? Look at the verse carefully. When does one experience this penalty according to the teaching of this verse?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What does Ezekiel 18:20 teach about the absolute certainty of this penalty?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Where does this leave me, a guilty sinner?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **The Third Point—the Penalty Must Be Paid**

The third point is also vital in the ongoing development of understanding of the Gospel. The charges of sin are not going to be dropped for anyone. That would be a violation of the holiness of God! God seems to require that **all sin everywhere must be paid by someone somewhere**. Simply not having knowledge of the Gospel does not excuse men.

1. In terms of the above reality, what does Romans 2:12 teach us?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What possibility of escape exists for us, Hebrews 2:2-3? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Every sin must be  
paid for by  
someone somewhere.  
Either the sinner  
pays or God pays.*

*But as many as  
received Him,  
to them He gave the  
right to become  
children of God,  
even to those who  
believe in His name.  
John 1:12*

3. What additional truths are taught in Hebrews 9:22, 27? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. In a real sense, no sin is ever forgiven, because God requires payment for sin. The sinner is forgiven. The sin is paid for by Christ, the perfect sacrifice.

### **The Fourth Point—The Penalty Was Paid by Christ**

The fourth point is the work that Christ has done to eliminate the problems that man has which are so basic to his life and existence in this world. But before we look at God's solution to this problem, let's look at some of man's feeble efforts to solve his problem.

1. Men have offered to God good works, sacrificial living involving self denial, regular church attendance, moral lives (in societies' thinking), and other good deeds. It is not that these things do not have value in our society. They certainly do. But before a **holy** and **righteous** God, they have what kind of value? Isaiah 64:6.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

These are simply of no value whatsoever in helping man reach God or please Him. They are as worthless as filthy rags in pleasing Him.

You will remember we stated that no sin is ever forgiven. It is paid for either by the sinner or by Christ. This brings us to God's provision for the problem of man and how He has brought about reconciliation, Eph. 1:7.

2. The greatest problem God ever sought to solve was how He could be \_\_\_\_\_ and yet be the One who \_\_\_\_\_ those who believe in Jesus, Romans 3:26.
3. What was the grandest expression of God's love for us sinners? Romans 5:8 \_\_\_\_\_.
4. On the cross, Christ bore \_\_\_\_\_ that we might \_\_\_\_\_, 1 Peter 2:24.
5. The purpose of Calvary is stated as being that, \_\_\_\_\_, 1 Peter 3:18.

6. We are likened to \_\_\_\_\_, and the Lord has laid on Christ \_\_\_\_\_, Isaiah 53:6.

### The Fifth Point—Salvation is a Free Gift

The fifth point of the Gospel is one that is almost universally misunderstood. For good reason, the god of this age (Satan) has put into the minds of people the idea that works are needed to please the Father. The reality of salvation being a free gift is totally foreign to the thinking of humans. It is built into the structure of our unregenerate thinking that something must be done to merit life. After all, as the saying goes, "that's the way we would do it if we were God."

1. If salvation then is a gift, how can it become ours? \_\_\_\_\_, Ephesians 2:8-9. Both this verse, and Romans 3:24 tell us that salvation is purely a matter of \_\_\_\_\_! The word "grace" has special meanings for us and will become one of the most important words in the entire structure of salvation. Suffice to say for now, it means "everything for nothing for those who don't deserve anything." It is God who accomplishes our salvation through the Holy Spirit.
2. Titus 3:5 tells us that \_\_\_\_\_ have nothing to do with our salvation. The Holy Spirit is active in our salvation in what ways?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Write in your own words what this has meant in your own life in a practical sense. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### The Sixth Point—You Must Accept

The sixth point of the Gospel is our required action. If understanding has been adequate to this point and the individual is truly moved by the Holy

*There are three elements in saving faith: knowing, mental assent, and action.*

*One of the greatest wonders of all time is the incarnation—the birth of the God-man.*

Spirit, there will be relatively good understanding that salvation is a \_\_\_\_\_, Romans 6:23.

1. The one thing I must do to get a gift is \_\_\_\_\_ John 1:12.  
What will happen if I try to add works to it? Romans 11:6  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What promise is given to all who simply come to Jesus? John 6:37  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What assures us of eternal life? 1 John 5:10; The testimony that \_\_\_\_\_ has given.
4. All that one must do to have the Son is \_\_\_\_\_, John 1:12.  
There is **never** a reason for us to be rejected if one accepts Christ into his life.  
Christ will not \_\_\_\_\_ John 6:37.

### Three Things Necessary for Saving Faith

To be sure one's faith is "saving faith" there are three distinct elements that are necessary and observable.

1. Romans 10:17 says faith comes by \_\_\_\_\_. When I hear something, I become a \_\_\_\_\_ of it. I therefore have \_\_\_\_\_ of the plan of salvation. In view of this, the first element of a faith that brings eternal life is \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I can obviously be aware of an idea or a body of information and yet have some doubt as to its authenticity. I must \_\_\_\_\_ this information if it is going to mean something that will be life-changing for me, 1 Peter 1:8.
3. But simply being aware and giving mental assent are yet insufficient. There must be an action on my part that appropriates the work of Christ. This action is spoken of in John 1:12 as \_\_\_\_\_. Much of the



world believes that Jesus lived and that He was a good man. Many attest belief in His resurrection and that He is the Son of God and died as a sacrifice for the sins of man. **This is not enough!** There **must** be an appropriation of His work for us and this is only accomplished through receiving Him as Personal Savior — inviting Him into my life and confessing Him as Lord, Romans 10:9-10.

The question of Lordship is a significant and real issue. Faith alone saves. However, the faith that saves is never alone, and there is sufficient evidence in the New Testament that true faith involves repentance and commitment to the Lordship of Jesus. In a day of "easy believism" we need to re-emphasize the saving grace of God that includes a desire for obedience and submission to the Lord of Heaven and Earth. How else would the Spirit of God convict us and bring us to a brokenness over our sin?



### Questions for Review and Discussion

1. Can something that is a gift ever be withdrawn if no conditions are attached to receiving it? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. When do we receive eternal life? 1 John 5:11,12  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. At what point in the suffering of Christ on the cross did He actually bear our sins? Matthew 27:35-46 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What part does Lordship play in salvation?  
\_\_\_\_\_

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5. How can one know his faith is "saving faith?"

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6. What is the problem when we mix faith and works? Romans 11:6

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7. What was the dilemma God faced in providing salvation for mankind?  
Romans 3:26

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8. What two basic attributes of God were involved in His provision of salvation?

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9. Man is portrayed to be dead in trespasses and sins. How can a dead man believe? Eph. 2:4-5

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# THE BRIDGE

## Basic Christianity

- 2 The Six Main Points of the Gospel
- 3 **The Bridge**
- 4 The New Life I Have in Christ
- 5 Assurance of Salvation
- 6 Positional Truth
- 7 Spiritual Maturity
- 8 What it Means to Grow as a Christian
- 9 Practicing Spirituality
- 10 Flourishing in the Spirit
- 11 The Sources of Temptation
- 12 The Misuse of the Tongue
- 13 Review Questions

**Purpose:** The purpose of this session is to introduce the disciple to the Bridge presentation of the Gospel.



## Objectives

1. The disciple will familiarize himself with the Bridge as an evangelism tool.
2. The disciple will memorize important verses associated with the Bridge.
3. The disciple will become confident in his use of the Bridge.

## Scripture Memory

*All Scriptures related to the Bridge presentation of the Gospel, as shown on the following pages.*



## Agenda

1. Mutual sharing, accountability and prayer.
2. Demonstration of the Bridge by discipler to disciple.
3. Discuss difficulties disciple may have.
4. Disciple presents the Bridge.

## Introduction

The Bridge diagram is simply a tool used by many believers to explain the plan of salvation to a non-believer. It is a visual expression to aid the understanding of the spiritual concept of salvation.

It is important that every believer be confident of his ability to explain the Gospel and give clear direction about how one is to respond in order to obtain salvation.

Once someone is familiar and comfortable using this tool, it will enable him to give a clear, concise presentation in a relatively short period of time. All that is needed is a pencil and something to write on: paper, napkin, business card (a little small but still a possibility).

As you draw the lines of your Bridge diagram, you speak spiritual truths from the Word of God, thus providing a pictorial representation of the process of salvation that the person can take home.

## Opportunities for Presenting the Bridge

Often we find ourselves in a position where we have an wonderful opportunity for sharing our faith and we get so nervous and afraid that we'll say the wrong thing that we end up saying nothing at all! This will never be the case again once you know how to present the Bridge and have practiced it. Perhaps you enter into a discussion with a non-Christian friend and you have the opportunity to tell him what you believe. You might say, "May I draw this diagram to help you understand what I'm saying?" Or maybe you feel the necessity to ask a question like, "Do you know if you were to die tonight that you would go to heaven?" If the answer is "no," then you might offer to show them the Bridge diagram to help explain that God says in the Bible that you can know you have eternal life. The Bridge illustration can be given in approximately 15 minutes.

## Presenting the Bridge

The Bridge is presented in four sections:

God's Love	Man's Problem
God's Remedy	Man's Response

Each section has appropriate Scripture to be memorized and used so that your presentation will be smooth and full of the powerful Word of God. . As you learn and practice presenting the Bridge, it will become very natural to you. Remember this is only a tool to help tell the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit Who moves hearts and gives understanding.

## Presenting the Bridge

Draw two lines with the word “God” on the right, and “Man” on the left.

### Major Point—God’s Love

\*Talk about God first and explain that the Bible teaches that God loves us, and that He wants us to live life to the full. recite John 10:10

\*Man was created to spend time with God to be His friend, and experience His love. Genesis 1:27

\*Man was not created as a robot. God gave man free will.

MAN

GOD

John 10:10  
Genesis 1:27

ETERNAL LIFE

### Sample Questions

- What does it mean to live life to the full?
- How many of your friends are living life to the full?
- When you think of God, Who is He and what is He like?

### Major Point— Man’s Problem

\* Man has turned his back on God. Isaiah 53:6

\* The result of man’s sin is separation from God, Romans 3:23

\* The payment for sin is death Romans 6:23

\* Appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment. Hebrews 9:27

\* All men are in the same hopeless situation.

\* God’s opinion is the only one that counts.

MAN

GOD

SIN  
Romans 3:23  
Isaiah 53:6

DEATH  
Romans 6:23

JUDGMENT  
Hebrews 9:27

John 10:10  
Genesis 1:27

ETERNAL LIFE

### Sample Questions

- Would you agree that everyone has sinned somehow?
- How would you define sin?
- In your opinion what are the consequences of sin?
- When you think of death, what do you think of?

### Scriptures to Memorize

John 10: 10b

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

Genesis 1:27

“God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

Isaiah 53:6

“All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way. But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.”

Romans 3:23

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Romans 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord.”

Hebrews 9:27

“It is appointed for men to die once and then the judgment.”

**Major Point—God’s Remedy** Draw the cross of Christ as a bridge.

1 Pet. 3:18  
“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God.”

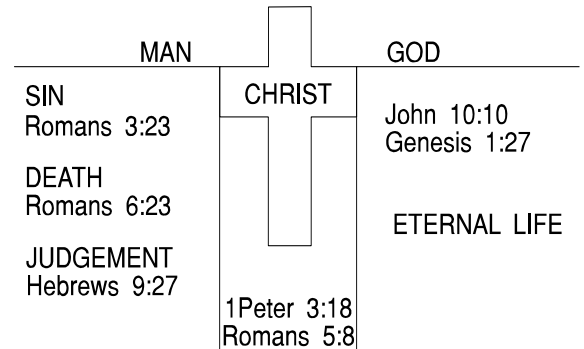
Romans 5:8  
“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

\*Discuss the fact that God still loves us and desires that we know Him personally.

\*There is nothing we can do to bridge the gap.

\*Jesus Christ is God and also man.

\*When Christ died voluntarily on the cross, he took our place. He paid the penalty for our sins and bridged the gap for us.



**Sample Questions**

- If death is separation from God, what is life?
- What is your understanding of who Christ is and why he died?
- Are you familiar with Christ’s death as substitutionary as taught in the Bible?

John 3 :16  
“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

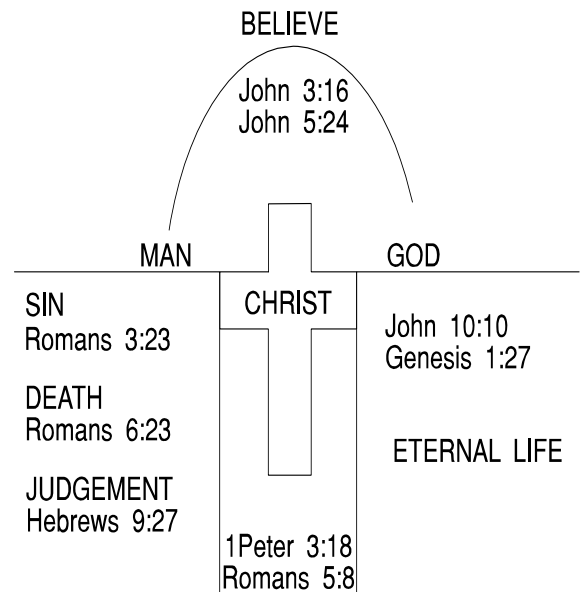
John 5:24  
“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My words and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”

**Major Point—Man’s Response**

\*Christ made it possible for us to cross over to God, but we need to take action that demonstrates that we believe what Christ has done for us.

\*Praying to God, we need to agree with God that we have sinned , and receive Jesus as payment for our sins.

\*Believing in Christ also means trusting what He says in Scripture is true.



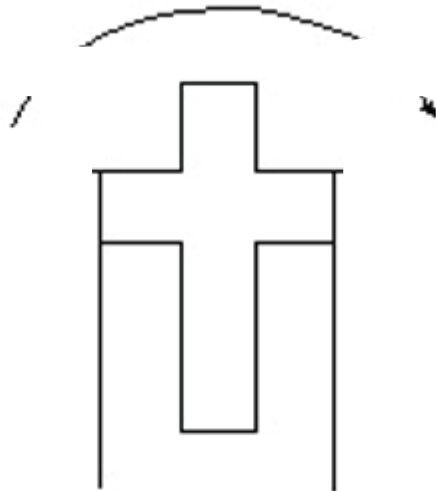
**Sample Questions**

- What do we receive when we hear and believe?
- According to these verses, how does one cross over to God
- Where would you place yourself in this illustration?
- Is there any reason why you should not receive Jesus and His gift of eternal life?



## Life Application

Practice using the Bridge illustration until you are very comfortable with it and familiar with all the Scripture to use. Refresh your memory often so that you will always be ready to help someone understand God's plan of salvation. Use the diagram below to practice your own presentation of the Bridge.



*Practice Sheet*

**Session Outline**

The thrust of this ministry has been both something that should build a believer, as well as help a



# THE NEW LIFE I HAVE IN CHRIST

## Basic Christianity

- 2 The Six Main Points of the Gospel
- 3 The Bridge
- 4 **New Life I Have in Christ**
- 5 Assurance of Salvation
- 6 Positional Truth
- 7 Spiritual Maturity
- 8 What it Means to Grow as a Christian
- 9 Practicing Spirituality
- 10 Flourishing in the Spirit
- 11 The Sources of Temptation
- 12 The Misuse of the Tongue
- 13 Review Questions

**Purpose:** The Bridge to Life was a session that addressed the plan of salvation. This session helps the believer know some of the things that happened to him when he received Christ.



## Objectives

1. The disciple will understand that his life has become new life.
2. The disciple will learn many things that have happened to him.
3. The disciple will understand some of the unique and important things about his life that are for today and some that are yet future.
4. The disciple will understand that what has happened will be the object of God's purpose of revelation for eternity.

## Scripture Memory

*I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might.*

Ephesians 1:18-19



## Agenda

1. Mutual sharing, accountability and prayer.
2. Discuss the session material.
3. Discuss the questions at the end of the worksheet.
4. Discuss any new terms.



### Worksheet

You have trusted Christ and have settled that issue. What does the Scripture say has happened to you? See 2 Corinthians 5:17 \_\_\_\_\_

What meaning does this have in your life. \_\_\_\_\_

How many things are new according to Paul and his statement in verse 17?

### In Christ We Have

1. I have had an encounter with the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is God — one of the members of God's triune being. What part has the Holy Spirit played in my coming to Christ? See John 3:5. \_\_\_\_\_

The Holy Spirit con\_\_\_\_\_ me of my s\_\_\_\_\_, brings me to life, and gives me faith to \_\_\_\_\_, John 16:8-9.

2. The Holy Spirit has put me into a very special body, 1 Corinthians 12:12-13. This body is called the \_\_\_\_\_. The church is made up of every true believer regardless of his denominational affiliation. I am a member by virtue of my new birth. This church is the body of Christ.
3. I have quality \_\_\_\_\_, 1 John 5:11-12. Quality life refers to its superiority both in the nature of this life, and its endurance. It is life that is \_\_\_\_\_, John 3:36, and life that is \_\_\_\_\_, John 10:10.
4. This life has brought me forgiveness of sin, Ephesians 1:7. I am not only innocent, I also have the covering of Christ righteousness, and I am seen as perfect in God's sight.
5. I am now a member of the family of God as a \_\_\_\_\_ in the family, John 1:12. I am no longer a stranger or \_\_\_\_\_, Ephesians 2:19. In this family, I have many privileges that are really innumerable. Some are, however, very evident.

*Scripture teaches that  
all things are new  
when we enter eternal  
life!*

- I have the privilege of \_\_\_\_\_, John 16:24. I can approach God at any time and know that He is listening. If I ask according to His will, I will receive what I ask.
- He has a wonderful \_\_\_\_\_ for my life, Psalm 32:8. It should be my desire to seek that plan, follow it, and do His will for me. His will is always \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, Romans 12:2. Because of this, and because of His sovereignty, He can make all things work \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_, Romans 8:28. What does this promise mean to you?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ And remember, when He puts forth His own sheep, \_\_\_\_\_, John 10:4. This new life has a more than adequate map to guide me. What is this map? \_\_\_\_\_  
2 Timothy 3:16-17. I have, as it were, a tour guide who is always with me and helps me if the map is difficult to follow. Who is this “tour guide?” \_\_\_\_\_ John 16:13.
- The Holy Spirit is in me and becomes my \_\_\_\_\_, John 14:26. As my Teacher, he helps me understand the written instructions in the map I am given — the Bible.

*Being a Christian  
makes me a mem-  
ber of the family of  
God.*

6. I am no longer a slave to \_\_\_\_\_, Romans 6:6. With my release from the dominion of sin, I can now choose to not sin in any situation. Before I came to Christ, I could only sin.

Now, knowing Him, I have freedom to yield my will to \_\_\_\_\_, and not sin, Romans 6:13-14. This freedom characterizes my whole life as a Christian. Perhaps it is important at this point to say that as long as I am in the flesh, I can sin. But I must also say that if I do, it will be my choice, and I can choose **not to sin** as well.

*Christ has delivered every believer from the fear of death.*

7. As I think of what God has done for me, I must also speak of His deliverance from the \_\_\_\_\_, Hebrews 2:15. This seems to be the universal dread of mankind. This is not true for believers. We will \_\_\_\_\_, 1 Thessalonians 4: 17-18.  
We have the assurance that to die is \_\_\_\_\_, Philippians 1:21. We also have assurance concerning a future \_\_\_\_\_ of our bodies, 1 Thessalonians 4:17. These bodies will be perfect.
8. He has called me to ministry (service). In doing this, at the point of my entry into the body of Christ, He has also given me \_\_\_\_\_. These gifts are sovereignly given just as \_\_\_\_\_ for the very ministries to which He calls me, 1 Corinthians 12:11. These gifts can work in concert with my talents. As I discover and sharpen the use of these gifts, I aid the functioning of Christ's body, the Church.
9. We become \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ with Christ, Romans 8:16-17. Many of us will be heirs of nothing that is material. We have, however, confidence that we will be heirs of God and \_\_\_\_\_ with Christ. Our inheritance is linked with Christ's inheritance. The only reason we would not receive our inheritance is related to Him not receiving His inheritance. We are the heritage of the Great Creator. Both Christ's and our inheritance are certain.
10. I am introduced to a particular group of people. These are people I love and they are like me. This group calls each other \_\_\_\_\_, 1 John 2:9-10. In reality, one of the ways we know we truly possess eternal life is that we love the brethren. This is an indicator that we have truly entered relationship with God. We find that these people have kindred spirits and we desire to be with them. Meeting, sharing and prayer is called \_\_\_\_\_. We have this with one another, 1 John 1:3.
11. I have \_\_\_\_\_ for the first time, Romans 5:1. This peace is both posi-

tional and p\_\_\_\_\_. Practical peace comes as a result of God's instructions concerning how I handle stress.

What does Philippians 4:6-7 say concerning practical peace?

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How does Psalm 55:22 reiterate this same truth? \_\_\_\_\_

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12. Finally, although certainly not the end of things that have happened to me, God gives me the enabling to live the life He has given me. Jesus says in Matthew 11:28-29 that this life is characterized as \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Rest certainly eliminates great effort and struggle.

My new life is called rest in Hebrews 4:1. We will learn more about this in a future study on the practice of spirituality. Your new life has given you an abundance of possibilities waiting for you to explore. May these considerations excite you and cause you to be stimulated to grow.

*Each person longs for  
a life of rest.  
This life is found  
in our walk with  
Jesus.*



### Questions for Review and Discussion

1. What was your chief expectation the day you trusted Christ?

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*Only eternity  
will fully disclose  
what this new life is.*

2. What surprises have you encountered since you have become a Christian?

3. Of the things considered in this session, which seems most difficult to believe? \_\_\_\_\_

4. With the knowledge of what we have discussed, how will your life be different from this point?



### Summary and Key Concepts

Jesus says that coming to Him is like entering a yoke that makes your labors easy. The results of coming to Him include things you will spend all eternity discovering. God's word says that you are a new creation when you come to Him. You begin to understand this when you see the many things He has accomplished through the decision you have made.

# ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

## Basic Christianity

- 2 The Six Main Points of the Gospel
- 3 The Bridge
- 4 The New Life I Have in Christ
- **5 Assurance of Salvation**
- 6 Positional Truth
- 7 Spiritual Maturity
- 8 What it Means to Grow as a Christian
- 9 Practicing Spirituality
- 10 Flourishing in the Spirit
- 11 The Sources of Temptation
- 12 The Misuse of the Tongue
- 13 Review Questions

**Purpose:** The purpose of this session is to help the disciple know that he has eternal life. He need never doubt his salvation.



## Objectives

1. The disciple will understand that it is God's will that he know he has eternal life.
2. He will see that there are experiential ways that can give us assurance, although these are subjective.
3. He will see and understand that there are objective ways one can have assurance, and these ways can never fail.

## Scripture Memory

*And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eter-*



## Agenda

1. Prayer, sharing, and mutual accountability.
2. Discuss the worksheets and questions.
3. Discuss any new terms.
4. Share Scripture memory verse.

*There are both  
subjective and  
objective  
indicators  
involved in  
assurance.*

Assurance of salvation is the first essential in living an effective Christian life. Without assurance, one is self-centered, anxious, and unable to focus totally upon Christ. Lack of assurance will disable his walk in the Christian life.

### Two Basic Means of Personal Assurance

I. Experience — **indicators** — what may be true of us.

- A. What we love, 1 John 2:15. I am told that if I love the world, the love of the Father is not in me. An indicator of personal salvation can be “what” I love. Certainly things related to the world-system will not be a controlling factor in my life.
- B. Those we love, 1 John 3:14. This tells us we know we have passed from death to life because we love “the brethren.” My joy will relate to my fellowship with believers.
- C. The general tenor of my life concerning practicing obedience is an indicator. 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 2:3. Salvation with commitment to the Lordship of Christ will bring a change in the life of the individual. Obedience becomes a reality.
- D. The witness of the Spirit, Romans 8:16-17. Witness is born by the Holy Spirit *with* my spirit that I am a child of God. It’s like “I’m standing in Jesus’ shoes and He’s standing in mine.”
- E. Scripture takes on new meaning, 1 Corinthians 2:14-15. I now seem to understand Scripture and it speaks to me. I am developing a love for it.

It must be remembered that each of these is only an indicator .

II. The Scripture itself is the ultimate basis of assurance. God is faithful to His Word. Psalm 119:89 says,

*“Forever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven.”*

With this assurance and trust in the written Word, see 1 John 5:10-13; John 5:24; John 6:37, you can reason your way to assurance. The following are crucial in the use of these verses:

- A. The Savior casts none out when they come to Him.
- B. If He doesn’t cast us out, He takes us in, and we have Him!
- C. If we have the Son, we have life. We can’t have one without the



other. His life is eternal.

- D. We receive the witness of men — for example, we use a notary public to verify a document. The Scripture is the witness of our Father God. 1 John 5:10-13 is our legal document. To disbelieve is to call God a liar and doubt the most ultimate source of truth in all the universe. When all else fails, I can firmly rest upon the Scriptures for assurance.

“Eternal life” refers to both endurance and quality of life. Please note that it is a present possession. This is very important to emphasize. Being a present possession, there is not a time in my future that I will ever be in a position where I cannot have fellowship with God the Father. There is no reality in the doctrine of “soul-sleeping.” See John 11:25-26. “Soul sleeping” is the doctrine that says there is no consciousness beyond death until Christ returns. This teaching is erroneous.



### Worksheet

You have recently worked through the “Bridge” illustration of salvation on your own. Hopefully, in doing this, your understanding of the gospel should be much clearer. You have a rather concise and personal outline you will be able to use in sharing Christ with another person.

The next most important thing is that you have assurance that what you have learned is your own experience. You need to have no doubt about it and it is truly yours. It is not presumptuous to say that “I know that I have eternal life.” In fact, it is most important that you do know. Without assurance, one will be continually looking within himself, wondering if his life is good enough or if he has really “done” enough to have obtained God’s salvation. Salvation does not, of course, rest upon what we have done apart from faith. It is what God has done. The intent of this session, however, is to give you a foundation upon which you may be assured that you have eternal life, and that the issue of your destiny is settled forever.

List the ways you think you might know you have eternal life before proceeding further. After doing this study, come back and see if what you have written above is included in this study.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

E  
T  
E  
R  
N  
A  
L  
  
L  
I  
F  
E

There are several things the Scripture says about knowing we have life. These we are going to look at and analyze. But let's do some review first. If salvation were a matter of my works, I could never have assurance. I would not find out until I die and experience judgment. But there is no teaching in Scripture that would lead me to believe that. If I had to work my way into God's favor, I would have to be \_\_\_\_\_, James 2:10 and Galatians 3:10. Therefore how "good" I am really does not help assure me that I have eternal life. Others feel they are saved because they see God as "good," and a \_\_\_\_\_ would not condemn them. There is, of course, no basis for an argument like this, nor can one gain assurance from such an argument. It is the \_\_\_\_\_ of God that leads men to \_\_\_\_\_, Romans 2:4, and this means an acknowledgment of sinfulness and a desire to turn from it. Repentance means changing my attitude or thinking about sin or a particular sin. It leads me **to turn to God** from that sin or lifestyle.

### The Basic Means of Assurance

The first means has to do with changes that have taken place in my life as a result of my acceptance of Christ. But I must be careful as I look at these things. While it is true that in all probability, most or all of these things may be true of a life sometime, it is likewise certainly true that most may be missing from a life from time to time if he is walking as a carnal Christian. So we call the indicators **experiential** because they have to do with what I \_\_\_\_\_. Therefore, we call them \_\_\_\_\_ because they are related to my **experience** as a Christian. They are merely indicators that may or may not be present in my life. Their presence is often related to the quality of my Christian life...whether I am carnal or spiritual. This is enlarged upon later.

#### I. Experiential Indicators

- A. The first experiential indicator is found in 1 John 2:15. This verse says the love of the Father is seen to be in me if I do not \_\_\_\_\_ the

\_\_\_\_\_. It is obvious that the word “world” in this context does not mean the physical world in which I live. We are at home on this planet and adapted to living in the environment as we know it. We speak of loving the mountains, the ocean, flowers, fresh air, etc. This verse has to do with a \_\_\_\_\_ system. It speaks of an age over which the “god” of this world system rules. This ruler is none other than \_\_\_\_\_, the chief enemy of God, Jehovah. The devil is behind the world system involving materialism, pleasure, money, etc. As a true Christian, my chief involvement in life — my goals— are not those of this present evil world. In contrast to the goals of an ordinary man, a Christian’s goals are God centered. If this is true, this is an indication that I am a Christian. This is an \_\_\_\_\_ indicator. So we are taught that understanding \_\_\_\_\_ we love will also help us know that we have eternal life.

- B. The second \_\_\_\_\_ indicator is seen in 1 John 3:14, where it says we \_\_\_\_\_ we have eternal life because we love \_\_\_\_\_. In the previous verse, what we love is a crucial indicator. Now we see that \_\_\_\_\_ we love also plays an important part in my assurance of salvation. This is a verse that relates to “inter-family” relationships. What groups of people in this world do I most enjoy being with? The present verse says I know I have eternal life if I love my brothers. This is a very special group. When I came to Christ, I became a son of God. Anyone who \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus becomes a child of God, John 1:12. This means that as sons and daughters in a family, I have many sisters and \_\_\_\_\_. The point of this verse is that if I truly am a child of God, I will know it because I \_\_\_\_\_ my brothers and sisters, and I feel most at home with them.
- C. The third point involving how we know also relates to an \_\_\_\_\_ indicator. We mean by this that it may or may not be true, but if things are as they should be, it will be true. Again we look at this Scripture in 1 John (which was written for the expressed purpose of helping us know we have eternal life). This time we go to chapter 2:3. This has to do

with my behavior overall or in a general sense. I will be assured I have eternal life if I keep \_\_\_\_\_.  
 Once again we look at something that has to do with my \_\_\_\_\_.  
 And because experience is not the most dependable thing in the world, and because I am yet a \_\_\_\_\_, Romans 3:23, this is not always true of my life. This verse probably speaks of my attitude more than anything else. Psalm 119: 97 says "O how I \_\_\_\_\_." There will be a desire to be obedient. This is what brings about what Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 5:17. As a new creature, the old things \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ have come. There will be change in my life, and that change will take the form of more careful \_\_\_\_\_ to Christ, John 14:21.

- D. Closely associated with the previous thought is one that is inferred in 1 Corinthians 2:14-15. These verses teach me that a \_\_\_\_\_ does not understand the things of God. Actually they are \_\_\_\_\_ to him. But this is not true of a \_\_\_\_\_ man. The spiritual man is one who \_\_\_\_\_, vs. 15. As I begin to study Scripture and have its truth opened, I can be assured that I am a child of God. Nevertheless, there are times when my life becomes dry and I lose something of the ability that I have to understand the Scriptures. Therefore, since this too is tied to my experience, we see it as more ex-\_\_\_\_\_, and not an absolute indicator.
- E. We have looked at indicators that are more \_\_\_\_\_ because they are tied to human experience. There is a final experiential indicator to be introduced. Romans 8:16-17 tells us of a permanent Heavenly Guest who comes to indwell us. This One is the \_\_\_\_\_. The Holy Spirit comes to indwell every believer. No believer is without the Holy Spirit, Romans 8:9b. He is in my life for many purposes, but basic in His indwelling is His desire to be manager of my life. As He fulfills that purpose, He assures me of my salvation and as such \_\_\_\_\_ with our spirit, vs. 16. This is a mutual

witness that He bears **with** my spirit. It is fragile and probably depends upon my not \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ Him, Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19. And because of this — because it will vary in terms of my walk — this is only an experiential indicator, though one which we would not want to be without.

## II. Objective indicators

The second broad category is more **objective** and does not relate to what I experience on a daily basis. It is, rather, based upon the faithfulness of God to His own Word. Several statements from Scripture provide the planks in this platform of assurance.

- A. Psalm 119:89 says that the Word is \_\_\_\_\_.
- B. 1 John 5:13 states that the things written in 1 John were written in order that I might \_\_\_\_\_ I have \_\_\_\_\_.
- C. Again, the faithfulness of our Heavenly Father comes into the picture. James 1:17b says that with Him there is no \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_. We can depend on Him. His very nature and reputation are at stake when we trust Him and His Word.
- D. And what does His Word say? 1 John 5:11-12 make it clear that eternal life is related to \_\_\_\_\_ the Son. Let's look at 1 John 5:9-13 very closely. Vs. 9 says we accept man's \_\_\_\_\_. What are some of the testimonies of man that you or others accept? If I want to prove I am married, I must ultimately produce, not my wife, nor the minister that married us, but my \_\_\_\_\_. This becomes a witness of man and anyone will accept it. If I go to the grocery store and buy groceries and write a check, I must produce proper identification, usually in the form of a current \_\_\_\_\_ and this becomes a "witness of men." It is accepted. I am a university graduate. I produced my framed degree which has on it the name of Arizona State University and the board of regents' signatures. That diploma or degree is a \_\_\_\_\_ of men and attests that I am a

*And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.*

*He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.*  
1 John 5:11-13

graduate of that university. Everyone accepts it. There can be no doubt that we generally do accept the witness of men in good faith. Vs. 9 tells us that if we accept the witness of men, and we do, the witness of God is \_\_\_\_\_, so we are anxious to see what the witness of God is concerning us and His Son. Vs. 10 says that not believing the witness of God causes us to accuse Him of \_\_\_\_\_. We accept the witness of men — not to accept God’s witness is to put our finger in His face and say, “Father, you are lying.” And what is His witness? See vs. 11. God has given us \_\_\_\_\_ and this life is in His \_\_\_\_\_. What is central as far as having life is concerned? \_\_\_\_\_. How can I have the Son? John 1:12 If I receive Him, Who do I have? \_\_\_\_\_. What promise is crucial in John 6:37? If He doesn’t cast me out, what does He do? \_\_\_\_\_ Who has whom? \_\_\_\_\_ And of what does this assure me? \_\_\_\_\_ 1 John 5:11,12. Therefore, 1 John 5:11,12 is the witness that we must believe or else we make God a liar. The purpose of all this is found in vs. 13, which says:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### I CAN BELIEVE THE WITNESS OF GOD!

Someone once asked Luther, “Do you feel your sins are forgiven?” He replied, “No, but I’m as sure of it as heaven, for feelings come and feelings go, and feelings are deceiving: My faith is in the Word of God, nothing else is worth believing.”

**Questions for Review and Discussion**

1. Why is it absolutely essential to effective Christian living to know that you have eternal life? Write a statement that will give adequate reason.

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2. Write out word for word what the “witness of God” is.

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What is the absolutely crucial factor in this witness? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. There are two kinds of indicators or ways we can know we have eternal life. What are these?

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4. Write a statement about the failure of experiential indicators in our lives.

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5. What effect will unconfessed sin have in the life of an individual who desires to have assurance?

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6. List other things or conditions that could rob an individual of assurance.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

7. What effect will “backsliding” have on assurance?

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### Key Concepts

The first thing that is significant in this material is the importance of “knowing” that I have eternal life. Try to understand that a person not having assurance will be a person who will not experience the rest that Jesus promised, and over time, this can lead to much anxiety. Being self-centered does not translate into a healthy Christian life. Christ-centeredness must accompany a healthy Christian life. Only with assurance will I know this life. The matter of my assurance must be settled forever through my ultimate faith in what God says.

There are two basic ways one can experience assurance of salvation. Of course, the new birth is an essential precursor of assurance. It is probably possible for one who has never studied the Bible to generate his own ideas about God and assume that a God of love will never damn anyone. Assurance of salvation assumes that one has experienced the new birth as presented in the “Bridge”. The first are called “experiential” indicators since they relate to our experience. They will vary, depending upon our knowledge and experience in the life. They are simply indicators that may or may not be present during periods of time. The second indicator is more objective and relates to what the Scripture says, and the very nature of Scripture which is unchanging.

We need to emphasize again 1 John 5 which states that we can know we have eternal life. Think through the process that took place when you accepted Christ. “If He didn’t cast you out what did He do?” “Who has whom?” “What does having Him mean?” The witness of God is in 1 John 5:9-13. This is God’s legal witness given to us that we have eternal life.

Feelings are important, but they have little to do with assurance which in a final sense, rests upon the Word of God and nothing else. When all experiential indicators fail, I still have the witness of God, the Scriptures.



# POSITIONAL TRUTH

## Basic Christianity

- 2 The Six Main Points of the Gospel
- 3 The Bridge
- 4 The New Life I Have in Christ
- 5 Assurance of Salvation
- 6 **Positional Truth**
- 7 Spiritual Maturity
- 8 What it Means to Grow as a Christian
- 9 Practicing Spirituality
- 10 Flourishing in the Spirit
- 11 The Sources of Temptation
- 12 The Misuse of the Tongue
- 13 Review Questions

**Purpose:** It is the purpose of this session to acquaint the disciple with truths relating to standing and state to better grasp the reality of trusting Christ.



## Objectives

1. The disciple will learn the doctrine of justification by faith.
2. The disciple will learn the truth of his sanctification.
3. The disciple will learn that one is clothed with garments fit for heaven.
4. The disciple will begin to learn doctrine that relates to his permanent standing before God.

## Scripture Memory

*For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.*

Hebrews 10:14



## Agenda

1. Prayer and sharing.
2. Discuss questions.
3. Scripture memorization.
4. Discuss new terms.

## Positional Truth

### Standing and State

It is important for every Christian to understand the difference between *standing* and *state*. Standing deals with my position with God by virtue of the new birth which I have experienced, John 1:12. This position is one of perfection, since I am justified. (Be sure you understand the meaning of the word **justification** which is a central doctrine of salvation.) Because the righteousness of Christ has been imputed or reckoned to me, I am just as perfect as Christ in the Father's sight. As Christ is, so am I in this world, 1 John 4:17. Finally, this standing is one of permanence, Romans 5:2. I don't "step in and out of grace." The permanence of my relationship with Christ is spoken of also in Romans 8: 1,38-39.

State is quite another matter. State deals with my condition in this world. It is involved with what kind of a child I am as a member of God's family. What is the nature of my walk with the Lord? At best, one can say it is imperfect. It will vary from day to day. I may or may not be efficient in my practice of spirituality — keeping step with the Spirit.

State has to do with practical sanctification. The writer of Proverbs states: *"But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day,"* Proverbs 4:18. Hopefully this practical sanctification will bring one's state or condition to be more consistent with his standing. But the two will never be equal until we experience glorification with the Lord, 1 John 3:2. Then, "we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is."

The following are words that you should learn and understand if you do not know them. They are included in the section **Definition of Terms**.

1. Standing - position
2. State - condition
3. Justification - a legal declaration that I am innocent and righteous. No direct feelings are experienced when we are justified.
4. Sanctification - positional sanctification is being set apart for God. Practical or progressive sanctification is the process of being made holy.
5. Glorification - a state of perfection involving both standing and state which will become a reality when I am with the Lord.
6. Saint - God calls me a saint when I experience new birth, and through practical sanctification I am learning to live like one.

These are words that occur in theological writings and some of them in Scripture. They are necessary for our understanding of biblical truth that relates to our salvation. You should learn them well.



## Worksheet

One of the most basic understandings necessary for effective functioning as a Christian is that which involves the difference between where I am (in Christ) and how I function in the world today. Another way of stating this is how God sees me in the world today as opposed to how I and others see me.

This is a study of positional truth. My position has to do with where I am in the Father's sight and this is called my standing. \_\_\_\_\_ has to do with **how** God sees me in this world, and this is central in what we call \_\_\_\_\_ truth. What I experience on a day-by-day basis is different, however. This is called my state. \_\_\_\_\_ relates to my every day experience in the world. It relates to how I see and experience myself in this world. My \_\_\_\_\_ is how God sees me; my \_\_\_\_\_ is how I and the world see me.

Standing and state are usually quite different, at least at the beginning of one's spiritual journey. The purpose of this session is to help each Christian recognize the difference. This recognition can make the difference between peace in a person's life, or having great personal anxiety. Understanding these differences can literally set me free.

Let's first look carefully at the position I have as a Christian. Central to an understanding of this (where I am) is the doctrine of justification. Justification is a key doctrine in understanding my \_\_\_\_\_ as apposed to my \_\_\_\_\_. The only thing I can do to give me adequate positional relationship with Christ is to \_\_\_\_\_, Romans 4:5. When I come to Christ by faith, I become a \_\_\_\_\_ of God, John 1:12. I can look into His face and call Him \_\_\_\_\_, Romans 8:15.

In this position as a \_\_\_\_\_ of God, I now have many things. Perhaps the most important possession I have is the \_\_\_\_\_, 1 John 5:12. We have already seen in a previous study that to have Him is to have \_\_\_\_\_, 1 John 5:11. But this is not all I have, however wonderful that might be. There is much more. Not only do I have position in the family of God, I also have a position that is **perfect** because I have been given the

*As a Christian  
I am a child  
of God  
with perfect standing.*

*I am a child of  
God with perfect  
standing and  
righteousness.*

\_\_\_\_\_ of God, Romans 3:22

His righteousness and life give me a \_\_\_\_\_ standing or position, Hebrews 10:14. Because I stand in the righteousness of Christ, I am just as righteous in the Father's sight as is \_\_\_\_\_. For this reason, I can have \_\_\_\_\_ in the day of judgment, 1 John 4:17. One whose standing is \_\_\_\_\_ need never, never fear \_\_\_\_\_, John 3:18.

A final and wonderful truth about my standing or position is that it has been settled forever. Look again at Hebrews 10:14. He has \_\_\_\_\_ those who are sanctified (being made holy). For how long will this transaction last? For how long am I a son of God in His family? Write in your own words what the words "forever" and "eternal" mean to you.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

It is a wonderful thing to understand truth related to my position. I am a child of God with perfect standing and righteousness. I am secure because this is going to continue forever. No charge can ever be laid out against me by an adversary, Romans 8:33. But I am aware that my life in practical ways does not seem to correspond with my position in Christ. I am justified — declared both innocent and righteous. Yet I sin on a daily basis. How am I to understand this seeming discrepancy with what the Scriptures teach about my position. Consider again Hebrews 10:14. "Sanctified" is in the present tense in the original and can just as well be translated b\_\_\_\_\_ s\_\_\_\_\_. This is a process that will continue for the rest of my earthly life. It is described in the Old Testament in Proverbs 4:18. Write what this verse says about the process going on in your life, in your own words. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

These words are a biblical description of my \_\_\_\_\_ rather than my standing or position. It is a description of my day-by-day experience in the world as I do battle with my spiritual enemies. What does 1 John 1:8 say that makes us liars? \_\_\_\_\_

Ecclesiastes 7:20 says there is not a righteous man on earth who \_\_\_\_\_. So we seem to be stuck with being \_\_\_\_\_. This means that my condition, in contrast with my perfect standing, might well be seen as im \_\_\_\_\_. This condition of imperfection has its “ups and downs” on a daily basis. Some days are better than others, but every day is characterized by \_\_\_\_\_. In contrast with my perfect standing, my state or condition is highly \_\_\_\_\_. It changes from day to day. Remember, the process of helping my state approach my standing is called sanctification, whereby we are being \_\_\_\_\_, Hebrews 10:14. This is practical \_\_\_\_\_, as opposed to \_\_\_\_\_ sanctification which makes me a saint. Practical sanctification is a process which begins when \_\_\_\_\_, and continues until I go to be with the Lord, 1 John 3:2. The rest of this discipling ministry has to do with how I can help my state be more consistent with my standing. This should be our earnest desire and basic effort in the world since we are representatives of the King of Kings and have made Him our Lord, Romans 10:9-10.

It is important to remember that there is never a time on earth when I can become sinless. It is not a matter of reaching a place where I cannot sin. But Christ has set me free and now I am able to NOT sin. I can choose to not sin in any situation, Galatians 5:16 and 1 Corinthians 6:18-20. I sin when I choose to not follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.



### Questions for Review and Discussion

1. To which does justification relate - standing, state or both? \_\_\_\_\_
2. To which does sanctification relate - standing, state or both? \_\_\_\_\_
3. To which does glorification relate - standing, state or both? \_\_\_\_\_
4. To which does being a saint relate - standing, state or both? \_\_\_\_\_

5. How does my condition affect my position? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What kinds of things might happen to me if I pay no attention to my state and continue on in a life that never experiences progress in practical sanctification?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. God declares when He justifies me that I am righteous. How can this be? What does He do?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Which is more basic—justification or sanctification? \_\_\_\_\_  
Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What is the relationship between justification and any future judgment for the believer in Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Romans 8:1,2; John 5:24
10. In your own words, contrast justification and sanctification.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. React to this statement in relation to the doctrines of justification and sanctification: “That person is really a saintly person; her life is one of Godly concern and faithfulness.”  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## POSITIONAL TRUTH

### The Christian's Foundation to Stability in the Christian Life

The casual observer of Christians and the Christian life is quickly aware of the halting and stumbling of most of us in our Christian walk. It seems we will begin our walk with vigor, only to falter soon and slip into lives that characterize mediocrity. We find ourselves doing battle with our three arch enemies: the world, the flesh and the devil. Many become discouraged and fall away.

This brief article is a statement of truth that is basic to the effective functioning of a Christian in this world. It is an effort to develop some basic teaching in a way that makes sense and help it become a part of the stabilizing force that will make one's walk with Christ more successful. These are the doctrines of justification and sanctification. They are readily recognized as theological axioms, but inadequately understood as far as their place in our lives is concerned.

These truths are not new truths. Indeed, they are as old as salvation itself. Nor are they unnecessary truths. They are practical and important in our experience of Jesus Christ today. They are neither peripheral nor secondary truths. They are as central and important as the doctrine of reconciliation through the blood of Christ. But they are much **neglected** truths. We need to understand them for our walk with God through a world in which we struggle to be free from the carnage of sin.

### What Is Positional Truth?

We have already stated that positional truth is a consideration of the doctrines of justification and sanctification and their impact upon those of us who are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me attempt to make this understandable and practical.

Positional truth has to do with the difference between what I have in Christ as a child of God, as opposed to my actual condition in the world. Another way to express this is to say it defines the difference between how God sees me in this world as one of His own, as opposed to how I and those around me see me, and what I experience in the world. For the purpose of this study, these are called my **standing** and my **state**. Our first comparison and the primary distinctions of this discussion relate to these two terms. Let's remember that justification has to do with my **position** or **standing**, whereas sanctification has to do with my **state** or **condition**.

We first consider the doctrine of justification. This is a cardinal doctrine in the broad scope of salvation and regeneration. Paul says in Romans 5:1,

*“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,”* and in, Romans 3:24, *“being justified as a gift of His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”* Other verses tell us we are not justified by the law or the works of the law, (Rom. 11:6), and of course this doctrine became a focal doctrine in the movement we call the Reformation that initiated Protestantism.

What is the meaning of this doctrine? Why is understanding justification so very central to the body of teaching regarding my position in Christ? Do I experience justification when it happens? These are some of the questions I will attempt to answer in this discourse.

First, it is important to understand the nature of justification. This doctrine is not something we experience. It's a **legal term** describing what God does. The results of this declaration may have everything to do with how I live. The Father declares that something is true. When this term was first used in Scripture, it was spoken in relation to Abraham because he believed the promise God gave him concerning his son Isaac, (Genesis 15:6).

Some have attempted to make the understanding of the word simple by saying the meaning may be remembered easily if you say “just-as-if-I’d-never-sinned.” When we are justified, it is just as if I’d never sinned! Now that would be wonderful indeed. We are all sinners and long for the ability to reverse many of the deeds of our lives. Words have gone from our lips that we can never retract. Works relating to the darkness of this world have been acted out and tears cannot remove them. We are all in the same place as far as our guilt is concerned. Time can never be reversed. But our Father’s remedy for this is in the doctrine of justification. Our God declares that I am innocent when I receive His Son. For me now, it **is** just as if I’d never sinned! This is part of the glory of His true forgiveness. When God forgives, He does not tuck the record away to be brought out at some distant date to incriminate me again. When He forgives, He chooses to not remember! He casts my sin behind His back...He remembers them no more. I truly am “just as if I’d never sinned.” How wonderful that One who knows everything can also choose to not remember! Psalm 130:3 says, *“If you Lord, should mark iniquities (kept a record of sin), O Lord, who could stand?”* This certainly implies innocence before Him. But this is not the only truth in the doctrine of justification.

There is another declaration that comes from the Father when He justifies me. Not only am I forgiven--declared innocent, but I am also declared righteous by the Father. This He does as a result of Christ’s resurrection. See Romans 4:25. Because of His resurrection, He can clothe me with garments that are suitable for heaven. I have the righteousness of God, Romans 3:22. The Father literally covers me with His righteousness and gives me perfect standing in His presence. Because of this, I need never fear future judgment.

1 John 4:17b declares, *“...we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.”* And He is altogether righteous!



This truth is vividly illustrated in the Chinese word for righteousness. Many years ago, I was teaching my class in the Vineyard at the First Presbyterian Church in Honolulu on Sunday and was trying to share the meaning of “righteousness.” Somewhere I had heard that the Chinese word for righteousness was two words—lamb over man. I mentioned this that day. It happened that the Professor of Chinese Linguistics at the University of Hawaii was present in that class, and he corrected me. The correct rendering is **wounded lamb over me**. How personal and how strange and interesting that in a language of a people in darkness—even today, there is a structure that conveys the truth we desire to illustrate in this writing. It is “wounded lamb over me.” It could never be anything else.

The offering of the Savior for sinful man has made it possible for the Father to declare us righteous in His sight, and this is because He sees us through the righteousness of His own beloved Son. His canopy over us is love demonstrated through the offering of His Son and the covering His blood affords. And as the Father sees me now, He sees me through the righteousness of Christ that is my covering. So the Scripture declares, *“Because by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy,”* Hebrews 10:14 (NIV).

Now let’s look back and review. I have come to Jesus by faith (John 1:12). Because of this, I am made a member of His family. In this position, I am justified. As one who is justified, I am declared innocent and righteous. I am no longer guilty before the Father and He has covered me with the righteousness of His Son. I now have clothing fit for heaven. I probably don’t feel it, but it’s true. I don’t need to feel it for it to be true. I simply need to believe it. And the glory of this is the sufficiency of His work and offering. It is forever! See Hebrews 10:14, once again. His one offering need never be repeated! My salvation is assured. Throughout the Greek text, the word *apax* is used. This word means “once for all,” and that’s the emphasis of the Hebrews passage. God has perfected forever those who believe. We have perfect standing before Him because we are justified. So justification is a legal declaration by God that I am no longer guilty. I am innocent. It is also a declaration that I am just as righteous as His Son because I am covered with Christ’s righteousness.

To summarize, then, my standing relates to my **position** as a child of God. That position is **perfect**. It is also **permanent**. This summarizes the meaning of the doctrine of justification. It needs to be learned well. It is the most practical basic understanding of a new child of God. It is absolutely necessary to understand for effective living as a Christian.

### The Growing Side of Positional Truth

There is a practical side to positional truth. This involves the doctrine of sanctification. This is how the world and I see me on a day-by-day basis. This

is the growing part of my life in Christ. The original text says those who are perfected forever are “being sanctified” (being made holy). Although sanctification has a positional aspect—we are set apart for Christ—it has practical aspects as well. I am in the process of being sanctified. Sanctification begins the moment I place my faith and trust in the Lord Jesus and it continues on until the day I am with the Lord.

Paul speaks of sanctification in terms of our ultimate glorification, Romans 8:29, and as the process involved in reaching glorification when Christ comes for us. Once again the process of practical sanctification is found in Proverbs 4:18, *“The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day.”*

Think of the typical experience of coming into relationship with God. The description of the “path of the righteous” in the above verse is something like this description. In the beginning, there is joy—joy that is hard to contain—that is different than anything I have ever experienced. The burden of sin is gone. There is understanding that I now have eternal life. It seems that all things are indeed new (2 Corinthians 5:17). Then there is something of a slump and things are now almost as before, though I struggle to keep my joy if I can. And then from nowhere I am hit with the most horrendous trial I’ve ever known. Something that is worse than anything ever experienced as an unbeliever. Needless to say, I don’t understand it. I am now a Christian. Why should I have things like this coming into my life? I am not well enough acquainted as a babe in Christ to understand that it is through the process of trial that I am brought to perfection—that the Father sanctifies me! James is a very practical epistle involving the Christian life and difficulties encountered as a Christian. Trials are the first problem considered in his writings (James 1:2).

What do I learn from this? Could it be that this is one of the ways *“God causes all things to work together for good,”* Romans 8:28,29? Could it just be that this is the way God is now beginning my process of living a life that will burn brighter and brighter to the bursting of full day? Might this experience produce the peaceful fruit of righteousness for those who have been trained by it, Hebrews 12:11? So I learn—pick myself up—and go on. I discover that although I have been made a new creature in Christ Jesus, this has not exempted me from the trials of daily life. I turn to the Word of God for further understanding and I find myself increasing in knowledge. The Word is sweet to my taste and there is a preciousness about it I have now discovered. It has become “the joy and rejoicing of my life.” I begin to learn how to “walk in the Spirit,” to allow this Heavenly Guest Who lives within me to manage my life. I have not relished the ideas of being controlled by anyone to this point in my life, but now it seems reasonable in the light of confessing Him as Lord, to let Him be my Lord and God. This is new and strange to me, and I must learn **how** to do this. I learn to acknowledge my sin and confess when I fail Him (1 John 1:9). I am involved in a process when I enter the state of “being” sanctified. This is far different from my standing which is perfect and settled once and for

all—it is very unsettled and imperfect.

Therefore, standing and state might take the following form. My standing with the Father is absolute—perfect. My state, my sanctification, is a matter of growth or degrees. It is highly relative. What I am actually involved with is working to bring my state nearer the level of my standing. In the course of these workings, which will take a lifetime, I will have many ups and downs. I will slip and fall, but the Lord upholds me with His hand. I will learn to walk in the Spirit only to make choices that again involve carnality. Hopefully I will learn lessons from each failure that will enable me to follow the Savior more closely. As I make the Scriptures a part of my life, I will be cleansed, John 15:3, Psalm 119:9,11. But at best, my state is characterized by many failures, yet hopefully a gradual movement toward a perfection that will be mine when I am with the Lord. At that point, the process of sanctification and glorification is complete.

Justification is a declaration by the Father that I have perfect standing with Him because He has forgiven me and declared me righteous. He can do this and be just because of the death of Christ for me, and His resurrection, (Romans 4:25). What He has done with regard to this has given me perfect standing forever. I need **never** fear judgment or any condemnation in the future, Romans 8:1.

My life in a practical sense is different. I have experienced new birth. I am in the process of being sanctified and this is a daily matter of my walk with Him. Central aspects of this include my growth toward spiritual maturity and my ability to learn to “walk in the Spirit.” Because I am a sinner and actually imperfect in my walk, this is an up and down process. Some days my walk is more effective than other days. Until I am with the Lord, my walk will need work in order that it be more consistent with the perfect standing I have in the Father’s eyes.

Finally, there is no truth in theological thought more practical than the truth found in the simple terms “standing” and “state.” Assurance and peace are found in the teaching of this brief writing. And if both of these are necessary in a fruitful walk and a life of victory, there is no way they will sooner be a part of one’s experience than to grasp an intellectual and spiritual understanding of these principles. In the doctrine surrounding **standing** and **state** are the mighty and meaty implications of justification and sanctification. Do not let these teaching slip from your grasp. They are basic investments for eternity! Your life will find a stability in the understanding of them.



## Key Thoughts and Concepts

The understanding of positional truth is absolutely necessary in building a sound theological base for a person. Therefore it is necessary to understand basic concepts and doctrines that are involved in the teaching.

Positional truth begins with the doctrine of **justification**. Remember that justification is a legal declaration that one is **innocent** (including the forgiveness of sin and restoration to Adam's innocence) and **righteous** (I am just as righteous as is Jesus, because I am covered with His righteousness, Romans 3:22). It is important to understand and remember these two aspects of justification. It is also important to emphasize that justification is not something felt by us. It is a declaration that relates to my new position in the Lord Jesus and the family of God. Therefore the writer of the book of Hebrews states that I am "perfected forever."

Justification gives me perfect standing with the Father. Nothing could ever be added that would make it more perfect. It is as perfect as it will ever be for all eternity. I am "in Christ," a "son of God" in His family, "accepted in the beloved." Each of these statements relate to my position. My position also relates to my being a "saint." With positional relationship, I can understand that I am **now** a saint.

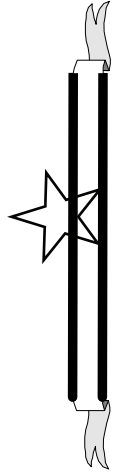
Positional truth must also include the doctrine of sanctification. Sanctification – the reality that I am a saint – is also related to my position. A saint, according to Scripture is anyone who has made a covenant with God by blood, Ephesians 2:13, 19. There are positional aspects to sanctification, which have a basic meaning of being **set apart** for God. Sanctification also relates to my state or condition. In this respect, it is the progressive aspect of positional truth, and is never perfect. The latter part of Hebrews 10:14 says I am "being sanctified." This is relatively accomplished during my lifetime, and it has to do with my ability to learn to walk efficiently in the Christian life. It will never be fully accomplished until I am with the Lord.

The basic truth that needs emphasizing is that my state does not affect my standing or position. I am perfected **forever**! This does not mean that I will have no concern of sin in my life. Rather, because I am a child of God forever, I will have every concern that my life might be pleasing to **Him**.

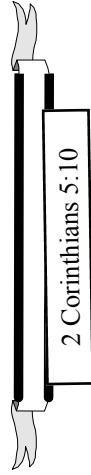
Glorification has to do with the ultimate movement of my state in becoming equal with my standing or position. When I am with the Lord, the process of sanctification will be complete—position and condition will be equal. I will be glorified and that will be my eternal state.

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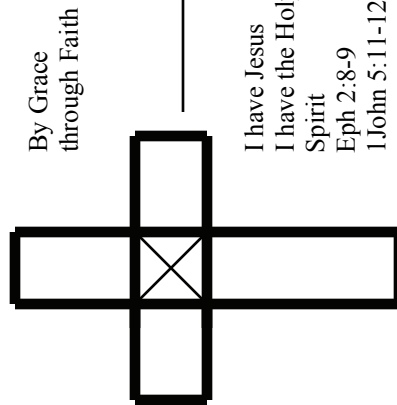
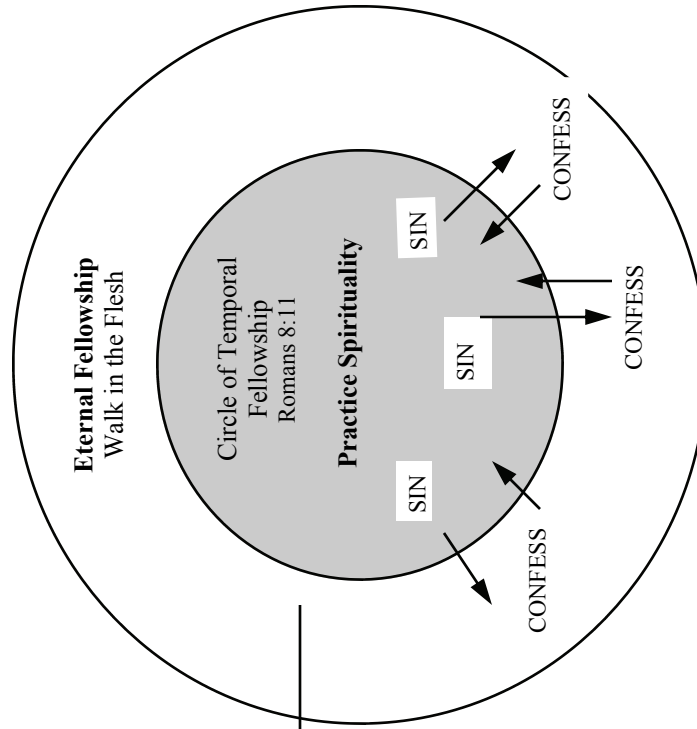
# The Circle of Eternal Fellowship Philippians 2:5-8



The Bema  
The believer's  
Award Seat



2 Corinthians 5:10



By Grace  
through Faith

I have Jesus  
I have the Holy  
Spirit  
Eph 2:8-9  
1 John 5:11-12

**Human Goodnesses**  
Isaiah 64:6

Love  
Joy  
Peace  
Patience  
Kindness  
Goodness  
Faithfulness  
Gentleness  
Self Control

**To bear fruit there must be a commitment to obedience. John 14:21**

1. Grieve not the Spirit, Ephesians 4:20
2. Quench not the Spirit, 1 Thessalonians 5:17
3. Confess (on the run). 1 John 1:9
4. Faith to accept forgiveness Colossians 2:6

# SPIRITUAL MATURITY

**Purpose:** The purpose of this session is to give the disciple understanding which will help growth toward maturity.

## Basic Christianity

- 2 The Six Main Points of the Gospel
- 3 The Bridge
- 4 The New Life I Have in Christ
- 5 Assurance of Salvation
- 6 Positional Truth
- 7 **Spiritual Maturity**
- 8 What it Means to Grow as a Christian
- 9 Practicing Spirituality
- 10 Flourishing in the Spirit
- 11 The Sources of Temptation
- 12 The Misuse of the Tongue
- 13 Review Questions



## Objectives

1. The disciple will understand the key factors in becoming an adult Christian.
2. The disciple will understand the difference between spiritual maturity and spirituality.
3. The disciple will understand the relationship between spiritual maturity and spirituality.
4. The disciple will be able to bring to his life the kind of fellowship with the Father that will produce much fruit that remains, John 15:16.

## Scripture Memory

*But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

2 Peter 3:18



## Agenda

1. Mutual prayer, sharing and accountability.
2. Discuss the session materials.
3. Discuss the questions.
4. Discuss new terms.
5. Discuss journaling to monitor growth.
6. Scripture memory.

## Introduction

Scripture describes three classifications of man in I Corinthians 2 and 3.

There is the **natural** man who is positionally related to Adam. This man may be good, but what he produces in his life can at the most be human goodnesses. These human goodnesses are totally unacceptable to God, Isaiah 64:6; Romans 8:8. The natural man has never experienced new birth.

There is the **spiritual** man who is positionally related to Christ through justification and experientially controlled by the Holy Spirit. The spiritual person bears the “fruit of the Spirit” which is pleasing to God and is what we are made for, Galatians 5:22-23. Spirituality is an absolute. Only those who have experienced new birth can be spiritual. One who is justified is either spiritual or carnal.

There is the **carnal** man, or “man of the flesh” who is positionally related to Christ but experientially is controlled by himself. This person produces nothing that is pleasing to God, and lives like the natural man lives. This, as spirituality, is an absolute. A believer is either carnal or spiritual. Both the spiritual man and “men of the flesh” are related to Christ. The man of the flesh controls his own life.

As a believer in Christ, I make the choice concerning what kind of a person I am. I am at any given moment either “spiritual” or “of the flesh.”

## How Does One Practice Spirituality?

- I. Spirituality requires a commitment to obedience. Disobedience breaks the control of the Holy Spirit in my life. There are two ways of sinning that will break His control.
  - A. Grieving the Spirit, Ephesians 4:30. This is breaking a specific or known commandment in the Scripture.
  - B. Quenching the Spirit, 1 Thessalonians 5:19. This is failure to follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit which is given in ways other than the Scripture. But the Holy Spirit never leads me to do something contrary to the Word of God.
- II. What shall I do when I realize I have sinned?
  - A. Confess on the run, 1 John 1:9. Confession means agreement with God that my behavior was sinful. It is the word *homologeo* which means literally “to say the same thing.”



- B. After confession, I am to believe that I am forgiven, Col. 2:8. This is not as easy as it may seem. All of us have “hang-ups” including many that are psychologically oriented that can hinder our acceptance of forgiveness.
- III. At any given moment in time, I am either *spiritual* or *carnal*. Not a little bit of each. I am either totally spiritual or totally carnal. No one is any more spiritual than another even though our lives may differ in many ways.
- IV. The practice of spirituality has great significance in relation to the Bema, the judgment seat of Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:10. This award seat is where “how” I build, and what sort of building it is will be evaluated. The practice of spirituality, therefore, has great significance not only in quality life today but in differing glories of life to come in eternity.

### **Spiritual Maturity**

Spirituality deals with my health, while maturity deals with my growth. Maturity is a matter of degrees whereas spirituality is always an absolute.

What is involved in my maturation?

- I. Doctrine — significant accumulation of teachings of Scripture, 1 Peter 2:2,3; Isaiah 28:9-10.
- II. Stress — difficulties, Romans 8:28. Growth never takes place in a vacuum. See also James 1:2-4
- III. Faith — being able to develop the proper attitude toward stress, Hebrews 12:3, 5, 11.
- IV. Grace — not a doctrine but rather an attitude or an action of grace in everyday life. “They saw the grace of God.” This is apparently the virtue of accepting others without being judgmental.
- V. Reproduction — When I grow to maturity physically I can have children. When I mature spiritually I can reproduce spiritually. Although any believer can reproduce, maximum reproduction comes with spiritual maturity.

*“The Trouble Tree” is an old Jewish fable told by Sheldon Kopp, a New York therapist. It is important to say that this is a fable and not a true story. But it illustrates a truth. It says that on the final day of judgment, a trouble tree will be set up. We will come to the tree and hang our unique sets of personal troubles on the tree. Then we will dance around the tree and look for another set of troubles and put them on. But after wearing them for awhile, we will return to the tree and take our own again realizing they were the ones we most needed for our development. The Father does not allow us to crumble, though the troubles are ever so severe, 1 Corinthians 10:13. Alas, my troubles were just the ones I most needed.*

### Becoming Spiritually Mature

- I. My involvement with the Scriptures must become comprehensive and systematic. Acts 20:32.
- II. I must learn how to survive in a “pressure cooker” world.
  - A. Growth never takes place in a vacuum, James 1:2-4.
  - B. My attitude toward pressure is crucial. We are not fatalists, but it is important that I see that this is just what I need at this present moment in my overall development.
 

Pressure can be corrective, 1 Corinthians 11:30.  
 Pressure can be directive; Paul and his Macedonians call.  
 Pressure can be productive, John 15:2; James 1:3.  
 Pressure can be purifying, Job 23:10.  
 Pressure can be preventative, (Paul’s thorn in the flesh).
  - C. Being able to find meaning is most important, Romans 8:28-31.
  - D. Further meaning and instruction is found in Hebrews 12, which teaches that the Lord disciplines those He loves.
- III. I must take responsibility for personal failure and reducing defensive behavior. Typical responses are often called ego defenses. The most common of these are:
 

Rationalization  
 Denial  
 Projection  
 Displacement
- IV. I must be willing to confess my sins and make restitution as fully and as quickly as possible.

### How to Know The Father

- I. Interact with Jehovah on a daily basis in ways that help you learn what He is like.
- II. Know His names — especially the compound names of Jehovah.
- III. Learn to love and deepen your love for Him. Love can be reciprocal and absorbing, with gratefulness and adoration.

IV. Commit to knowing the Scriptures — going beyond daily devotions.

V. Pray and fellowship with Him.

VI. Engage in active fellowship with other believers.



## Worksheet

This is a session on the subject of spiritual maturity. There are some general understandings that are necessary as we begin to investigate the subject of spiritual growth. It is important that these be very clear, and the first part of this study will attempt to make them easily understandable.

Physical and emotional maturity can be experienced by any person, whether one is a Christian or not. Spiritual maturity, however, adds a dimension to maturity for the Christian. Because of this, maturity is somewhat more complex for a Christian because of the added dimension of relationship with the Father. The Christian has the Spirit \_\_\_\_\_ indwelling him, Romans 8:9. This truth brings an additional aspect to the maturing process, and makes Christian maturity more complex.

First, then, one's maturity is always relative (i.e., more or less). There are several important facts involved in this statement. The first is that spiritual maturity deals with \_\_\_\_\_, 1 Peter 2:2-3. This means starting at one place and beginning to move toward another. Usually the first stage of development after birth is called \_\_\_\_\_. In a similar way, the beginning point in spiritual growth can be called spiritual \_\_\_\_\_. Infancy seems to be characterized by the need for \_\_\_\_\_, Hebrews 5:12-13, if one is yet a babe. Because one may be more or less untaught in the Word of Truth, he therefore might be termed an \_\_\_\_\_. But he is always **more** or **less** an infant. Because of this, we say maturity is \_\_\_\_\_, or "more or less". Relative refers to being more or less — never is maturity a matter of being absolutely mature, but always \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.

Thirdly, it is correct to say that maturity is unique for every individual. God has made each one of us different from the other. We are each intelligent in our own way. We each have grown up in different environments. Our experiences vary and are never the same as another's. Because of these realities, we might say that we are all \_\_\_\_\_ in a little bit different way. No one looks just like another. Our maturity, characterized by relative qualities, is \_\_\_\_\_ – oriented and \_\_\_\_\_ in the way it develops.

First we would say that what we know is important in spiritual maturity. It is crucial that we have a growing information pool — information about the world and the life that we are now experiencing. I need, of course, information concerning life in general. I also need information concerning the new life I have experienced through Christ Jesus my Lord. This I can find only through the Scriptures. Jesus stated that man needs to live, not only on bread, but on \_\_\_\_\_, Matthew 4:4. In what book is this word? \_\_\_\_\_. Difficult things in Scripture are often called \_\_\_\_\_, Hebrews 5:14. Simple things are referred to as the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Word, 1 Peter 2:2-3. It is simply impossible to become a \_\_\_\_\_ Christian without taking into my life the Word of God. And I do this by beginning with the \_\_\_\_\_ and I move to the \_\_\_\_\_. Later in this discipleship ministry we will introduce you to some varied methods which will enable you to add the Word of God to your

information pool. It is sufficient now to say “the Word is necessary.” It is imperative! One cannot move toward maturity without it. A spiritually mature believer is one who knows and understands how to handle and interpret the \_\_\_\_\_.

A second and very important aspect of a spiritually mature person, and one that is foundational to the rest of growth is that which relates to the basic principles by which he governs his life. Many function rather informally and have never organized the principles by which they live and survive. The spiritually mature person will have a lifestyle that is well systematized. This will include concepts concerning **truth** — its nature, source, and endurance. It also includes knowing **where** he is going, **what** is really important to him, and **what** he appreciates. Knowing where I am going is like having a goal or map. A goal is having direction concerning \_\_\_\_\_ going. Goals are pursuits in my life that are \_\_\_\_\_ to me. One who is without goals has nothing upon which to base his behavior in any organized fashion. He becomes directionless and scattered.

Truth is also important in one’s philosophy of life. We learn “right” and “wrong” early in life. This is related to a system of truth we finally adopt that governs our behavior. Two questions must be answered concerning truth: Where does it come from and what is it like? In John 14:6 Jesus said, “I am the \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_, and the \_\_\_\_\_. Jesus emphasized truth. We call this revelation, if we are talking about the Scripture, or the embodiment of truth if we are talking about Christ’s Person. Truth that comes from Scripture is called \_\_\_\_\_. This means that it was revealed to us, otherwise we would not know it. The Bible refers to itself as being given to man as \_\_\_\_\_, 2 Timothy 3:16. Truth also is given through natural law. The Psalmist says, “The heaven’s “are \_\_\_\_\_,” Psalm 19:1. The consistency of things in nature speaks of God’s existence. There is **order** in the universe. There seems to be purpose. These things we refer to as natural law.

Another aspect of truth relates to its nature. Two words quite important to know at this point are relative and absolute, which describe the nature of

truth. Relative refers to something that is true some of the time, while absolute speaks of something that is true all the time. Write in one statement or two what you believe the nature of truth is (as you function in the world today).

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A third point to make is one that relates to more psychological aspects of my being. This has to do with how I feel about myself — my self-concept. Much has been said about self-concept or self esteem in recent years, and the church is beginning to be open to aspects of biblical truth that relate to this variable of human personality. Self-concept has to do with how I feel about myself. It is the organization of all the ways I see myself and becomes the grid through which I interpret what goes on in the environment which is around me. How I see myself is called my \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_. In relation to what has just been said, why is self concept important? \_\_\_\_\_

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Sometimes we see self-concept related to humility, and this is acceptable and biblical. Humility is seeing myself as I really am. In a very real sense, humility is accepting myself as I truly am. Having a **realistic** view of myself is b \_\_\_\_\_. If I am an excellent concert pianist, but I try to be h \_\_\_\_\_ by denying the fact, I am really not being **humble** but deceitful. One sin I commit by denying how I really am is \_\_\_\_\_, Exodus 20:16. I can, of course move in the other direction and find myself thinking unrealistically and more highly than I ought to think. It is enough to say at this point that maturity includes a feeling about one's self that he is "enough" in a situation because Christ dwells in him, Colossians 1:27. To think this way is to have a relatively positive \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_.

A fourth descriptive point when considering maturity is one that is extremely important. A mature person is one who is able to handle stress more effectively. Stress is a "given" in the life of any human. It is impossible to be alive and not have \_\_\_\_\_. The only people without stress are those who are in cemeteries. But there is a characteristic involving maturity that is

supremely significant. A mature person is enabled to handle \_\_\_\_\_ with greater efficiency.

James tell us in 1:2 that we should approach stress in what way?

\_\_\_\_\_

What is pleasing to God according to 1 Peter 2:20?

\_\_\_\_\_

What is a significant sign of our sonship or membership in the family of God? \_\_\_\_\_ Hebrews 12:6. \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are the results of stress that is being dealt with in satisfactory ways, Romans 5:3, 4. The mature Christian is one who has learned and has confidence that \_\_\_\_\_ will work together for good, Romans 8:28, as far as God's children are concerned. This truth has been called a "soft pillow for a tired head."

Therefore, in summary, we can say that growth does not take place in a vacuum. \_\_\_\_\_ is necessary. God is concerned that we learn how to deal with stress effectively, therefore He allows us to experience \_\_\_\_\_ for our profit, Hebrews 12:10b. Our attitude is crucial, however, Hebrews 12:5-7. We are not to **forget** \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ when we experience chastisement or training.

The fifth aspect of the experience of maturity is that of reproducing ourselves — or having babies. When people grow up, they increase their family size by \_\_\_\_\_. Reproduction is also a mark of spiritual maturity. As we move toward adulthood, spiritually, we are able to fulfill the command to \_\_\_\_\_, John 15:16. You will notice that the "fruit" is to \_\_\_\_\_.

Not only is being able to reach out and introduce men and women to Christ a part of maturity, but "following up" is also of the utmost importance to see that the fruit remains. Of course, everyone and anyone can introduce another to Christ at any point in his spiritual development, but for **maximum**

**reproduction**, one must be relatively mature. We are able to bring forth fruit and through discipleship **help it remain**.

A sixth and final descriptive aspect of maturity is grace. Grace is, of course, a doctrine most of us champion. But in a practical sense, grace is an attitude as well—an attitude of how we see others. It is equivalent to the psychological variable that is called acceptance. See also Romans 15:7; Acts 11:23.

We demonstrate \_\_\_\_\_ in practical ways when we don't "look down our noses" at another person, or when we remove ourselves from being "God" in another's life. Paul is talking about this aspect of maturity when He says we ought to \_\_\_\_\_ who is \_\_\_\_\_ in faith, Romans 14:1. Grace is not demonstrated when we \_\_\_\_\_ one another, Romans 14:13. Therefore, continued evaluation and judgment of another Christian is actually making my life devoid of \_\_\_\_\_.

In summary, maturity is always *r*\_\_\_\_\_, which means "more or less." We must take action to help ourselves grow to maturation. List some of the things **you** must do to encourage growth in your own life.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Be as open as you can be. What have been some of the major hindrances to growth in your own life?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What are you going to do about these hindrances?

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It is altogether possible to lose as well as gain spiritual maturity. One can move toward maturity during one part of his life and because of neglect and unconfessed sin, become less able to exercise spiritually mature behavior.



### Questions for Review and Discussion

1. When we say that maturity involves a process, what do we mean?

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2. Why is my self-concept so important in movement toward maturity?

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3. React to the following statement: “The troubles I have are just the troubles I most need in order to grow.”

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4. How would you characterize an “old” Christian (20 years or more in the faith) who has never introduced anyone to Christ, and who is not spending time in the Scriptures in any systematic way? (Please think about this and then write a bit on the question.)

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5. What is the problem in the life of someone who says “since I have become a Christian, my life has been smooth sailing. All my problems are over and life has been really easy?”

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## Key Concepts

It is important to understand that the most basic thing involved in the Christian life is growth.—one's movement toward maturity. Without this, the life is destined to be dwarfed and inefficient. It is vital that one grasps the concepts involved in this movement.

It is important to remember that maturity is always relative. By this is meant that it is a matter of "more or less." One of the indications that I am moving toward maturity as a Christian is that I am able to handle "meat" as well as the milk of the Word. The meat involves knowing the truths of Scripture and practicing them. Obviously, growth takes time and is a matter of process.

Although there are certain characteristics of maturation, everyone will mature a bit uniquely. The description of a spiritually mature Christian is as follows. Be sure you know these and emphasize them in your daily walk.

1. The spiritually mature believer is one who is growing in his grasp of truth. There is no maturity without becoming more aware of the world, and for a Christian, more aware of his spiritual resources as given in the Word of God.
2. The second characteristic involves a well-defined philosophy of life. This must be clear and concise. The spiritually mature Christian knows who he is and where he is going.
3. A third characteristic is a positive self-concept. He feels relatively positive about himself. This is, of course, related to being obedient to Christ. A positive self-concept is not opposed to true biblical teaching about humility.
4. The ability to handle stress is also important. The spiritually mature believer must understand that true spiritual maturity involves the adequate and efficient handling of stress. In reality, there can be no growth without a personal encounter with difficulty.
5. Spiritual maturity will enable the believer to bear maximum fruit. When he grows up physically, he can reproduce (have babies). The same is true of his spiritual life. He will bear some fruit and perhaps help it remain," John 15:16.
6. Finally, grace in a practical sense is involved with maturation. A mature person does not see himself as "God" in the life of another. The more mature he becomes, the more "acceptance" will be demonstrated in his life. Maturity is not the same as spirituality. The former is connected with growth, and the latter with health.

*Notes*

# WHAT IT MEANS TO GROW AS A CHRISTIAN

## Basic Christianity

- 2 The Six Main Points of the Gospel
- 3 The Bridge
- 4 The New Life I Have in Christ
- 5 Assurance of Salvation
- 6 Positional Truth
- 7 Spiritual Maturity
- 8 **What It Means to Grow as a Christian**
- 9 Practicing Spirituality
- 10 Flourishing in the Spirit
- 11 The Sources of Temptation
- 12 The Misuse of the Tongue
- 13 Review Questions

**Purpose:** It is the purpose of this reading to provide understanding for the disciple in order that he might know what spiritual maturity is.



## Objectives

1. The disciple will know that maturing spiritually is a process.
2. The disciple will understand that we all develop uniquely.
3. The disciple will understand the difference between maturity and spirituality.
4. The disciple will understand aspects of spiritual maturity that he can work toward.
5. The disciple will see that spiritual maturity is always relative.
6. The disciple will understand the purpose and importance of stress in his life.

## Scripture Memory

*So that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*

Colossians 1:10



## Agenda

1. Prayer and mutual accountability.
2. Discuss spiritual maturity.
3. Discuss of new terms.
4. Share Scripture memory.
5. Discuss applicability of the session in your own life.

## What It Means To Grow as a Christian

by Emery Nester, Ed.D., D.Min.

*"But grow in the grace and knowledge  
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

*To Him be the glory, both now  
and to the day of eternity. Amen."*

2 Peter 3:18

### Spiritual Maturity

Growing is a natural part of life for every living thing. We watch plants grow from tiny seeds into grandiose displays of color. Little animals greet life with enthusiasm and develop into robust pets. And as parents and grandparents, we are fascinated as we observe our children and their offspring move from childhood, through adolescence and become adults.

Sometimes the process is thwarted; it is not allowed to progress in its normal course. Such was the case of a young cousin years ago. My aunt and uncle had wanted a daughter for many years. Not that their two boys were unloved and lacked appreciation, but they had hoped that their third child would be a girl. Their dreams seemed fulfilled with the birth of little Lynn. She was a lovely yellow-haired little girl with so much promise for happiness for her family.

But spinal meningitis ravaged this little girl during the first year of her life. Her growth, both mentally and physically, was stunted. She would never learn what healthy children learn and experience during her early growth processes—to walk, to talk and to play. The disease abruptly eliminated these.

One's growth is not confined to physical processes. Growth also takes place emotionally and spiritually. We are urged to grow into mature persons who bear Christ's likeness. This, too, should be a natural process, but often the process fails. It does not seem to "just happen." We do not become mature simply because years pass by. Job says in Job 32:9 (NIV), *"It is not only the old who are wise, not only the aged who understand what is right."*

This statement implies that there is more to growing than passively experiencing years that go by. That there is something we must do in order to make the process of development toward maturity a reality for us. Other Scriptures affirm our need to grow. 1 Peter 2:2 says, *"Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation."*

The writer of the epistle to Hebrews remembered the readers of his

letter and their immaturity and said:

*"We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."* (Hebrews 5:11-14 NIV)

So important is this matter that Paul speaks of it as one of the primary goals of Christian ministry in Ephesians 4:13, *"until we attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ."*

The mature man in this text refers to the fully developed man — one who has grown emotionally and spiritually. Surely these texts present to us the importance of growing in the life I now have in Christ. This is the theme of this first section.

Some general considerations of maturity are necessary for our understanding of this crucial subject. They are essential if we are to clearly differentiate between maturity and spirituality.

### **Maturity Is Relative**

The first important consideration is that maturity is always understood in terms of degrees. It is a human condition or quality that is reasonably measured from one point on a scale from infancy, or immaturity, to adulthood, or maturity. None of us is ever totally mature in this life. It is even possible in relation to processes that make us mature, to lose some of our maturity and become less mature. Therefore, we are each one more or less mature. Nor will any of us ever become totally mature—as mature as we might ever be—in this life. Maturity will become complete at glorification, just as our standing was completed at justification.

### **Maturity as Process**

Process coupled with maturity suggests that it takes time to grow. We do not see growth from day to day as a rule. Audrey (not her real name) is a woman I knew years ago. She was in her early forties, a high school graduate, whose husband divorced her. She made some important decisions about her

*Maturity is  
always a matter  
of more or less.*

*Every person  
matures in a  
unique way.*

life while in counseling. These included going back to school and getting a degree. Finding herself able to do academic work quite successfully, she continued in graduate school and eventually obtained a master's degree and became a marriage and family counselor. She continued her counseling during most of that time, working to understand her inner dynamics and the will of God for her life. It would be difficult to see Audrey grow from day to day, or even week by week. Her maturing had to be measured in "chunks of time." But over the longer term, she had become a different person. Her life, seven years later, was nothing like it had been in the beginning of our acquaintance. Her growth was process-oriented, not specific.

Yet time alone is not enough for growth to take place. It is possible for me to live many years, and yet be as defensive, rigid, and unaware as in my earlier years. Part of the process of maturing involves improving ways of interacting with stress. I make my functioning in the world more efficient by applying my increased knowledge to the situations faced in my life. The more I am aware of reality, the more able I am to handle problems successfully.

### **Maturity and Uniqueness**

Maturity develops in ways that are just a little different in each of us. We are unique! Each is intelligent in ways that are unlike the intelligence of another. Some are mechanical. Others are artistically gifted. Some are mathematical, while others are blessed with verbal skills. Each of these differences impacts our maturity and causes our development to proceed in unique ways.

Personality is another factor of significance. Differences in personalities probably cause us to move into different types of experiences. If I am a person-oriented individual, I will undoubtedly be more involved with people. My experiences, then, will move me toward greater maturation in areas that relate to interpersonal relationships, as opposed to those with scientific orientations who spend much time alone or working with things. In these situations, one may be more highly developed in skills that involve working alone. Loneliness may not be a problem for such a person, as it might be for one who is person-oriented.

Another factor of personality that possibly directs trends of growth is self-concept. I tend to interpret my environment through the "grid" of how I see myself. As my self-concept is unique, my interpretations become unique. One whose self-concept is negative will make interpretations that are less likely to be associated with growth. On the other hand, if I am somewhat positive about how I see myself, these concepts of self will aid in my growth process. I remember Ted (not his real name) who had many problems in interpersonal relationships. He simply could not make a friendship last. He saw himself as basically unliked by others and generally inadequate. Although he would try in some circumstances to extend himself and be friendly, it was easy for him to



misjudge statements made by his would-be friends. He tended to be somewhat paranoid and would often set up self-fulfilling prophecies that would insure his failure. As hard as he would try, he just couldn't have a good experience. He would fail every time. And so his maturity was hindered—his growth blocked.

Each person's environment is also somewhat different from another's, and this can affect how maturity takes place. We live in different places geographically. One is the first-born in any family. If there is more than one child, one is in last place, or somewhere in the middle. Again, the unique differences of a couple without children, as compared with one with children, will cause differences in experiences that in turn affect the nature of one's growth. Even the Father's unique way of dealing with me and my personal needs will affect my growth, my maturation.

### **Spiritual Maturity**

A final word about maturity needs to include a brief word about the uniqueness of spiritual maturity. For those who know Jesus Christ, maturity is always more complex or multidimensional when compared with that of an ordinary person in the world. Surely, unbelievers can mature as persons. Many reach a higher level of maturity than some Christians reach, it is sad to report. A professor in my graduate school was not a Christian, but he had grown throughout his lifetime into a well-rounded, mature person who had many virtues and human goodnesses. He could deal effectively with problems he encountered day by day, and he was highly skilled in interpersonal relationships. His effective behavior enabled him through the years to develop admirably as a human. Yet for all of his development, he knew nothing of spiritual maturity.

In the case of a Christian, not only are emotional and intellectual qualities involved in maturity, but spiritual qualities as well. These unique aspects include knowledge of Scripture, dealing with the unseen world, the present world system, the development of hope, and efficient ways of handling stress. Each of these is crucial in the Christian's quest for maturity.

### **The Spiritually Mature Person**

A description of a person who is spiritually mature must include characteristics that are those of any emotionally mature person, as well as descriptions that are specifically those pertaining to Christians. In this section, therefore, both classes of conditions will be merged as a composite in describing or depicting one who is spiritually mature. The first description is that of...

#### **One Who Is Well Aware**

As one grows older, experiences accumulate, and we might reasonably

*The spiritually  
mature Christian  
finds leadership  
in the  
Word of God.*

think that anyone who has lived longer will be more mature in knowledge. The passing of many years is usually in the favor of maturing as far as information is concerned. We travel, read, listen to lectures, experience varied things in our lives. And as these experiences take place, barring injury or some other unusual circumstance, we increase in awareness. For this reason, Jung, a disciple of Freud, felt that none could begin to mature until he had reached at least fifty years of age. It takes this long to accumulate adequate information to apply to the rest of life so one can be relatively mature. Life prior to fifty is simply filled with too many extraneous things that hinder real growth, such as rearing children, earning a living, and keeping one's self together in early adulthood and into the middle years.

There are, of course, many other experiences that younger people experience that are crucial for maturing. Rearing children, earning a living, and other everyday experiences are maturing in themselves. Yet it is true that with respect to increased awareness of the world in which we live, years must pass in order for me to accumulate and analyze information that enables me to live more efficiently. And, of course, for you and me who are Christians, awareness of my world includes in a very central way, the Word of God—the Scriptures. Without Scripture, there can never be spiritual maturity. Indeed, the Word makes the difference between mediocrity and productivity.

A spiritually mature person finds leadership for his life, not only in his awareness of the world about him, but also and centrally, in the Bible. This is my primary guide for daily living. Without an awareness of the Word of God, all of my use of information in the world will only lead me to living a life that is earthbound and wise according to men, but not God. As years pass, with diligent and systematic efforts we build "line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little" (Isaiah 28:10), until our awareness has increased significantly and we have a basis for efficient living. This foundation becomes the matrix out of which springs...

### **A Well-Defined Philosophy of Life**

This variable is a requirement in the lives of both Christians and non-Christians alike, when maturity is considered. But this basic characteristic of structure for living will vary rather profoundly when Christians and non-Christians are compared. A life with no anchoring "philosophy of life" is like a ship without a compass or chart. I set sail with no direction and basically drift with whatever wind may blow me about, and often end upon the rocks of ruin. I suppose this would not be so crucial if life were no more than a grasshopper dance off to oblivion. But it is not that simple. Existence is characterized by turmoil and pain—by games people play with us, by dishonesty and the dehumanizing of each other, as well as by tragedy over which none of us has much control.

An adequate philosophy of life helps me know where I am going, and how I am going to get there. It gives me direction along the way, and enables me to make my life more than random effort.

The mature person, therefore, has thought much about the issues of life and what governs his behavior. Having organized his life's direction well, much of the usual ambiguity he struggles with is gone. He knows where he is going.

With a clearer understanding of these principles, the maturing person is better able to deal with the struggles and stressful problems of life. These are, of course, the "warp and woof" of our lives and the maturing process. There is no way of escape from them. We can only learn to handle them more effectively if our lives are to become more efficient. With a mature, adequate, biblically-based philosophy of life, I am able to understand the "whys" and "hows" of pressured situations. With these mysteries no longer present, I deal with my pressures and go on. And as this process takes place, if I am maturing, it is important to have, a...

### Relatively Positive Self-Concept

Self-concept is another variable related to maturity. One who is spiritually mature is characterized by a relatively positive and healthy self-concept. He feels good about himself. He doesn't feel "normal," "average," or "necessarily" superior. But he feels **adequate**. Adequate refers to an awareness of what one is as being "enough." This may appear strange at first, yet when union with Christ is understood, and when I experience His adequacy in connection with my own functioning, I begin to see myself as enough. For some reasons difficult for me to understand, self-concept is often neglected in approaches to spiritual maturity. Yet it is most important to consider in relation to the spiritually mature person.

Perhaps one of the most hackneyed statements from pulpits today is the statement that "once I become a Christian and understand who I am, I will never have an inadequate or negative self-concept again." Such statements are inaccurate, and misleading. The church is filled with believers who are negative in ways they feel about themselves, and often in ways that lead them to be very confused and disillusioned. They should feel good about themselves, but they don't. They read about adequacy, "positive self-images," but they do not have them. Often poor self-images are equated with humility, but this, too, is wrong. Humility is seeing oneself as he truly is. It is an accurate understanding one's abilities as well as liabilities. Humility is to see myself realistically. And humility involves my self-concept and how I feel about myself.

Understanding what constitutes self-concept is vitally important. Many

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*“Concepts of self  
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and clarity.”*

descriptions of this variable are at best hazy or ambiguous. Self-concept or self-image are terms common to most all Americans today. Educators, psychologists, ministers, and teachers everywhere talk of it and suggest strongly its importance. But few understand what goes into its makeup.

Let me try to enlarge upon this for you. Self-concept is made up of hundreds, perhaps even thousands of concepts of self. These are individual, discreet concepts of self. I see myself in hundreds of ways. These concepts vary in clarity with each other. Some are clear and others not so clear. Some are more central than others. Some are important and others not so important. There are concepts of self vitally related to who I am and what I am about. Other aspects of “me” are not so important. But each way I see myself is part of the perceptual organization of my self-concept. Each is relatively positive or negative.

I illustrate this in the following way. What I am about to say are individual, discreet ways in which I see myself. I am a male and a senior citizen. These two aspects of myself are fairly central. I feel good about being a male, but perhaps not so good about being a senior citizen (although I qualify for those outstanding senior citizen menus in certain restaurants). I am average in height. That's not too central. How tall I am is really not all that important. I am a Christian! Ah, this is the most central and pivotal aspect of my life. The reality that transformed me from a hopeless wretch into a prince, a child of God, is of supreme importance to me. Another concept of self—I am a good Christian, is not quite so clear. I am not sure I really understand all that a good Christian is. And if I did, I am terribly frightened that I would fail the criteria involved. I like and own a good bicycle—a Paramount with “campy” parts. I also have a thing with German automobiles. I love little Schnauzers and most other dogs. I have an adequate income. I am a teacher and psychotherapist. I desire to be a servant...more than anything else to be as Barnabas, a “son of consolation,” a helper in the lives of others. I am a father. Big deal! Just about any male can become a father. A good father? Well now, that is not quite so clear. There are yet echoes of my failures as a father. So one can readily see that each of these concepts of self varies in centrality or importance, and each differs in clarity. The total organization of these becomes my self-concept which is more or less positive—or negative.

Self-concept has a significant effect upon my relationship with the world in which I live. I tend to behave in ways consistent with how I see myself. If my perceptions are somewhat negative, then I will tend to act in ways that confirm those negative feelings. Conversely, if how I feel about myself is somewhat positive, I will tend to act in ways that will confirm and be consistent with these feelings. A relatively positive self-concept, which is related to maturity, will enable me to be more efficient in my behavior and act more maturely.

Other aspects of self-concept include its stability once it is organized,

and its fluidity or ability to be changed, although it is characterized by stability. These characteristics are actually opposites, although each is true of self-concept. Stability means the self-concept tends to maintain its present structure and preserve what characteristics of self are presently true. This is the case whether the characteristics are positive or negative. Hence there is a stability about self-concept. One theorist (Combs) has gone so far as to say that the one supreme need of human personality is to "preserve and enhance the self-concept that is."

It is equally true that no concept of self is so set in concrete that change cannot take place. It is probably true that to simply concentrate on what I am like—to attempt to study my own self-concept—will cause its fluidity to become apparent. There will be movement. The interaction I have with my environment on a continual basis, will cause change to take place as well.

Self-concept develops as a result of my interaction with my environment. I see myself in a particular way because I have had experiences in my world that have caused me to feel "able" or "unable." For instance, I am a singer. That is another concept of self for me, incidentally. I like to sing. Earlier in my life I sang in a male quartet, in duets and on occasion, solos. I got moderately good feedback. I felt that I sang relatively well. I felt somewhat positive about the concept of self "I am a singer." That has changed in more recent years. When I sing, no one asks me to sing again. When I sing in a church congregation, I am not always in tune with what's happening. Let's face it, I am not the singer I used to be. I now feel somewhat negatively about the whole idea of my being a singer. I still love music, but I would really rather hear it than make it.

The principle of the importance of interaction with the environment is true in every way I see myself. I do not develop certain ways of perceiving myself, as a general rule, by simply thinking about those things that pertain to me. Thinking may give me enough encouragement to attempt something new, but it will never change my self-concept. Therefore, "self talk" really makes little difference in any change. I can assure myself forever that I am able to become a writer, but I will never see myself as a writer until I am successful in publishing. This is why simply understanding my position in Christ does little, in itself, to change my views of myself. I may as a result of understanding that position reach out to the world in new ways and experience something new and different, but it is the *experience* and *not the understanding* that truly makes the difference. To experience love, being valued and accepted will generally enable me to consider myself lovable, valuable and acceptable. Nothing else will do that for me. Therefore, in summary, we might say that the quality of my self-concept will heavily rest upon the nature of my experience with my particular world—my phenomenal environment. And self-concept usually deals with concepts involving "being able and being worthwhile."

A final consideration of self-concept in this section involves the effect

*The quality of my  
self concept will rest  
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nature of my  
experience in my  
particular world.*

of my self-concept upon my behavior in everyday life. This turns out to be pretty much the same, whether one is a Christian or not. The effect is simply that I tend to behave in ways consistent with how I see myself. If I believe I am a failure, I will tend to be a failure. This will happen because I not only distort the reality of my ability, but I create self-fulfilling prophecies and end up making them true. If I feel I am a poor witness for the Savior, I will either not witness at all, or witness poorly, never expecting to introduce anyone to the Savior. If I feel I am a poor husband, unworthy of my spouse, I will act like an unworthy spouse, behaving poorly. I remember Giavini—how he hated his big nose and felt he had "lucked out" in winning the love of his pretty wife. Instead of thanking the Lord he was truly loved by such a person, and understanding that noses do not constitute bases for happiness in marriage, he would on occasion become terribly threatened by her friendships with her fellow workers. He would frequently pull great clumps of hair from her head because of his jealousy.

It is therefore quite easy to understand how the nature of one's self-concept can accelerate or decelerate growth or movement toward maturity. I have a friend who has experienced love and acceptance most of his life. He could probably be best described as being a little above average because of the success of his life. Surely he is not overly capable, but you couldn't impress him with that fact. He puts himself into the middle of situations where even angels would tremble to be and somehow comes out "smelling like a rose." Because of the goodness of most of his experiences, and his willingness to involve himself in almost every kind of task, he has become a very mature, capable person. He is an effective servant of God. Most people who know him would agree that his strongly positive self-concept has enabled him to grow at an accelerated rate as compared with the person who feels bad about himself. Self-concept is a significant factor in growing more mature.

### **Spiritual Maturity and Relative Openness**

One of the more difficult things to be dealt with in the maturing process is the lack of relative openness among Christians. As a child, I was aware that my father had most of the information available in the world. He never faulted in his understanding—was always correct in his assessments. I remember feeling that he was the most knowledgeable, intelligent man in the world. But the more I matured, the more I realized the dogmatism that characterized my father's insistence that he had all the answers. I have also found that dogmatic thinking is characteristic of the world in which I have been reared. Dogmatic thinking is just one area in our lives that relates to relative openness.

Closely associated with dogmatic thinking is our own defensiveness—our ability or inability to see ourselves realistically and accept responsibility for successes and failures. Relative openness means that I am willing to see myself



pretty much as I am. This is, of course, nothing more than true self-acceptance. Not necessarily liking myself, but at least letting me see what is really happening with me, and how I really am.

A mature person moves from dogmatic positions to more flexible or open positions. This certainly does not mean that we give up our firm convictions that we have held precious to our faith in the Lord Jesus. It does mean that we become willing to investigate and question traditional positions. It means that we learn to admit into our awareness, perceptions that are different than our own, with a minimum amount of distortion from our own perceptions.

When I was interviewed by the graduate faculty of the Department of Counseling Psychology at Arizona State University many years ago, one of the esteemed faculty said to me, "Nester, when we're through with you, you won't be a Christian." Perhaps this was half joking, and perhaps it was somewhat serious. After all, no minister had up to that time ever finished the doctoral program in that department. I thought about that statement for several weeks. Could it be possible that the commitment I had made some 20 years previous could be inferior to some other commitment? Could it be possible that I would find in my studies in psychology something superior to the commitment I had made to the Lord Jesus? A commitment that had turned my life from despair to hope? One that gave me meaning I had never known? I was determined to finish my doctorate in that field, and I made a decision to look at other commitments and evaluate them for their superiority to Jesus. Alas, I found nothing that could compare with Him! But I was open, and I emerged stronger as a Christian than I had been before. My commitment could endure open evaluation. This seems to be a movement toward openness.

A mature person is also relatively non-defensive. This is necessary for growth, change, and maturation. If I am wrong, it is important that I admit my wrong and take responsibility for my part in whatever is involved. The Apostle Paul and David are two examples of those who readily took responsibility for their sins. In doing this, they preserved their growth and maturational processes.

See David, the king of Israel, guilty of both adultery and murder. Nathan approaches him with a message from God concerning his sin. In order to help him see his sin more realistically, Nathan tells a story and clarifies the situation the king found himself in. David's immediate response was, "I have sinned." He took responsibility and admitted his failure. The same was true of the Apostle Paul. In Acts 23:1-5 NIV we read: *"Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, 'My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day.' At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, 'God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!' Those who were standing near Paul said, 'You dare to insult God's high priest?'"*

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that I admit my  
error and take  
responsibility  
for it."*

*Paul replied, 'Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: 'Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.'''*

Possibly Paul could have been excused because of poor vision. There seems to be strong evidence that he was afflicted by an eye disease that not only caused him to be rather repulsive to look at, but also to have seriously impaired vision. He said in his defense, "I did not realize that he was the high priest." Then he condemns his actions by referring to Old Testament Scripture. He took responsibility for his conduct—his behavior. Such openness or non-defensiveness must be characteristic of the life that is relatively mature, or the life that wishes to be mature. Characteristically, we work to defend ourselves against being responsible for behavior that is interpreted negatively by ourselves or others. Ready admission of responsibility will open the door to forgiveness and personal growth.

Sometimes it is as difficult to experience success as it is to know failure. Success can create conditions of omnipotence in my life. I will see myself unrealistically and perhaps forget that who and what I am as a Christian, is the result of my personal relationship with Christ and the Holy Spirit's control of my life. On the other hand, successes can help improve my self-concept and my overall behavior. It is important to keep an awareness of my position in the world under the Lordship of Christ. What I have, I have received. What I accomplish is the result of grace in my life, not my own dynamic resources. I am only a servant functioning under the suzerainty of Christ.

### **Spiritual Maturity and Inner-Directedness**

One of the most important concepts involved in the whole problem of emotional maturity is the matter of inner-directedness. Numerous writers agree that one cannot become mature without learning to be, and being willing to be, one's self. Basic in this concept for the Christian is my willingness to develop as the Father has made me. Turning from the common practice of patterning my life after the directions and feelings of others, I experience what can be uniquely "me."

As I become committed to this aspect of what is necessary to grow, I will shun standards that are not "me." Simply behaving in a certain way because this is expected of me does not produce spiritual or emotional maturity. My true potential for development is blocked, if not completely stopped.

Writers speak of the necessity of moving away from the "shoulds" and the "oughts." To do this completely is probably not a realistic goal. "Men ought always to pray." We can only affirm that Scriptural statements such as these are entirely appropriate and healthy for spiritual growth. But to engage in a type of behavior, religious or otherwise, simply because there are those out



there that feel I "ought" or "should" do something is not a biblical or healthy psychological basis for behavior. It is to deny myself the experience of growing uniquely into a person who can fit into the Body of Christ in the way He has designed. And it hinders me in the whole maturing process.

Saint Augustine spoke of "loving God and doing as I please." Some are shocked by such a statement. How can I ever "do as I please"? But this statement is consistent with the idea of the Spirit-controlled life. When I am practicing spirituality as developed in the next sessions of this manual, I am basically able to "do as I please." My actions will be those that please God, even though they come from within me, because my life is lived in concert with the Holy Spirit. Such a life moves me away from "other-directedness" and toward an "inner-directedness" that produces maturity and psychological health. I begin to feel a sense of personal dignity related to the special and unique gifts given to me individually as a person.

Of course, there are problems related to this style of living. One might ask, "What about Scripture that emphasizes 'becoming all things to all men'?" And this is certainly a legitimate question. We are urged to be willing to become all things to all men so that we by all means might win some. There is certainly no point in doing this if we are not motivated to do so from within. To simply do this because we ought is not the proper tact to take in evangelizing the lost. I have an inner urging to introduce someone to the Savior, and I am willing to extend myself in order to do this. This is consistent with moving away from the "shoulds" and the "oughts."

What about the practice of liberty urged in Galatians 5:1, and the constraints put on this practice relative to the "law of love" and the "weaker brother?" I am not to do anything that would cause a weaker brother to stumble—anything through which or because of which he would be offended. This certainly seems to indicate that some behavior might legitimately be "other-directed." And again, this is true. If I am to understand this truth correctly, I need to understand the meaning of the word translated "offend." The idea inherent in the word "offend" is that of falling on one's face, never again getting on one's feet to walk with the Lord. There are not many things I can think of that would cause one to never again walk with the Lord simply because I might do them. But there are probably some, and I should know each behavior and its effect on a brother who doesn't understand liberty. There will be an elaboration of this principle and these subjects later in Session 32.

Mark this: Inner-directedness as a style in life is consistent with biblical concepts of the Christian life and the practice of spirituality. With the Holy Spirit in control of me, I can safely "do as I please." This style of living is truly healthy for me as an individual and enables me to become all I can be in the direction of my spiritual gifts and unique personality. The long-range impact upon the Body of Christ is its growth and ultimate benefit because I as a member will fit strategically into the purposes He has planned for me. Therefore,

*"Practicing  
spirituality moves  
me toward inner-  
directedness that  
produces  
maturity and  
psychological health."*

for both the Body of Christ and me as a person, "inner-directedness" becomes the badge of psychological and spiritual health.

### **Spiritual Maturity and Effective Interpersonal Relations**

For both believers and nonbelievers, growing effectiveness in interpersonal relationships becomes a mark of maturational processes being highly developed. One who is mature will be able to relate well to others. And this is crucial in our fulfilling our purpose in the world in which we live. We are in the world as witnesses for the Lord Jesus. We are here to serve Him in the reaching of mankind. Just as a maturing nonbeliever is able to develop more highly his skills in interpersonal relating, even so is a believer able to develop more highly his interpersonal skills because of his unique assets as a Christian.

Basic to all effective interpersonal relationships is grace lived by me on a consistent day-by-day basis. In the psychological world, one might refer to acceptance. In the theological world, the word is much more beautiful—grace, grace, grace! Grace is more than a doctrine. It is a way of relating to others. Perhaps its basis is in doctrine—"unmerited kindness," "everything for nothing, to those who don't deserve anything." But it is also an attitude that puts the doctrine into action for me.

Grace is characterized by moving away from the position of being an evaluator or judge of others. It is accepting people without any qualifications—as they are. It makes no demands on another to change in order for me to care for them. When my life is characterized by grace, I will not force another into my "rubric." I do not insist upon my unique standards to qualify them for my love and acceptance. I allow others to be themselves.

Many years ago, I pastored a small church in the foothills of the Cascades Mountains in Oregon. A woman lived in this community who was considered somewhat strange and who probably had some intellectual deficits. She rode a bicycle around the little community where we lived. Her son, who was about twelve or thirteen years of age, was also somewhat retarded. He accompanied her on the bike as a rule.

This little woman would fish the village creek and come around to the parsonage and tithe her fish to us. She did have a spirit of generosity and was very kind, though so odd. One day during a ladies meeting at the church, she was being casually discussed. One by one those present gave their impressions of strange Ruthie. Then one dear lady ventured her thoughts and said, "Every time I see Ruthie, I think of the Scripture that says we should entertain strangers, because in so doing some have entertained angels unawares."

This was truly a woman who had grown in grace—her attitude of accep-

tance in receiving an unlovely person considered queer by the community. Surely this characteristic of maturity enhances interpersonal relationships and demonstrates as nothing else, God in one's life.

Acceptance sets the climate for knowing and loving people. It gives basis for a sound interpersonal relationship with others. It releases others to grow and love me. When I learn to relate to others in this way, I demonstrate the greatest gift of Jesus after the giving of His life—unconditional acceptance just as we are.



### Questions for Review and Discussion

1. How would you describe growth as a human and growth as a Christian?

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2. We believe that reproduction is an indication of spiritual maturity. What things must be combined with spiritual maturity that would enable one to be reproductive?

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3. When comparing a spiritually mature Christian with an emotionally mature unbeliever, what are the differences?

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*Notes*

# PRACTICING SPIRITUALITY

## Basic Christianity

- 2 The Six Main Points of the Gospel
- 3 The Bridge
- 4 The New Life I Have in Christ
- 5 Assurance of Salvation
- 6 Positional Truth
- 7 Spiritual Maturity
- 8 What it Means to Grow as a Christian
- 9 **Practicing Spirituality**
- 10 Flourishing in the Spirit
- 11 The Sources of Temptation
- 12 The Misuse of the Tongue
- 13 Review Questions

**Purpose:** The purpose of this session is to help the disciple understand the nature and importance of spirituality or “keeping in step with the Spirit.”



## Objectives

1. The disciple will understand the difference between spiritual maturity and spirituality.
2. The disciple will understand the significance of the practice of spirituality as it relates to the Bema.
3. The disciple will understand more clearly the example of Christ in the kenosis.
4. The disciple will know how to actively practice spirituality.
5. The disciple will understand the difference between the fruit of the Spirit and human goodness.

## Scripture Memory

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

Galatians 5:22-23



## Agenda

1. Mutual accountability and prayer.
2. Discuss the session material.
3. Mutual Scripture memory.
4. Discuss new terms.

## The Nature and Practice of Spirituality

You have recently completed a study on the subject of spiritual maturity. This study is on the subject of spirituality. Spiritual maturity and spirituality are two different things that are interrelated. They are not the same, but they have a relationship with each other. It is the purpose of this study to give the disciple some understanding and background concerning the difference between spirituality and maturity as we have defined them, and yet show the relationship of the two. This session is also for the purpose of helping the disciple learn to practice spirituality, as well as helping him accelerate his growth.

Although spirituality and spiritual maturity are not the same, they have a close relationship with one another. Their interrelatedness includes the following: (1) Spirituality accelerates maturity and (2) Maturity makes the practice of spirituality more efficient. The more spiritually mature I am, the more effectively I can practice spirituality.



### Worksheet

Remember from our previous study that spiritual maturity deals with my \_\_\_\_\_, 1 Peter 2:2,3. As such, maturity is always a matter of something being \_\_\_\_\_ or less. By this we mean that maturity is always relative. “More or less” has to do with maturity being \_\_\_\_\_. In contrast to this, spirituality is all or nothing. One is either spiritual or not spiritual. Another way of stating this is that one is either carnal or \_\_\_\_\_. As opposed to being relative, spirituality is an absolute. By absolute is meant that something is all or n \_\_\_\_\_. So at any given time, a Christian is either totally carnal or \_\_\_\_\_.

There are many ideas about spirituality that are confusing and not true, yet these are very popular. Let’s look at some of these and understand that they are false ideas that are not supported in Scripture in spite of their popularity. Please be aware that popularity of an idea does not mean that it is true.

The first idea that is not true is that spirituality is by tabooism. “Tabooism” is the teaching that if one observes a specific list of rules pertaining to certain things others feel he shouldn’t do, he is spiritual. A very popular exclusion is

the drinking of alcoholic beverages. Another is smoking and yet another is going to movies and dancing. To think like this is quite prominent in many Christian circles and this is called “spirituality by t\_\_\_\_\_.”

We are not saying that some of these things are alright. Alcohol is the most destructive drug available to the American public. We also know that smoking is associated with heart disease and cancer. And simply because a picture is “moving,” it is not necessarily sinful. But the idea that to refrain from these things makes one spiritual is not taught in the Bible. Spirituality by \_\_\_\_\_ is not a biblical qualification for spirituality.

The second erroneous approach is spirituality by comparison. In this mode of thinking, one looks at another Christian, “sizes him up” and sees a problem this one has in his life and thinks, “I am more spiritual than that person, because I don’t have that sin in my life.” A common phrase used by those who think this way could be “that person is really spiritual,” or “she is a spiritual giant!” These are also ways of saying that another person is really not too spiritual, and that there are spiritual pygmies. Scripture warns against doing this in 2 Corinthians 10:12; *“For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.”* The Bible clearly forbids practicing spirituality by \_\_\_\_\_. We should shun therefore, practicing spirituality in this very familiar way.

Then there is spirituality by withdrawal. These people are often called separatists and feel that they can \_\_\_\_\_ themselves from everyone that may be tainted and become more spiritual. This is somewhat related to spirituality by tabooism, only it involves excluding those who don’t agree with everything I might believe. Simon Styletus, a separatist from other years was one such person. He lived on top of a pole thinking he would develop spirituality in this way. He thought that by living above the corruption of the world, he would surely become more spiritual. He is an example of spirituality by \_\_\_\_\_. But when I do this, I am no longer the witness I need to be for Jesus, who was a Friend of sinners. Withdrawal from “contamination” is

certainly not something that will make me \_\_\_\_\_. Spirituality by \_\_\_\_\_, or separation, is not a biblical approach to spirituality. I can be in the world, but not **of** the world.

A final negative to consider is perhaps the most difficult to talk about. This is “spirituality by prayer.” What we say at this point is in no way meant to depreciate the importance of prayer. Great men and women of prayer have lived in every age, and they model for us the needed time we might spend before the throne of grace. But prayer does not make one spiritual. It is certainly related to our spiritual growth and is important in our spiritual life. Prayer is one of our means of communion with the Father. It is related to our joy being \_\_\_\_\_, John 16:24. But \_\_\_\_\_ does not make me \_\_\_\_\_.

### **What is Spirituality?**

Having stated several things spirituality is not, let’s take a little time and emphasize in positive ways what spirituality is. Perhaps a good way to begin is simply to ask, “What is Christianity?” The answer is, of course, a relationship with \_\_\_\_\_. Remembering this, we might say that spirituality is learning to live in relationship with the Holy Spirit.

The question arises: “What should that relationship be like?” As I try to evaluate this, I must look at the example of Christ in His coming to earth. Paul says in Philippians 2:5, “Have this \_\_\_\_\_ in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.” Then he elaborates on the attitude of Christ. He was One Who was willing to empty Himself and become a \_\_\_\_\_. Becoming a servant was involved in the mind of Christ and is the example we are to follow. Of what did He empty Himself? When I understand this, I know what to imitate in Christ and this is the most necessary understanding in the practice of spirituality.

Let’s consider for a moment what Christ surrendered when He became a man. John 17:5 speaks of Christ giving up some of His \_\_\_\_\_. In the garden, He prayed that his glory might be restored. When Christ became incar-



nate, He became observable, touchable, and truly knowable as a man. In order for this to be true, it was apparently necessary that He give up some of His pre-incarnate glory.

Again in John 5:30, He states that He could do \_\_\_\_\_ by Himself. Doing nothing by Himself would suggest somewhat of a change in the functioning of One Who had always been, and yet still is omnipotent. We behold Him changing water into wine, raising the dead, and healing the sick. Those were demonstrations of His \_\_\_\_\_. Yet He says He can do nothing of His own volition. When we understand that He became a \_\_\_\_\_, and as a man became a s \_\_\_\_\_, yielding his rights and initiative to exercise His divine attributes which were still His, He became a servant to the \_\_\_\_\_, Philippians 2, with whom He was coequal in the Godhead. Therefore, all during His lifetime, He never once exercised His divine attributes independently from the Holy Spirit. He voluntarily surrendered Himself to the Holy Spirit. Taking this then as my example in the practice of spirituality, I learn to practice living my life in concert with the Holy Spirit, being under His control. This is what it is to be spiritual.

### **The Practice of Spirituality**

How can I make spirituality a daily practice? What is involved in this aspect of my Christian life which is so crucial? Romans 8:9 says that if one is without the Spirit, He does not \_\_\_\_\_. This means that I cannot be a \_\_\_\_\_ without having the \_\_\_\_\_ indwelling me. It is impossible to be a Christian without having the \_\_\_\_\_! The Holy Spirit's indwelling presence in our lives has many functions. John 14:26 tells us that He is our Helper to teach and bring to remembrance. Romans 8:26,27 tells us that He helps us when we are \_\_\_\_\_. And, of course, He bears witness with our spirit that we are \_\_\_\_\_, Romans 8:16,17. He is also in us to \_\_\_\_\_ us, Romans 8:14. These passages speak of His ministry in our lives.

Remember that earlier in this session we saw that in the kenosis, Jesus became a \_\_\_\_\_ to the Holy Spirit. He gave up His independent exercise of

His divine attributes, surrendering them to the Holy Spirit. In reality, Jesus became a \_\_\_\_\_ to the Holy Spirit during His earthly life. We do not, of course have divine attributes. But we have a will that needs to be in subjection to the Holy Spirit. We can, therefore, see our position with Him to be one under His \_\_\_\_\_. In this way, we become true \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus Christ, Romans 1:1. Now how do I do this? How do I live my life as a servant to the Holy Spirit? The answer to this question is the answer to what spirituality is.

First and primary is a commitment to \_\_\_\_\_, John 14:21. Obedience implies my willingness ultimately to do, without argument, whatever the Scripture says to me. It is a commitment to not sin. When I choose to not sin in a situation in which I can make a choice, or when I commit to doing something the Scripture tells me to do, I am \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ teaches us to be obedient, Titus 2:11,12.,

The second point is that which enables me to understand what sin is in order that I might recognize it and avoid it “like the plague.” Sin seems to fall into two broad categories. The first of these is objective. When I break a commandment that is found in Scripture, I \_\_\_\_\_ the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 4:30. Grieving the Holy Spirit is breaking a known \_\_\_\_\_. I can grieve only those who truly love me.

There are also subjective aspects of sin. One of these that is mentioned in Scripture involves following His inner leadership that He gives me on a regular basis. When I do not follow that leadership, I \_\_\_\_\_ the Spirit, 1 Thessalonians 5:19. Grieving and quenching the Spirit are the two ways we all sin. And when I sin in either of these ways, I break His control of my life. I am no longer spiritual but carnal. Spirituality is when the \_\_\_\_\_ is in control. Carnality is when I am in control. Carnality is the opposite of \_\_\_\_\_, when the Holy Spirit is in control. Becoming carnal does not cause me to lose my relationship with the Father but it breaks my fellowship with Him. At any given moment, I am either carnal or spiritual.

A major consideration is how I can leave my chosen state of carnality and become spiritual again. What must I do to be controlled again by the Holy Spirit? The answer, of course, is found in my \_\_\_\_\_ of that sin, 1 John 1:9. This Scripture is written primarily to Christians. I must acknowledge that sin. When I do, I am forgiven because the sin has been paid for by the death of Jesus Christ. So confession of sin is necessary for me to once again be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Let's look for a moment at the meaning of the word confess. In the original writings it carries the meaning of agreeing with God or literally "saying the same thing" that God says and believes about a specific behavior. I see sin to be sin and tell God I see it as such. Therefore, confession of a sin is \_\_\_\_\_ a certain action or behavior as \_\_\_\_\_, and telling God that that's what it is. It is simply bringing my mental faculties in line with His. This is in reality what repentance is. Therefore, confession is closely related to \_\_\_\_\_, or changing one's mind about a certain behavior that is sin. It is acknowledging a sin with a heart for obedience.

Now notice the results of confession. 1 John 1:9 says he will \_\_\_\_\_ us our sin. He doesn't forgive our sin, rather He forgives \_\_\_\_\_ our sin. Two characteristics of the Father assure us of this. He is \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in forgiving us. "Faithfulness" has to do with His consistent forgiving. He will do it every time. "Righteous" has to do with His ability to forgive with a just foundation for forgiveness. This, of course, He can do because of the sacrifice of Christ and the shedding of His blood.

A problem sometimes arises because of the unique difficulty posed by a particular sin and the reality that we are not to use forgiveness of sin as a license to sin. How many times will God forgive us? To answer this, let's first affirm that no one should use God's forgiveness as a license to sin. That would be unthinkable. But it is also true that God forgives no less than He has instructed us to forgive. In your own words, what does Matthew 18:22 mean?

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We are also to remember that God keeps no accounts. When He forgives, He also \_\_\_\_\_, Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 44:22. These and other passages support the reality that God chooses to not remember sin when we confess it. Therefore each time I bring Him a sin in confession, it is as if it were the first time.

A final step to consider is that which involves a recommitment to obedience, and faith that I have been restored to fellowship. I accept forgiveness and believe the Holy Spirit is again controlling me. Colossians 2:6 says, *“Therefore, just as have you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”* How did I receive Him? \_\_\_\_\_

In the same way, I need to walk in Him. I can believe I am forgiven. Let's practice this in our practice of spirituality.

### **Results of the Practice of Spirituality**

Now let us consider the practical aspects of spirituality. What will be the results of the Holy Spirit's control of me? Before we look at these, let's review once again some vital truths. Some would teach us that speaking in an unknown tongue is the mark of the filling of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit can transcend the giving of any gift in the life of an individual today. Remember the experiences spoken of as:

Being led by the Spirit, Romans 8:14

Being filled with the Spirit, Ephesians 5:18

Walking by the Spirit, Galatians 5:16

These are all speaking of the same things. Therefore spirituality can be called \_\_\_\_\_, Galatians 5:16, \_\_\_\_\_, Romans 8:14, and \_\_\_\_\_, Ephesians 5:18. These all refer to the same type of relationship which in this session we have called the p\_\_\_\_\_ of s\_\_\_\_\_.

We are interested in the results of spirituality in the final part of this ses-

sion. First, the Holy Spirit is in control of my life and He \_\_\_\_\_ me on a moment by moment basis. What does Psalm 32:8 say ? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This passage surely makes it clear that the Holy Spirit gives me \_\_\_\_\_. Just how He does this is not quite clear. Surely He does it through the Scriptures and my understanding of them. He is also deep within my psyche and as He controls me, He will surely \_\_\_\_\_, John 16:13. Other results of spirituality are found in Galatians 5:16. This passage tells me that I will not \_\_\_\_\_. This means that I will not make choices to sin as long as I submit to His control. While He controls me, He enables me to choose to go the way of the Scriptures rather than the way of carnality, or the flesh. A third and specific result is found in vs. 22,23. Here I am told that the fruit (singular) of the Spirit is \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. These are a cluster of fruit. They are also the fruit of the \_\_\_\_\_. They are not human goodnesses which have no value to the Father. They are the direct result, without effort, of the control of the Holy Spirit in my life. There is no struggle in the banana tree to bring forth bananas. The fruit is just there. Fruit is my reaction before I get myself under control.

In your own words list the results of the practice of spirituality.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_ see Acts 1:8; and Luke 24:49.

It is important to look at the Judgment seat of Christ (the Bema) in relation to the practice of spirituality. Read carefully 2 Corinthians 5:10 and 1 Corinthians 3. In 2 Corinthians 5:10, to whom is the apostle referring when he says "we"? \_\_\_\_\_

It is interesting to observe that the word translated “judgment seat” is the word used for the **award** seat at the Corinthian Olympics. No athlete was ever punished at the Bema. He just stood before it to receive his **awards** for participating. This enables us to understand more clearly the purpose of the Bema for us who know Christ. How is this affirmed in Romans 8:1, 31-35? \_\_\_\_\_

Two kinds of good works are evaluated at the Bema. The first are works produced through me by the Holy Spirit and are described in Galatians 5:22,23 as the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_. The second are produced by me apart from the Holy Spirit’s control and are described in Isaiah 64:6 as a \_\_\_\_\_. A larger description of the Bema is found in 1 Corinthians 3 - 4:6. Here the criteria for the Bema are described as how he \_\_\_\_\_; 3:10, and the \_\_\_\_\_, vs. 13.

Therefore “how” we produce works and the “quality” of the work are so very crucial. What are the ways we can produce works? \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. List some of the results of the Bema seat. See 1 Corinthians 3:14, 15; 4:5. \_\_\_\_\_

Please note: The word “bad” in 2 Corinthians 5:10 is not “bad” in the sense of evil, but rather bad in the sense of being “worthless.” Although human goodnesses are convenient and desirable as far as society is concerned, they will have no ultimate value as far as God and eternity are concerned. No one will be punished at the Bema. The “loss” referred to in 1 Corinthians 3:15, is a loss of awards. It is an award seat where distinctions will be given for one’s efficiency in “walking in the Spirit.” Spirituality and maturity are at the heart of the concerns of the Bema.



## Questions for Review and Discussion

1. List some of the leading misunderstandings regarding spirituality and maturity among Christians today.

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2. Who can practice spirituality? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What is central in understanding the kenosis? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What is the purpose of the Bema seat of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What is central in the practice of spirituality if one is to be successful in this practice? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. How far-reaching time-wise are the results of the Bema? Or, the significant results of the Bema will extend to what?

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*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

Galatians 5:22-23

7. This question is for your speculation and thought. What effect do you feel spirituality and its practice will have upon certain aberrant behavior such as an explosive personality disorder, child abuse, a poor self-concept, etc.?

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8. How does patience learned by discipline and rigid means of self-control differ from patience which comes through the practice of spirituality?

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Perhaps another emphasis upon the importance of spirituality and maturity is redundant at this point. Nevertheless, I want to make the point again. There is no aspect of the Christian life so central and yet so clouded as spirituality and spiritual maturity. It would be good to work and rework these areas until they are such a part of you that they become a lifestyle. Joy in the life, peace on a daily basis, and a life that speaks of Jesus will be to the results of practicing spirituality.





## Key Thoughts and Concepts

In looking to see if you are comprehensive in your understanding of spirituality, be sure the following things are included.

Whereas maturity is relative, spirituality is an absolute. One is either spiritual or carnal (controlled by the flesh). Practicing spirituality is “keeping in step with the Spirit.” It requires obedience and immediate confession of sin and one’s failure that results in sin. Confession does not mean saying “I’m sorry.” It means, rather, acknowledgment, and seeing sin as the Father sees it. Repentance is implicit in confession.

Central in the understanding of spirituality is the kenosis—the emptying of Christ. In the humiliation of Christ, He surrendered the independent exercise of His divine attributes to the Holy Spirit. His entire life was lived surrendered to the Holy Spirit, with Whom He was equal in the Godhead. And in living this way, He sets a perfect example of what spirituality is for us.

Closely related to the practice of spirituality, the Bema or judgment seat of Christ is considered. Here believers will present their works for which they might logically expect recognition. Many of our works, however, find their source not to be in the Holy Spirit and His control of our lives, but rather in our own strength and self-effort. Christ will separate that which is good from what is “worthless.” What is “good” will cause us to be distinct for all eternity.

Remember! No one is more spiritual than anyone else. We are at any time either spiritual or carnal— controlled by the Holy Spirit or controlling ourselves.

It is also important to reiterate some of the things spirituality is not. These include prayer, withdrawal, comparison and tabooism.

Practicing spirituality is central to successfully living the Christian life. There is nothing more important than spirituality and its practice.

*Notes*

# FLOURISHING IN THE SPIRIT

## Basic Christianity

- 2 Six Main Points of the Gospel
- 3 The Bridge
- 4 New Life I Have in Christ
- 5 Assurance of Salvation
- 6 Positional Truth
- 7 Spiritual Maturity
- 8 What it Means to Grow as a Christian
- 9 Practicing Spirituality
- 10 **Flourishing in the Spirit**
- 11 The Sources of Temptation
- 12 The Misuse of the Tongue
- 13 Review Questions

**Purpose:** The purpose of this reading is to help the disciple know better how to practice spirituality.



## Objectives

1. The disciple will understand what abundant life is.
2. The disciple will see more clearly the difference between spiritual maturity and walking in the Spirit.
3. The disciple will understand the results of walking in the Spirit.
4. The disciple will see the impact of walking in the Spirit on our lives psychologically.

## Scripture Memory

*In his days may the righteous flourish, and  
abundance of peace till the moon is no more.*  
Psalm 72:7



## Agenda

1. Mutual sharing, accountability, and prayer.
2. Discuss the reading
3. Discuss any new terms.
4. Share of Scripture memory.

## FLOURISHING (In The Spirit)

Psalm 72:7

*"In his days may the righteous flourish."*

Jim is a young, single youth minister. He is a graduate of a prestigious western university and became a Christian four years ago. His life is dedicated to self-discipline and rigorous efforts to achieve excellence in his walk with Christ.

The time and diligence Jim spends in Bible study and prayer far exceeds the devotional and Bible study habits of many much older and more mature men of God. Jim is sincere, dedicated, self-disciplined, and committed to the attainment of a life that is superior. Jim simply cannot—he must not fail in anything he does. He controls everything in his environment in order to ensure there will be no failure or imperfection.

Lately, Jim has been unable to sleep. He will lie awake and pray, questioning God about his life. Pleading for what is missing in his life characterizes his periods of nocturnal alertness. And a month ago, Jim began seeing a psychiatrist. What a contradiction this seems to be! We might think that Jim's efforts would produce a life superior to the average life characterized by mediocrity—that he would know and experience truly abundant life. But this has not been so, and Jim has finally decided to seek help from one who understands life even less clearly than he.

In many ways Beth's story is pretty much the same. She was the daughter of missionaries. She attended a Christian school to train for ministry and there met a young man also dedicated to God and ministry. Their lives were soon entwined in love, and after marriage, they began their ministry together. Before long God gave them a little son. But Beth more and more found the reality of her drab life little more than religious drudgery. And she ultimately abandoned her husband and son to find a better life. Her new life excludes her husband and son, and she has also ultimately excluded the Savior.

These stories can be told over and over again with only slight variations. Multitudes of people in the church are disillusioned and weighted down with efforts to live lives that produce little more than their experience prior to coming to Christ. And there can be little wonder when there is such inadequate teaching about spiritual life—life with the Holy Spirit in control.

Of course, no one in his right mind would undercut the need for self-discipline. The "fruit of the Spirit" includes self-discipline. But Jim saw self-control in the Christian life as something he could produce in himself—not something produced through divine means through the Holy Spirit's control. In fact, when presented with the idea that it was the Spirit that produced proper

self-control, he confessed that this was new to him. Nor did he understand how to pursue this. Indeed, though sincerely committed, Jim had fallen into the trap of the Galatians—"...*having begun by the Spirit*" he was now trying to be perfected through the flesh, Galatians 3:3. This is legalism in its most common and subtle form—living life through self-effort and with some kind of external dynamic. And sadly, many Christians live their lives like Jim, with no superior bases or motivators.

For Beth, she just could not find the superiority in the Christian life. It simply involved too many sacrifices—too many things she could never reach. She married a wealthy man who could give her the things she had always hoped would make her life different and continues her now futile quest for satisfaction.

In many ways, the writings of this section become central to the whole concept of quality life. This superior life must, of course, begin with new life in Jesus. Unless we experience new birth, our hearts will forever remain in darkness. And quality life is most possible only with processes that lead to maturity. But new life and maturing do not bring quality life in themselves. This life is most possible only with the processes that lead to spirituality. New life and maturity, by themselves, do not result in quality life. I can positionally be in Christ—justified—and experiencing exceptional appropriation of my growing knowledge to everyday situations of pressure and resulting stress, and still not know quality life. I may yet be struggling as did Paul when he cried "wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" This agonized cry of despair is one that will be experienced by anyone, believer or unbeliever alike, who seeks to pursue life in Christ through legalistic patterns. Only grace—inwardness—life controlled and motivated by the Holy Spirit will cause us to flourish, to experience life with genuine quality, to find relief from our "binding" **self-efforts** to walk with Christ.

### Concepts of Spirituality

There is much confusion surrounding how to live the Christian life. Few areas are as unclear and fraught with controversy as Pneumatology—the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. This confusion runs the gamut of error. Some deny His existence—His personality. Others fear excesses and ignore His work in their lives. Some people build their entire doctrinal systems around certain aspects of His work and ministry in their lives and that of the church. Perhaps this is one reason so very little is understood and taught about the Holy Spirit's place in daily living and quality life.

During recent years I have directed questions about spirituality to groups of evangelical believers from many orientations, including my own particular denomination. Almost without exception, I have found little agreement in the responses that have come from people. The responses suggest little un-

derstanding of what represents true spirituality.

Inasmuch as most of the work I do as a psychotherapist is with those who profess relationship with God, I will often ask clients, "How does your practice of spirituality help you with this particular problem in your life?" Responses are often confused and vague. Sometimes they will be in the form of a question asking me what I mean. (I do believe the most effective tool in the hands of a Christian psychotherapist is in helping one learn to practice spirituality.)

Perhaps this lack of understanding explains why the Christian life is often no more effective than life apart from Christ. And because the expectations were higher to begin with, there is not only ineffectiveness, but disillusionment.

### **Spirituality and Maturity; How They Differ**

Because of widespread confusion in understanding spirituality, certain comparisons need to be made. Understanding of this subject should be as clear as possible. And this understanding of differences can be one of the chief allies in thinking clearly about the issues that follow.

Maturity, you will remember, was discussed in the previous section. Let me again state that growth is a process that is experienced by Christians and non-Christians alike. We usually refer to emotional maturity when we talk of maturity in general. To the basic ever-present dimensions of maturity all humans experience, we add spiritual maturity. This includes unique aspects of maturation that are experienced by believers—those whose lives are positionally related to Jesus Christ. Both Christians and non-Christians can mature emotionally.

Such is not the case with spirituality. As used in this text, spirituality is experienced—practiced only by those who have life in Christ. Spirituality is the possibility in life of those indwelt by the Spirit of God...those who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the practice of spirituality brings quality life now. Without life in the Spirit, our lives bear striking resemblance to life outside of Christ, except for the possession of eternal life.

Again, a comparison can be made between the relative nature of the maturation process, as opposed to the absolute nature of spirituality. By this, I mean simply that maturing is always a matter of being more or less mature. On the other hand, spirituality is all or nothing. I am either totally spiritual, or not spiritual at all. An additional elaboration might proceed in this way. In terms of my growth processes, I am somewhere along a line representing a constant movement from immaturity to maturity. I may be in spiritual infancy, childhood, young adulthood, or a spiritual senior citizen. However, in this process of growth, at a given moment, I am either totally carnal or totally spiritual. I am simply one or the other, not a little bit of each.

Yet another comparison can relate to health or non-wellness. Draw a parallel from life and physical maturation. At any point in my growth processes, I can be healthy or sick. And at irregular intervals, I move from one condition to the other. Or perhaps it is usually true of some that health persists, while with others they are characteristically ill and seldom enjoy the blessings of good health.

Jerry is an example of one who never quite seemed to be healthy spiritually. He had lived a rather meaningless life prior to his conversion. But the reality of eternal life gave him a future he had never dreamed possible. As time passed, he wondered about that life—he longed for that life! But it never seemed to be within his grasp. Actually the quality of his life changed little from how it was before he found Christ. But he did not belong to a church where the Scriptures were expounded with clarity and authority. Grace and its practical applications to everyday life were never mentioned. Jerry never has learned important Scriptural truth relating to pressure and stress, and he lives much of his life "under the pile". He tenaciously clings to his awareness of eternal life, but his life is characterized by immaturity and lack of quality.

As I remember Gwen, her life was very different from Jerry's. She illustrates one whose life is characteristically healthy. Her church provides systematic Bible studies for those who attend, and after she came to Christ she grew very quickly in her ability to handle the Scriptures. There was great awareness of the importance of a proper relationship with the Word of God and the necessity for obedience to the truths found therein. In such an atmosphere, one could grow rapidly, and this was true of Gwen. And there was another dimension that must be added. In a setting where the Scripture is honored, there is understanding of spiritual life. Gwen not only experienced rapid growth, but also experienced health and quality life as she learned to efficiently practice spirituality. This does not mean that her life ever reached perfection. She does fail the Lord from time to time. But she has learned to walk with efficiency! And this is characteristic of growth and health. These are typical of the truths we wish to illustrate in this session.

### **Non-Biblical Approaches to Spirituality**

In spite of much writing on subjects related to spirituality, I have observed that there are rather common misconceptions when thinking of "what spirituality is." It would therefore seem helpful to approach this subject from both the position of what it is not, as well as what it is. Some concepts are so prevalent in the thinking of Christians that they seem to be transmitted through some sort of a "spiritual osmosis." Perhaps it will help in clarifying our thinking if in our descriptions of spirituality and what it is, we can first eliminate or brush aside some of these long-festered thorns of misunderstanding.

### Spirituality by Tabooism

One of the most common ways to view spirituality relates to tabooism. I am spiritual because of what I don't do. I become spiritual when I conform to a particular set of standards that fit the specific culture or subculture in which I live.

I well remember my experience as a young pastor in North Carolina—a Westerner, a swimmer—and the judgment leveled at me when I would go to the lake and swim. I never thought about the fact that I was "mixed-bathing," whatever that was! The local denominational ministerial association publicly labeled me as unspiritual. This was especially interesting to me inasmuch as my "chief investigator," another local pastor, would do his investigations of me from the shoreline while smoking a big black cigar. And at that point in time, I viewed spirituality to include refraining from the use of such. And so the church here and there has from time on end had its particular set of standards that must be adhered to tenaciously if one is to be spiritual, and geographic and cultural differences have played a large part in the particular makeup of that list.

So lists of taboos vary. Some include certain things and exclude others. Some are lengthy and laborious to conform to. None give any satisfaction as to what true spirituality really is. Nevertheless, multitudes of Christians see spirituality as just this—refraining from various behaviors dictated by others as wrong and sinful behavior. One can, however, exclude all kinds of behavior from his life and yet not be spiritual even one little bit. Those who are physically dead have **every** kind of behavior missing from their lives. Cemeteries are filled with people who do none of the things on these particular lists. But none qualify as spiritual because of their total inactivity.

On the other hand, we are not saying that various excluded things ought necessarily to be included in the behavior of Christians. I knew a man who wouldn't eat peanut butter and jelly on bread because he felt there was a prohibition in Scripture against "mixing seed." Too much of this delight would certainly contribute to weight gain which may be bad for one's health. Nicotine and cholesterol are related to heart disease, and alcohol is the most destructive of all drugs abused today. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit Who lives within us, and we are not to defile them. But to be nonindulgent, a non-smoker, and an abstainer really has little to do with whether or not I am spiritual. I am simply not spiritual if I practice tabooism.

### Spirituality by Comparison

Let's consider another commonly practiced procedure involved by many in determining spirituality. This practice involves the flawed procedure of putting the spiritual binoculars on another Christian. I study him carefully. My



personal scrutiny enables me to find defects or strengths in this person. I then make a very important and personally destructive judgment. I am more or less spiritual than this person. I have accomplished spirituality by "comparison".

Jerry has done this a good deal of his Christian life. And the practice has led him to despair. It seemed to him that so many others have been much more successful than he. He has a particular problem in his life that seems to drag him down continually. Others do not get as hostile as he, and try as he may, he is unable to control the aggressive outbursts that come with regularity. Looking around, he observes others who do not have this problem and he ultimately feels "less spiritual".

This is a common flaw in our thinking about spirituality. At some time in our lives we all put ourselves alongside of others and do some comparing. This is not the proper way to evaluate spirituality. The Apostle Paul has something to say about this:

*"We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise."* 2 Corinthians 10:12 NIV.

Does it sound familiar? Spirituality by comparison is deeply implanted into the thinking of all of us. We make statements like "He is a spiritual giant." This implies spirituality by comparison and the existence of spiritual pygmies. Or who has not said "he is really a spiritual person," again implying that there are those who are less spiritual? Yet these are only measures we make of each other and really have no actual or true bearing upon the subject of spirituality. Truly, spirituality by comparison is an erroneous approach to the issues involved in life in the Spirit. The practice of comparing needs to be banished to the rubbish heap of antiquated, non-Biblical concepts involved in the understanding of spirituality.

### **Spirituality by Withdrawal from the World**

Nor is spirituality withdrawal from the real world which we see and in which we live. There are those who champion this position, feeling that the further we are removed from the mainstream of the movement of mankind, the more we move toward spirituality.

This is just another plank in the platform of teaching that presents spirituality as relative and related to certain specified neurotic forms of behavior. Withdrawal from the real world has nothing to do with spirituality, or unspiritual behavior. Movement among men in a lost world, on the other hand, was practiced by the Lord Jesus Himself. This resulted in His condemnation, of course. For this He was labeled a wine-bibber and a friend of publicans. And for those of us who follow Him, He has left us an example with regard to mingling with the world. We need to learn how to be "in the world," but not "of the world." We must move among publicans and sinners. We must learn to eat

*"Commitment involves ... the reorganization of the core of one's life."*

with sinners, accept them, allow ourselves to be touched by those whose lives are deeply stained and even wrecked by sin. A "spirituality" that turns us from functioning in the world, is really no spirituality at all. "Lifestyle" evangelism requires that we move in the world with those who are less fortunate than we who know God. We do not become spiritual when we withdraw and have little or nothing to do with the world. Should we love it? Of course not. John makes this clear in 1 John 2:15. But neither can I withdraw and be right.

### **Spirituality by Prayer**

And finally, I will mention the negative which of all things discussed is most difficult. So deeply is this entrenched in our thinking about spirituality that rooting it out and discarding it is certain to be an impossibility.

History is replete with men and women who have been given to prayer and who have left examples of intercession and communion that have challenged us all. James, known as "old camel knees" from the days of early Christianity has been upheld as an example of one who had a superior prayer life. But James was never more spiritual because he prayed. "Praying" Hyde is a more contemporary example, but neither was he spiritual because of his prayer life. David Brainard spent hours before the altar of God as he poured out his life for the people of his parish. But alas, this didn't make him more spiritual. And then there was George, my roommate in seminary whom I would find asleep on his knees in the corner when I would wake up in the morning. George wanted "more of God" (as if God could be obtained in pieces through the agony of long prayers). He was certainly sincere. I don't know anyone I have ever known who was so in earnest as George. He longed for more of what he had—to be "more spiritual". And he persisted until finally his seeking led him into cultish spiritist beliefs that are cross-current to Christianity itself. James, Praying Hyde, David Brainard and George, though their lives seemed to have been given to prayer, were not spiritual because of this. If these men were spiritual, it was because they knew life, and experienced life in the Spirit. The practice of Biblical spirituality can be aided by prayer, but praying does not make one spiritual.

### **What Is Biblical Spirituality?**

Having spent time focusing on incorrect notions related to spirituality, we'll now consider some positive statements that will enable our understanding to be more clear.

A good way to begin is to state that just as Christianity is relationship with Jesus Christ, so spirituality is relationship with the Holy Spirit. There is no special blessing necessary, no unique baptism restricted to a privileged few, but simply relationship with the Holy Spirit. And it shouldn't be surprising to understand that this is the purpose for our being Christians—to be controlled by

the Holy Spirit. For this I have been left in this world.

Three New Testament passages best illustrate spirituality from a Biblical standpoint. The first of these is Ephesians 5:18, which says, *"be filled with the Spirit."* This is a command that indicates the need for continual filling. The filling of the Spirit is not a once-for-all experience that we never need give attention to again. The action of the verb translated "filled" suggests that I need to be continually filled...I need to practice spirituality. For this reason I use the term "practice spirituality", which we need to understand and incorporate into our style of Christian living in this world. The same implications or suggestions can be derived from the following verses in which "spirituality" is further described. The second verse is found in Romans 8:14: *"For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God."* Obviously one who is *"filled with the Spirit"* will also be led by the Spirit. This is true of all who practice spirituality. A third passage is found in Galatians 5:16: *"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh."* Each of these Biblical references is related to the practice of spirituality and say basically the same thing.

Spirituality, in the teaching of these three verses, speaks of my life being so adjusted to the inner presence of the Holy Spirit, and His control, that His filling, leading, and energizing me becomes a natural condition of my life. It is learning to live in ways that will enable His control to be constant.

The Holy Spirit indwells every believer: Romans 8:9, *"...if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."* John 14:16, *"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever."* And the explicit purpose of this indwelling is to control us. This is why I was brought to life—why He works in me and controls me. I am an epistle in the world "known and read of all men." It is important that as the Holy Spirit is in me, I learn to live my life in a way that enhances His control of me so I can fulfill my purpose in the world.

If I correctly refer to one as being "spiritual," therefore, I am describing one who has relationship with the Holy Spirit as God has meant that relationship to be. This means that one is meeting the criteria for the Holy Spirit's control of his life. And because these criteria are met, he is filled with the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, and led of the Spirit. This person has learned to live in concert with the desires of the Holy Spirit for the management of his life.

### **The Biblical Basis for Spirituality--the Kenosis**

The truths that form the basis for an understanding of spirituality are found in the central doctrine of the kenosis. This teaching is expounded upon in Philippians 2:5-8:

*"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself taking the form of a bond-servant, and being*

*made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."*

This passage is commonly made practical through emphasizing the need to control our thinking, without the central and most important aspects of this truth being made practical in our lives. We are to imitate the example of Jesus in the kenosis. But before we can do this, we must understand our Lord's example as set forth in this particular Scripture.

As we seek to do this, consider Jesus before His Incarnation! Just Who was this unusual Person who came from Nazareth proclaiming the Gospel, and in three short years left His mark upon the world for the rest of time? He was God the Son—equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit! This One possessed all of the attributes of deity and exercised them independently from all eternity.

Indeed, the writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus was the active agent in the creation of the universe, Hebrews 1:2. John tells us in his Gospel that *"Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made,"* John 1:3. Yet this One, so full of glory, so radiant, possessing attributes only possessed by deity and exercised independently from other members of the Godhead, did not consider such glory and majesty something He had to retain. We behold in wonder the Incarnation—He was God Himself conceived by the Holy Spirit, taking the form of human beings. We marvel that One Who was yet omnipresent could be compressed into the body of a tiny babe—filling all space, yet confined in a body of a mortal man of flesh, bones and blood.

But the greatest marvel was really not this. We look more carefully at the Incarnation and the teaching of Philippians 2 and we begin to enter an understanding of a phenomenon that defies our logic. Jesus was willing to become a servant—a servant of course to men, but a servant also to another Member of the Godhead. He surrendered Himself to the absolute control of the Holy Spirit. He would not exercise His divine attributes apart from the Holy Spirit's control. As He walked among and mingled with the wrecks of mankind, He felt their frustrations, anguish, and broken-heartedness. And although He ministered to them, He never once called upon His ability as God to turn their suffering into joy apart from His submission to the Holy Spirit. Hear Him as He speaks in Luke 11:20, *"But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."* In this instance the "finger of God" is a type of the Holy Spirit. Give ear to Him as He says in John 5:19, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself..."* And again in John 5:30, *"I can do nothing on My own initiative."* These are words that speak of Christ's complete submission to the Holy Spirit during His earthly sojourn. And it is in this way we who are mortal men need to imitate Him. Indeed, it is in this manner alone we can imitate Him.

We therefore see a new way to live: to have the mind of Christ in surrendering to the control of One Who longs to be in our lives with significance. Having the mind of Christ is to learn to live without exercising my own inde-

pendence—my own initiative. I let the mind of Christ be mine when I live my life in concert with His presence and control. Learning how to do this is learning to practice spirituality...to experience "life in the Spirit"...to flourish as a Christian.

This way of life is contrary to popular psychological thinking in many ways, but not all ways. Secular psychology and psychiatry tells us we need to be independent...to function apart from the whims and expectations of others. "Question authority" was a popular phrase found on bumper stickers. This speaks of independence. But quality life as a Christian does not come from "bumper sticker" theology. Nor does it come from a completely dependent position that openly welcomes neurosis and immaturity.

Quality life rises from the matrix of known union with the Holy Spirit and a voluntary lifestyle that permits Him, through an act of my will, to control me and my choices every moment of every day. And this way of life permits emotional health at its highest level in each one who practices spirituality.

### **Spirituality and Emotional Health**

Books on general psychological subjects say nothing about the need to integrate practical concepts of the "kenosis" into my life if I am to experience quality life. Yet there are abundant descriptions of the "good life." These books contain much information on how one must live in order to experience adequate mental health.

This author contends that of all systems available to mankind today, the practice of spirituality as a lifestyle is the most helpful of those related to mental health. I will elaborate on this in the following discussion.

It seems "other-directed" kinds of behavior are truly negative in relation to positive emotional health. Yet there is an almost universal movement in Christian circles to live up to the expectations of others. And many of these expectations are based upon sick motivations to manipulate others, or to conform to extra-Biblical standards of behavior preempted by teachings that come from "who knows where?" The practice of spirituality enables one to know inner-directed life as the Holy Spirit and my human spirit work in concert, and my direction and decision-making come from within.

There is also much written in secular writings on "doing as I feel." A few years ago, I sat at a breakfast table with a group of psychologists on the final day of a seminar we were attending in Berkeley, California. One person at the table needed to eat his breakfast hurriedly so he could catch a flight home. But his breakfast was late in coming. He was somewhat openly agitated and complained about the service. Then, looking toward the kitchen, he somehow saw his breakfast waiting to be picked up. He left the table to retrieve his

belated meal, and coming back to the table began to hurriedly devour it. The little waitress, probably no older than 18, and the chef saw what had transpired. The girl came back to the table and began to speak saying, "Sir, the chef..." With a burst of anger, the psychologist lashed out at her and said, "Tell the chef to go to hell!" The young girl recoiled and with haste left the table, at which point the psychologist glowed with pleasure and said, "I could not have done that a year ago." This man was walking down the road that says "do and say what you please" believing it would lead to health. I could not help but feel some of the anguish felt by the young lady who became the brunt of the unleashed hostility of this man who was a representative of my "helping" profession. I experienced some personal shame that day!

This man was a victim of thinking that says "health is doing as you please." Yet this statement is not entirely wrong. There is health in being real in expressing what I feel. The problem is simply that if one does not know Jesus Christ, if one is not indwelt and controlled by the Holy Spirit, this is a very hurtful and unhealthy practice. On the other hand, when the Spirit of God in my life is controlling me, congruence is a means to move me toward health. Doing and saying what I feel is safe when I practice spirituality. To state otherwise is to deny the ability of redemptive grace to have feelings under its transforming and cleansing efficacy. The Holy Spirit is able to exercise control over my inner life and help me desire to do and feel what is consistent with the will of the Father, and I can be real. The Holy Spirit exercises control over my attitudes, words and desires—and I can be **me**! And as I learn to live this way, I develop and mature most efficiently and in the direction of divine purposes for my life. I can achieve optimum mental health.

A third area involving spirituality and mental health is that which relates to interpersonal relationships. There will be an enlargement of this subject later in this session. Suffice it to say now that most problems in mental health are somehow related to the quality of the interpersonal relationships in my specific social milieu. When I imitate the example of Jesus in the kenosis—the emptying of Himself of His independent use of His attributes—when I allow the Holy Spirit to control my life and practice life with Him in control, the result will be such that my interpersonal relationships will be enhanced and my mental health will experience growth in positive directions. Therefore, I cannot find a lifestyle more compatible with mental health than that experienced in the practice of spirituality—learning to live my life controlled by the Holy Spirit.

In summary, we have seen that spirituality is absolutely necessary for abundant life as a believer. It is an aspect of our spiritual experience quite different from maturity, although maturity aids in the practice of spirituality. It is simply living my life in a way that facilitates the control of the Holy Spirit Who lives within me, and it is the result of that control. It is firmly based in the humbling of Christ when He came to earth—His complete surrender to the Holy Spirit and His control. And there is in spirituality a context for the development of superior mental health and life.



## How to Practice Spirituality

Perhaps the most basic thing in the practice of spirituality is learning how to choose to not sin. If I could learn this, practicing spirituality would be done with ease. Sin is, of course, the major problem and chief hindrance in learning to live life controlled by the Spirit of God. Though redeemed by the blood of Christ through grace, I yet have a bent to sin. I can choose to disobey, to transgress the commandments of my Father. And I do...and choices hinder my practice of walking in the Spirit. Indeed, sinning leaves me carnal. I take control of my life. I am now in charge and in control and find myself in the same place I was in prior to coming to Christ (as far as living my life is concerned). I am running my own life! And this is antithetical to spirituality.

The effects of choosing to not sin are always positive! Not only do I grow stronger in my walk. I help accelerate my growth to maturity because I develop a lifestyle that is consistent with the Father's will. And I demonstrate my commitment to God's will and purposes for my life. I exercise faith and confidence in His directives through my obedience. Above all else, I do not break the Holy Spirit's control of my life. He continues to control me. Commitment to obedience is not only a demonstration of love for God, John 14:21, but it is also a lifestyle that assures efficient practice of spirituality. If one is going to be compulsive about any area of life, obedience to God is the area that can best be involved in compulsive behavior. I need to see its importance, learn ways to be more consistently obedient, and find joy in always doing God's will.

Daniel is an example of dedicated obedience. He perhaps appears to be somewhat compulsive about many things in his life, and did his best to always please Jehovah of Israel. And at any possible inference that might be construed as disobedience, he absolutely turned from it! It seems that Daniel's dedication to be always obedient to the Father might be something worth imitating if we are truly interested in practicing spirituality. When I am obedient, His control is natural. I choose obedience, and He exercises unbroken control. And my life moves in the direction of His will for me.

As I have stated, sin interferes with the Holy Spirit's control of my life. It is therefore obvious that I must learn to recognize sin—know what it is. I need to recognize behaviors that are apart from the will of God, to know what is right and wrong. This, of course, makes my ability to make right choices more efficient. Knowing the Scripture is the primary endeavor we can be committed to that gives us knowledge of what sin is. This understanding is taught in the Bible, both by direct statement and through principle. But it seems that one way of looking at sins that becomes helpful in the practice of spirituality is to see them as violations of direct commands in Scripture, and as behavior that contradicts the Holy Spirit's internal control—His leadership of my life. Two passages of Scripture deal with these two ways of sinning.

I am not to grieve the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 4:30, *"And do not grieve*

*the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."*

This passage is couched in the midst of several statements that are explicit and ring with clarity. These include "laying aside the old self," "being renewed in the spirit of your mind," "putting on the new self," "laying aside falsehood, speaking truth," "being angry and not sinning." Also included are "not giving the devil an opportunity," "no longer stealing," "letting no unwholesome word proceed from my mouth," and other sins and misuses of the tongue, with malice. And then there is the commandment to be kind to each other, tenderhearted and forgiving.

These and other commandments are clearly given to us who are believers under grace. We are not without commandments, and the Holy Spirit is dependent upon our careful adherence to the commands of the Scripture if He is to control us. When we disobey or ignore what He has said in the Scriptures, He is grieved. What a descriptive word! One cannot grieve someone who does not love him. I am loved by the Spirit of God Who indwells me and seeks to control me. When I disobey a known command, He is grieved. And His control is broken, of course. I can develop a consciousness of the Personality and an awareness of Who is in me to control me, and seek not to grieve the Holy Spirit. And this, of course, puts me in a place of learning to love Him more deeply as discussed in the previous section involved with maturity.

The second basic way I sin is to quench the Spirit, 1 Thessalonians 5:19. "*Do not quench the Spirit.*" Quenching the Spirit seems to be a way of sinning, broadly defined, which simply involves not following the inner leadership provided by the Holy Spirit. Leadership, in this sense, is that which is experienced on a day-by-day basis in situations which involve my interaction with my environment. For instance, I may not feel right about a certain situation. Can I not recognize this feeling as being from God the Holy Spirit, working through my cognitive abilities? There may be no specific passage of Scripture involved in what I am experiencing—I just do not feel right about it.

Years ago, I worked for Youth for Christ in a small North Carolina town. My coworker was a former master sergeant who still perceived himself in the role of commander. He threw his weight around regularly. He and I were on the platform during the preaching one Saturday evening, when a young sailor in uniform came into the service. During the invitation, my former sergeant friend began to push me to speak to this young sailor about his relationship with God. I resisted this for a while—I didn't feel led to do that at all. But finally, there was so much pressure put on me by my friend, that I finally left my seat and proceeded to go down into the congregation where I could talk with the sailor. I had only spoken a few words when this young man turned around and hurriedly left. He was obviously embarrassed and felt "put on the spot." And I was left standing with the proverbial "egg on my face." I was embarrassed, too. I should have trusted my feelings...the Holy Spirit telling me I should not do what I had done.



Again, think of Philip who was traveling on the road to Gaza when a court official of Candace, queen of Ethiopia, came by. He was reading the book of Isaiah while traveling. Listen to the account (Acts 8:29-31:) The Spirit told Philip, *"Go up and join this chariot."* Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. He asked, *"Do you understand what you are reading?"* and he said, *"Well how could I unless someone guides me?"* So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

This account certainly speaks of the inner direction of Philip by the Holy Spirit, apart from specific Scripture. This was inner movement by the Holy Spirit that could have been quenched by Philip, had he not been willing to follow what he felt within himself. The two illustrations are only two examples of a multitude of ways we can quench the Spirit. This is sin that involves not following the inner direction that the Holy Spirit provides as He controls us. Such leadership involves our being in subjection to Him. Our following perfectly is perhaps more difficult because most of us don't understand our feelings very well. This is, nevertheless, an area in which we sin and we need to be aware of it so that we will choose to be obedient!

The area of "quenching the Spirit" is the area in which sins of omission are perhaps most frequently committed. James 4:17 says: *"To one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin."*

This does not involve violating a commandment. Rather, it is choosing not to do something I feel is right for me. It seems, therefore, that feelings are a factor involved in sinning or not sinning, and that as I come to understand my inner life more clearly, and as I integrate Scripture into my life, I can become more efficient in recognizing sin and choosing to follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit on a moment-by-moment basis.

Of course, the area of feelings is one that many have great difficulty with. As a young pastor, I learned that I shouldn't "fly by the seat of my pants", or trust my feelings. That advice is both good and bad. Certainly my salvation is based on more than "shifting feelings," more than upon how I happen to feel on a particular day. But there is an inner awareness that comes from the Holy Spirit's control that is followed in practice by most Christians. We tend to feel that what we feel about something is important. I will say, "I just don't feel good about that," "I really want to do this," or "this sort of thing is not consistent with my ultimate goals for life." What more is this than following the direction of the Holy Spirit in my life, if I am actively concerned about and practicing spirituality?

Therefore, in summary, it's important that I learn not to sin...to choose not to follow the dictates of my flesh or the temptations motivated by intelligence not related to the Father. Ways to personally become more efficient in choosing obedience when tempted will be discussed in another part of this reading. It is enough to say that God doesn't ask us to be obedient and leave us

short on resources that will enable us to obey Him.

But obedience may yet be a problem. I find it difficult to choose to be obedient if a certain behavior has an abundance of positive reinforcement associated with it, or if its long-ranged value is difficult for me to see at the moment. God has given us resources, however, and in the next part of this session some of these will be elaborated.

Learning how to be obedient—to say **no** when situations that may involve sin occur—is something that is ultimately important in the practice of spirituality. The Father has provided resources for me whereby I can resist temptation from both my "flesh" and the intelligentsia of the present world system.

When I sin, I take control of my life and become a "man of the flesh", or carnal! At this point, I am no longer spiritual. "Practicing" spirituality involves learning to say **no** to sin (which I'll not do with absolute perfection). It also involves confessing "on the run" confessing when I realize I have sinned. Because of the tendencies yet in me—even though I've been regenerated—I can find myself in sin almost without thinking. But there are Biblical admonitions that can assist me in making choices and recognizing more efficiently certain entrapments or times of weakness when I may be more susceptible to such temptations.

The first helpful principle is suggested in Ephesians 4:27:

*"And do not give the devil an opportunity."*

The teaching of this passage is explicit and crucial for the practice of spirituality. There are ways we can arrange our lives that make obedience easier for us. Obviously all sin is not the result of Satan's direct efforts to entrap us. Temptation will sometimes result from a casual involvement with my environment. I will be in a particular place or involved in a particular way with something that will give the devil an opportunity to bring temptation into my life and lead me into sin.

Mary has a drinking problem. She has even considered committing herself to a hospital treatment program for alcoholism. She seems to do fine when she is not with those who drink. Recently she came to know the Lord personally. Her new life has given her hope for ultimately overcoming this problem. But she senses her fragile hold on her ability to reject this deceitful panacea. Mary would be a fool to put herself back into a position where her craving for alcohol might become so strong that she would again be overwhelmed by its power. And she would lose the freedom she has experienced in Christ. To return to such a place would be "giving place to the devil!" This illustration could vary and include all kinds of situations involving temptation. It is sufficient to say that we are told to be ever so careful and "give no opportunity" to our enemy. This will take commitment on my part.

Commitment to the whole idea of obedience is essential for me to effectively choose to not sin. If spirituality is not a priority in my life--my supreme and ultimate goal—I'm not going to successfully live with the Holy Spirit controlling my life. There is no "laizze-faire" way to live with Him in control. This brings quality life. His yoke is easy—His burden light. But there is no magical way—no special baptism or ecstatic experience—that will keep me from carnality. If I'm not committed to the practice of obedience, I'm going to be carnal. There is no need to read any further. I may as well accept the reality that my life is going to continue as is.

### **The Whole Armor of God**

When I consider the sources of temptation, I find that most generally, Satan and his agents are considered the culprits. I certainly will not deny that Satan can be actively involved in situations involving my temptations—that he loves to kick me when I'm down! As discussed in a previous section in this text, he will take advantage of my weak moments and utilize situations in my environment to cause me to consider—even to want—to sin. And for such situations involving temptation from an intelligent source, I must put on the whole armor of God, Ephesians 6:13-18:

*"Therefore take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. With all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints."*

Paul's direction concerning these provisions of armor need to be considered carefully. The Father has given us instructions concerning how we can successfully resist Satan's attempts to lead us into sin. I want to elaborate on these provisions and say that utilizing them is one of the chief ways we learn to choose not to sin.

Let us observe that the apostle refers to these items as the "full armor of God." These are provisions divinely determined and are just what we need to resist the devil's schemes. They constitute the "full armor of God." The implication is that this full armor is enough. It is complete and sufficient. When I utilize these pieces of armor, I can resist Satan's temptation. With such a promise as this, we might expect people everywhere to be excited and clamoring to put into use this protective armor. Such is probably not the case, however. We are quick to blame the devil when we sin, but slow to capture for our own use

those things divinely provided in order to resist him.

So let's look closely at the pieces of equipment that constitute our armor—our first line of defense. The first piece of armor is **truth**. The apostle says, "Stand firm then, having girded your loins with truth" (with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, NIV)" In the imagery of this writer, truth is basic in the whole schema of defense. And this seems to be consistent with the entire body of Scripture. The Roman warrior of Paul's day had a basic sash or strap (belt) to which all of his armor was attached. One way to relieve the goliath of his armor and leave him totally vulnerable was to cut the sash. This would cause the rest of the armor to be useless and the fighter would be totally exposed—without armor and ability to defend himself. The apostle is apparently thinking of this when he mentions truth. How is this practical? Truth is the characteristic that is most descriptive of the Father. We are most God-like when we practice truth. And without truth, our entire system of defense crumbles and falls into a heap. How can I most strongly resist the wiles of the evil one? I can by being characterized by truth and not being entrapped in untruths—lies, or even little "white lies." Otherwise all other pieces of my armor will be nullified. I will fall ready victim to Satan's assaults.

The "breastplate of righteousness" is also a crucial item in my ability to ward off temptation. I am instructed to "put on the breastplate of righteousness". This is something I must do. How do I put this on? What is this piece of armor? Perhaps the best understanding is found in the reality of what a breastplate covers and what righteousness is. If I have a covering over my breast, my heart is covered. It seems that this piece of warrior's equipment involves my learning how to protect or guard my heart.

We have already discussed in a previous section how we are to give no opportunity to Satan to tempt us—to keep ourselves from any environmental situation that might be conducive to temptation. Somewhat the same idea is involved in putting on the "breastplate of righteousness." It is important that I guard my heart. The great concern for my heart is important. This speaks of that which is central and preeminent in my life. Putting on the "breastplate of righteousness"—guarding my heart—keeps the yearnings of the seat of my emotions consistent with my calling and enables me to practice spirituality more efficiently.

It would be good at this point to reemphasize the importance of having one's goals clearly in mind. There is much in this world that glitters and is attractive. It is easy to be led astray. The Christian who has not carefully thought through his goals, and what is really important to him, will have more difficulty with this than one who is firmly committed to goals that glorify Christ.

The third piece of armor discussed is that which has to do with our feet. *"And having shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace."* This

seems to relate to letting everyone, wherever I am, know exactly where I stand. This doesn't mean indiscriminate witnessing, but rather that I am not a muffled witness. When it is appropriate and natural for me to speak, I will speak. Silence never becomes a way of life for me, ultimately causing me to be more susceptible to temptation. There is just something about maintaining silence when I could speak that causes me to cease to be the "salt" of the earth. It is important that I be ready always to give an answer to any man who asks me a reason for the hope that is in me. This is having shod our feet with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace" and it will help keep us from the "evil one."

The "shield of faith" is an additional significant piece of armor. This doesn't mean faith on its own, or faith standing alone. Faith must be grounded in the proper person to produce anything significant. Nor does it seem that a significant amount of faith is crucial. It is not "how much faith I have" but who is the object of my faith. That is crucial! In whom do I believe? What do I believe? The life that I now have in Jesus is life that I entered by grace through faith. In the same way, I must live my new life through the constant exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus and His Word. And as I practice this, the shield of faith will extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. Faith enters when I confess sin. Faith is a factor when I choose to be obedient. Faith enters my prayer life, if it is to be successful. Faith enables me to enter into rest. Therefore, the shield of faith becomes a significant way to defend against temptation involving Satan. It literally is the means by which I live my life, and without which I surely will fail.

The "helmet of salvation" is the fifth piece of armor. If I am to be successful in my resistance of the devil, my thinking needs to be right. The helmet of salvation guards my thinking. I am to view everything that transpires in my environment through the grid of my personal experience of salvation. For example, I was tempted to withhold the extra change given me by my grocer last Saturday night. After all, he would never know it, and probably—indeed assuredly—I've been overcharged or shortchanged many times. This will only help make up for some of those times. That approach, of course, is rationalization. Keeping the change when I know it's too much is nothing but sin. I am rationalizing a wrong-doing. But rather than such rationalization, I "put on the helmet of salvation." I see my proposed decision to keep the money within the context of my experience with the Father. I am a Christian, and this is wrong. It is inconsistent with my experience with God. I have been renewed by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, remembering who I am is a way of defending against Satan. The breastplate of righteousness guards my heart, and the helmet of salvation guards my thinking.

And finally, there is the "sword of the Spirit", which is the Word of God. Perhaps this is the least ambiguous of all pieces of armor. What I do with the Scripture in my personal life will greatly influence my ability to resist temptations. A clear example of this is given us by the Lord Himself when He was tempted. Because He had no sin in Him, His temptation could only be from

Satan himself. It is interesting to see that in response to each temptation, the Lord Jesus quoted Scripture and threw it into the face of the tempter. Although He was God the Son, He relied upon the sword of the Spirit—the Old Testament Scriptures—to defeat or successfully resist the enemy. There was no logic of His own, although He could have thought circles around Satan if He had wished to—He could have argued him into the ground. The Word of God is a sharp two-edged sword that vanquishes the enemy.

These are specific helps in our battle with the wicked one. When I am tempted by him, I will find these means of resisting within my grasp. I am to wear them as armor. It's not that I evaluate the source of temptation and decide to put on a particular piece of armor when I conclude that my temptation is from the devil. Rather, I put them on and wear them customarily in my walk as I seek to practice spirituality. They become a part of me and my ultimate lifestyle as a Christian. And I am guarded continuously and enabled to choose obedience as the significant mode of my functioning in the world.

A major source of temptation comes from within me. It is crucial to my victory that I never forget that I am a sinner, and that I can be tempted without any outside influence either from another person or from Satan himself. James 1:13-16 says:

*"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren"*

This passage of Scripture makes it clear that I don't need any external influence to sin. I am a sinner. I confess this when I accept the work of the cross in my behalf. The bent to sin remains in me as long as I continue in this life. This reality looms as perhaps the most major influence in my ability to sin in any situation.

Several years ago I heard a man tell this story about a pastor friend of his. He said this pastor announced a Sunday evening sermon topic that brought havoc and fear not only throughout the church, but also the neighborhood where the church was located. The topic announced was the following: "The Man in This Church That Has Caused Me the Most Trouble." On the Sunday night the sermon was to be delivered, people came with "sheepish" looks on their faces. A couple of the deacons brought their attorneys. And several stayed away. They simply couldn't face being exposed. But when the pastor announced his text from Romans 7:24, it was apparent that all had misjudged this pastor. The text read, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" If I am honest, I must confess that I am my own worst enemy, and in reality I don't need the devil to tempt me to sin. Just leave me alone, and I'll get into all kinds of difficulty on my own. And if this is not



something you are aware of, you are very vulnerable.

With this reality in mind, let me introduce the second important principle related to choosing obedience. This principle has to do with overcoming the sin bent that is within me. Romans 6 gives us some of the principles we need in overcoming the deceitfulness of our hearts. Verses 5-6, 11-13 seem to be central in the teaching of this chapter:

*“For if we have been become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;” 11) “Even so consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”*

Let us first observe that according to verses 5 and 6, I have died to sin and I need to accept this as a reality. How then can I make a reasonable choice to sin? I am dead to sin, and the most reasonable thing for me to do is to choose to not sin. Yet sin resides within me. What can I do? Looking on to verse 11, I understand that I am to consider myself dead to sin, this sin, any sin! I must realize it to be so. And verse 13 tells me that I must offer the parts of my body to God—I must yield myself to God. These are the basic principles involved in being able to resist sin.

With the "full armor of God" we can make commitments to obedience that will be characterized as successful. This does not mean that I will never sin. But it does mean that I can successfully practice spirituality.

Two realities are involved in what I have been saying in these pages. The first, let me repeat, is the reality that I **can** have victory—I can choose to be obedient. The second seems paradoxical, but it isn't. It is simply a fact also. Sin will sometimes overtake me, and sometimes I will overtake a sin. I say this because there is no such thing as sin that is not willful sin. When I sin, I choose to sin. At this point in time I am carnal, and I must take action that will put me again in the place where the Holy Spirit can control me. This action involves the confession of sin—the way to begin practicing spirituality again, 1 John 1:9.

*“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

These words are spoken in instruction to believers—Christians alone. They are not words for unbelievers who have not made commitments to Jesus. One who has never trusted Christ need not confess sin—he only needs to con-

fess his need for the Savior and His redemptive work, and acknowledge it was for him. Confession of sin is my move for restoration that again puts me in a position to be controlled by the Holy Spirit...to practice spirituality.

There is some confusion over the nature of confession. Some feel it is saying "I am sorry". And sorrow may indeed be involved when I confess, but saying "I am sorry" is really not the same as confession. There may be many reasons for sorrow that are really not involved in the reality of my sin and how I have hurt the Father's heart. Perhaps I am sorry because my sin has been discovered, or because I am feeling the results of my behavior in some other way. We do tend to reap what we sow. Then there are others who emphasize that confession is "repentance." And although repentance is part of the involvement of confession, it is not necessarily the essence. Confession in the original is from the word "homologeo," which literally means to "say the same thing". It could also be translated literally, "to agree with." So when I confess a particular sin, I name it! I say, "This is sin!" I agree with the Father and how He sees it.

I remember a student years ago who was in love with a man who was simply using her in the relationship. Although she knew nothing would ever come of the relationship but sorrow and heartache, she persisted over many months and clung to it as if it were her only hope for something special. We talked much about fellowship with God and other aspects of her life that would be hurt if she continued in the relationship. We also talked about the way to restoration which of course is genuine confession. Weeks seemed to go by with nothing happening except a continuance of the relationship. Then one day I received a letter from her with only one statement. "Dr. Nester, **That** is sin!" It was not my job to forgive her. She had not sinned against me. But this was in essence what confession is, and directed toward God, these words bring forgiveness. This is confession in its purest form. When I confess sin to God, I agree with Him that the behavior is sin. I bring my thinking in line with His thinking. And in reality, this is also repentance.

King David is another example of confession and forgiveness. Having sinned with Bathsheba, he was confronted by Nathan the prophet. When he was fully aware that he was "caught red-handed," he said, "I have sinned." And in confessing, he simply brought his thinking in line with the Father's thinking. There are, in confession, implications of sorrow and a desire to no longer transgress the Father's will, but confession is simply admitting the sin to the Father.

Immediate confession is also important in the efficient practice of spirituality. I should not delay for one moment my confession or acknowledgment of sin. Hesitating or putting off only prolongs the time when I will not be bearing the fruit of the Spirit. Until confession is made, whatever I do will never be more than human goodness at best.

One of the greatest hindrances in the practice of spirituality is the act of



introspection at a particular set time on a daily basis. Assume this period to be sometime toward the end of the day, or possibly just before I go to bed. At this time, I not only read the Word and listen to the Father speak to me, I take time to look into my life and see if I need to confess any sin. Perhaps I recall times during the day when I sinned, and I carefully confess each of these. I am forgiven and go to bed spiritual and I am spiritual all night.

Early the next day, however, I "dump" on a family member, exceed the speed limit going to work, and imply many things that are not true. I have clearly ceased to walk in the Spirit. I have become a "man of the flesh." My life, as far as the Father is concerned, is clearly lived in vain. In fact, it would be accurate to say, "I am spiritual all night—carnal all day." And this is simply not the way to live the life effectively. This is surely not quality life—abundant life as promised by Jesus. And we wouldn't expect such a life to impact the world in a truly significant way.

It is important, therefore, to learn to "confess on the run." To immediately acknowledge sin in my life is extremely important. Confessing is the way of beginning again. Having confessed the sin involved, I am forgiven. With this, the Father also cleanses me from "all unrighteousness." This statement apparently refers to sins I have committed unknowingly, or those I do not recognize as sin. This is particularly true of a new Christian who works at practicing spirituality. Having grown little, and just beginning the maturing process, there is little understanding of what is and is not sin. God in His grace has provided for that, and when I do acknowledge what I know to be sin, He forgives me for the rest of my sins of which I am not aware. Now I am again in a position where the Holy Spirit will control my life.

The final involvement on my part is to believe that I am forgiven. Such faith is part of the process of living my life by faith. Paul says in Col. 2:6:

*"Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."*

I have received Him by faith, and faith needs to characterize my everyday walk with Him. If in the process of this living I am unable to believe I am forgiven when I confess sin, then I disrupt my walk of faith and leave myself in a position that denies me the privilege of a peaceful heart with regard to sin in my life. And this, in turn, effects my ability to practice spirituality.

Why some are unable to feel forgiven or accept forgiveness is not altogether clear. The matter of clarity of understanding is of course important in some cases. Not everyone understands confession and forgiveness sufficiently to accept forgiveness. Perhaps some simply do not understand the sacrifice of Christ adequately. For others, legalism is a problem. There is the feeling that we must do penance, or that we must contribute something, or even suffer a certain number of "lashes," for forgiveness to be real.

Some probably doubt because of different or unusual circumstances involved in their sin. Sometimes, for instance, sins committed against a close family member are more difficult to deal with—harder to accept forgiveness for. Or sins that are repeated often—problem sins we find especially difficult to let go of. We might reach a place in sinning where we feel God just can't continue to forgive and restore though we honestly confess.

Sue was such a person with a problem sin she seemingly could not get rid of, and she despaired when she brought it to God over and over again. One day as she was talking of this during a session, she was elaborating on the difficulty she had encountered with this "problem" sin...how she had brought it to the Lord in sorrow time and again. Then as she talked of this, she said something as profound as anything I have ever heard concerning the Lord's willingness to forgive unendingly. She said concerning the sin, "I bring it to Him again and again, and I know each time it's as if it were the first time..." That just about blew me away. I knew that! But I had never thought of it in quite those terms. I never need be concerned about the Father keeping records. He is omniscient, yes. He is also able, because of Who He is, to blot from His memory whatever He chooses. And each time I come with a sin—even a problem sin that presents more difficulty—He will forgive me. It's as if it were the first time I had brought it to Him.

And then there are those who are affected in these areas by their relationships with their parents (more often fathers) and transfer concepts of forgiveness that find their source, in parental patterns relating to God. The usual result is to feel that God does not really find Himself willing to forgive them, and forgiveness, for them becomes difficult.

Sometimes there are those who feel that a particular type of sin is unforgivable. Some—perhaps a sexual sin—are more gross than others and are excluded from grace. Again, these have nothing to do with God's ability or willingness to forgive us. Our conditioning is much more a factor in these cases. Let me reaffirm, as Scripture reaffirms, the Father is able because of Who He is and what He purposes, to forgive any sin at any time confession is made. And our Heavenly Father's forgiveness has no limits. His promises are true. We are forgiven!

One particular problem disorder involving non-acceptance of forgiveness is found in the obsessive-compulsive individual. The perfectionist perhaps will need help through counseling, if feelings of lack of forgiveness and its assurance is an ongoing problem. The obsessive-compulsive personality disorder is often rooted in faulty ways of handling guilt. These problems are more psychological in nature.

## Special Problems that Hinder Practicing Spirituality

There are certain specific things in our personal lives that can be a problem for us. These will be discussed under two main headings or categories. Some of these are more spiritually oriented, while others would bear the psychological label. Some are more difficult to remedy, although there is help for each type of problem. Our Father desires us to be able to practice spirituality with increasing efficiency.

### Spiritually Oriented Hindrances to Spirituality

Consider with me those problems that are more spiritually oriented. This does not mean that there is no overlap with psychological principles, but rather that the basic characteristics involved seem related more to spiritual principles.

Basic to the practice of spirituality is an **understanding of the principles** involved in this way of life or lifestyle. Obviously I will never be able to know life with the Holy Spirit in control if I do not understand the example left by Jesus in His humiliation. Therefore, a study and understanding of the kenosis, and a willingness to follow the example of Jesus and His mind-set is of inestimable importance.

I also need to **know the Scriptures** well enough to be fairly sensitive to the nature of sin. I need to know sin and recognize it when I have sinned. It is also important to understand biblical principles that should influence my behavior in ambiguous situations, and how to appropriate the resources that are mine as a child of God. So I emphasize, basic lack of pursuit of understanding this life will be a basic hindrance to the practice of spirituality. I need to work to set into motion those processes that will cause me to mature spiritually since spiritual maturity is associated with the efficient practice of spirituality. None will be successful if there is a laizze-faire attitude.

Closely related to the preceding hindrance is a lack of specific **commitment** to experiencing quality life. It is possible that one is merely interested in being assured that his eternal destiny is in safe keeping...that he has eternal life. There is no commitment to spirituality as a lifestyle. While this is a problem closely related to "lordship", and Scripture does imply that lordship and salvation are closely related, there probably are many who never take "life in the Spirit" seriously. To be successful in the practice of spirituality, there must be a commitment to it as a lifestyle. There is a story from another era that illustrates tenacity that needs to characterize our commitment to spirituality. It is said that Churchill once asked a high ranking German this question. "Why does an English bulldog's nose slant backward?" When there was no answer, Churchill said, "Because when he gets hold of something, he never plans to let go, and he still needs to breathe!" Our approach to spirituality and its practice will fail without

this kind of tenacity.

**Lack of continual growth** in Scripture is another problem. While every new Christian who is sufficiently instructed in the basics involved in the practice of spirituality can begin to practice walking in the Spirit, the process can ultimately be hindered if there is not continual growth in the Scriptures. None of us can have understanding and growing success in this process without a continual growth in the Scriptures. Therefore, sloven and haphazard involvement with the Word of God can be a profound hindrance. Each of us needs to make specific plans to systematically involve ourselves in regular in-depth study of the Bible. Without this, there will never be much efficiency in this practice and we may give it up completely.

And finally, a spiritually-oriented problem hindering the practice of spirituality—one that we have already mentioned—is **failing to confess** at the moment of sinning and failing to recognize my behavior as sin. I must develop sharp discernment of my behavior and confess immediately. Otherwise my spirituality will be sporadic at best, and I will never have the consistency of quality life as promised by Jesus when He spoke of "life abundant!" We need to learn to practice "**confession on the run.**" Only then can one experience abundant life as promised by Jesus.

### **Psychological Problems Related to the Practice of Spirituality**

This is an area that makes Christians extremely nervous. We are sensitive about being told that psychological problems might override our practice of spirituality. Indeed, the majority of us have believed that if one is spiritual, there would be no psychological problems at all. It has become increasingly apparent to me, however, that such is not the case. Indeed, psychological problems can be a major hindrance in the practice of walking in the Spirit. Nor can I necessarily expect the Father to miraculously lift these problems from me. It is not that He is not able. But often the problems discussed in this section in the following paragraphs are those that need the help of the special "paraclete"...a counselor instructed in psychological principles as well as spiritual principles.

First, there are problems that relate to general immaturity. These have been discussed in an earlier section in this paper, but it is important to mention them again at this point. Certain aspects of immaturity become real impediments to spirituality. The first of these is a relatively negative self-concept—generally feeling poorly about myself. If I tend to see myself in ways that are not positive, I will make determinations about situations involving my interaction in my environment that can make sin easier and therefore I can become carnal. Jim has never felt good about himself. He has been told that as a Christian appropriating the adequacy of Christ, this should not be true. But Jim has

never learned the secret of a good self-concept, and this in turn has seriously affected his interpersonal relationships and allowed him to sin. Because of his relatively poor self-concept, Jim is defensive. And his defensiveness causes him to make erroneous judgments about others who interact with him. He often misinterprets their statements and is blaming, aggressive, and punitive. And these things are sin! So Jim lives a good deal of his life as a Christian confessing his sin, or neglecting to confess and continuing in a state of carnality. Self-concept deficiencies are the culprits. Mark this truth! A negative self-concept will cause me to make more errors in my personal judgments of things related to my environment. And these judgments will leave me more prone to sin.

Again, if my general stance in life is one of dependencies rather than autonomy, this can be somewhat of a hindrance to the free-flowing practice of spirituality. By dependence, I mean that condition in my makeup that causes me to be heavily reliant upon others. In ordinary interpersonal relationships a dependent person draws upon others for the meeting of his needs. A relatively autonomous person is able to be more self-sufficient and self-reliant. A general observation related to dependence and sin is to be seen in the common relationship between dependence and much hostility. If one's needs are not met, he will very likely direct much hostility toward the one he expects to meet those needs.

Such may also be involved in my relationship with my Father. A person who is generally heavily dependent may have difficulty understanding God's dealings in his life. This person would have the Father arrange his life as he wishes, and in the end, doubt and even become bitter toward Him. Many are walking their own way because of their circumstances. They are simply dependent persons who have not seen events of life go their way and have turned from a simple path of trust and acceptance to the rocky and thorny trail of disbelief. As such, then, dependence can be a hindrance to the practice of spirituality.

Poor self-concept and dependence are psychological variables of a more general nature that affect spirituality. There are those that are more specific, and these we will discuss in the following resumes of difficulties. The situations that are involved in the descriptions that follow are certainly to be considered sin. They are, however, special kinds of situations that have bases, not only in the sinful nature of fallen man and Adam's sin, but also in disorganized psychological processes. These are special psychological problems that often need attention as such, if one is to be delivered from them. Again, the human paraclete—the counselor trained in psychological processes—can often be most helpful.

Al is an example of one of these. He has an explosive personality disorder. For several years he has been troubled by sudden outbursts of violent temper and anger. Relationships with other people are at best precarious. He is often violent on the freeways, and once observed another motorist "tailgating"

him at high speed. While anger boiled inside him, Al suddenly braked his vehicle to an abrupt stop. This cause his "tailgater" to ram violently the rear of Al's car. Stopping at the side of the road and with both cars quite severely damaged, Al pulled the stunned motorist out of his car and beat him up. This disorder has deep-seated aberrant bases that probably will take much more than prayer to sort out. And these bases are beyond the understanding of the individual. Al needs a special kind of help. His personality disorder can cause him to fail in his practicing spirituality and can nullify quality life.

Conrad is one who typifies another disorder and deep-seated problem. He has been promiscuous for years. He will have an affair, feel guilty, manage to get himself caught so others will be aware, confess to his wife and God, and is forgiven. Certainly no one who understands grace as a Bible doctrine would say Conrad is not forgiven. But, alas, it happens again and again. Conrad seems to feel that simply confessing the sin takes care of all aspects of the problem. He is forgiven—the problem is no longer there. But what makes his problem occur again and again? He has not considered that he may be deeply angry with his wife, or that he dislikes women in general and his wife in particular. And that through his behavior he is seeking to degrade or exploit them. Nor does he understand that research indicates that one involved in this kind of behavior has little chance, apart from the grace of God and divine intervention, of ever changing this behavior. And this would hinder the practice of spirituality and needs the assistance of that special paraclete in order that deeper bases of difficulties can be understood and worked through. Otherwise, Conrad probably will stumble to his grave, leaving innumerable trophies of infamy.

And then there is Jane...the punctual, meticulous, obsessive-compulsive who demands so much of herself. Jane completely rejects her imperfections and is self-centered and despairing. She continually feels guilty because she has equated quality in her life with **doing** rather than **being**. She has been instructed well by her pastor and other knowing friends who understand that her style can be her undoing. But try as she may, she has been unable to change. Jane needs special help in learning how to deal with guilt at levels where her awareness is unclear. She needs psychotherapy as well as practicing spirituality effectively. Unless she finds such help, her practice of spirituality will be greatly hindered. She will probably continue to be guilty of the error of the Galatians addressed by Paul in Galatians 3:2, 3:

*“This is one thing I would like to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”*

One with Jane's personality disorder tends to live the Christian life by raw, rote discipline, rather than by the Holy Spirit and His gentle control. Again, this would plainly affect her practice of spirituality.

I have attempted, with these illustrations, to point out different kinds of



hindrances to the practice of spirituality. These can be both theological and psychological. Spirituality brings quality life, but other things must often be dealt with to make this practice more efficient. I repeat again... these may require the help of a paraclete who will walk with a person and help eliminate his special impediments in his quest for "quality life."

### **The Results of the Practice of Spirituality and Other Approved Behaviors**

When I became a Christian by faith in Jesus Christ more than 50 years ago, I was tired of life as I had known it for my first nineteen years. My life had been characterized by failure, despair, hopelessness, and helplessness. I hurt terribly! Especially at night as I stood the 12-4 watch in the North Atlantic, the darkness and turmoil of that mighty ocean seemed to speak to me of my life. I was tossed about. I did not know where I was heading—I had no goals, and very little hope of anything being different. I don't suppose I would have thought "quality life" then—only life that somehow could be different—better! I longed for peace. I was tired, confused, and despairing at the tender age of nineteen. But there was Jesus, the Lamb of God's providing! And through the years I have found the answer to those demanding needs as I have learned something of "life in the Spirit". Practicing spirituality introduced me to quality life—to a life in which I "flourish as the palm tree", as the Psalmist says.

Quality life then relates not only to the reality that my life in Christ will endure forever, but also to its superior quality as compared with life experienced by others who live in this world now. Not only does my life have endurance, but it has unusual qualities not experienced by men in general. I do not live life in the same way—it is totally different than my former struggle. During these 50+ years there has not been one year that the Lord Jesus and my life for Him have not been my major concern. And during these years, I have found quality to be related to the practice of spirituality.

Perhaps the most basic result of spirituality is the "fruit" that is born in my life. The Scripture says this is the "fruit of the Spirit," Galatians 5:22, 23:

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

These verses clearly state that one of the chief results of practicing spirituality is a number of graces that will be characteristic of the life. I will bear the "fruit of the Spirit". The results are not power...special gifts...ecstatic experiences, but primarily fruit—the "fruit of the Spirit". For the moment, let's consider in more detail certain aspects of this "fruit" that make our lives practical and with higher quality.

I am a "Christian" in this world. I am a little Christ! I am an epistle—a letter to an unbelieving world which when read will help men understand what Jesus was like. He returned to heaven some 2,000 years ago, and I am on earth in His place. When men look at me, how much of Jesus do they see in me? Certainly, nothing that I can imitate in my own strength or on my own initiative. Only the "fruit of the Spirit" produced in my life will cause Christ to be seen in me. Note! It is not my imitating His characteristics, his virtues. It is the Holy Spirit producing these virtues as fruit through the life of a sinful man that will alert the world—cause it to stop, look, and listen to the message of love from Jesus. It is as someone somewhere has said, "The greatest miracle of time is not the incarnation—God taking on human flesh and becoming one of us. The greatest miracle is God reproducing Himself in the bodies and personalities of sinful men." And this is the basic result of the practice of spirituality.

It is significant to note that this is the fruit of the **Spirit**. It is not what I learn to produce in me through discipline or self-effort. Many years ago I heard a prominent Christian psychologist read a paper entitled "Behavior Modification and the Fruit of the Spirit". His basic thesis was that one could produce the fruit of the Spirit through manipulative means that related to natural law—through behavior modification! Now perhaps he was referring to "human goodnesses" or virtues that can be learned by believer and nonbeliever alike. These can surely be produced by psychological means as well as through sheer discipline. But these are never the "fruit of the Spirit". This fruit is always produced by the Third Person of the Godhead—the Holy Spirit. Human goodnesses and the fruit of the Spirit are not the same. Lack of distinctions at this point are partly responsible for lack of quality in the life we experience so often after becoming Christians. Many of us struggle and live our lives exactly as we did prior to coming to Christ. We develop love, patience, goodness, peace, etc. It is the same kind of effort we experienced in trying to live a good life prior to coming to Christ—and with pretty much the same lack of success.

Another significant observation is that this is the **Fruit** of the Spirit. Fruit in the text is singular, not plural. It is a collective noun. This conveys the reality that the potential for all fruit to be present when spirituality is practiced is certainly there. Of course, there must be an environmental situation in which love, patience, or goodness, as such, is in order. Should a situation arise—one in which all nine of these representative virtues would be God's response—then they would all simply just be there.

I have also just alluded to a thought that I believe is true. It would seem that the list of virtues—nine in number—is only representative, and any other virtue or behavior the Holy Spirit should desire to produce can be His own business. The list in Galatians 5 need not be the conclusive list. It is important for me to believe this inasmuch as the fruit is all I need for any situation in life. Life in the Spirit is life in which His fruit is produced.

Ordinary fruit—lemons, apples, papaya, guava and whatever the kind—



is fruit that is born without effort. So life in the Spirit is life without effort. Perhaps this is why Jesus said, *"My yoke is easy and my burden light."* Quality life requires adjustment on our part, rather than effort! When I begin to make an effort to live the life, I am in danger of falling from grace. Life in Christ lived by human effort is described by Paul in Galatians 5:4:

*"You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace."*

This verse certainly is not teaching that I lose my salvation when I seek to live the life in my own strength, but rather that any legalistic approach to this new life is an approach that reduces my standard of living from grace to a life of self-effort and this cannot be a yoke that is easy, or a burden that is light.

Perhaps the most beautiful, large delicious apples in the world are grown in the Pacific Northwestern regions of the United States. As a boy growing up, I never observed an apple tree struggling to bear apples. Certainly there were conditions that needed to be fulfilled. The warmth and rain in the spring would bring out the blossoms. As summer progressed, the sunshine caused the fruit to grow in size, and then the chilling blasts of fall would bring their color and final maturity, ready to be picked and eaten. They were just there by virtue of the relationship they had with the tree itself.

And so it is with spirituality. Practicing life with the Holy Spirit in control brings forward all of the graces in natural ways that involve no effort. Simple adjustment—abiding—the fruit is there! This is open to all who have positional relationship with Jesus. It's a life of simply learning to live with the Holy Spirit in control of me. This fulfills my basic purpose for being in the world—to be like Jesus.

Yet another word about the "fruit of the Spirit" seems to be in order. Richard Halverson states in his little book *Christian Maturity* that the test of whether or not a behavior is the "fruit of the Spirit", or merely "human goodness," is whether or not it is my reaction before I get myself under control. If patience is my reaction, if goodness is my reaction, if self-control is my reaction, rather than each of these being my response after I manage to control myself, then it is probably the "fruit of the Spirit".

A second result of the practice of spirituality will be my increased efficiency in "not fulfilling the lusts of the flesh". Galatians 5:16 says: *"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh."*

As stated earlier in this text on spirituality, learning to practice spirituality is learning to choose obedience in the face of temptation. Inasmuch as yielding to temptation (sinning) is fulfilling the desires of the flesh, I grow in efficiency in obedience—in not fulfilling fleshly (carnal) desires as I learn to practice walking in the Spirit.

*“Practicing life with the Holy Spirit in control brings forward all of the graces in natural ways that involve no effort.”*

Involved in this efficient practice is learning to recognize sin more clearly. Learning to utilize my armor provided by the Father and coming to terms with my own sinful self will help protect me when otherwise I would be vulnerable. I also learn to use the basic principles involved in my life that help me in situations that are ambiguous. These principles—laws—the law of love, the law of liberty, and the law of expediency, (session 32) are utilized efficiently in the practice of spirituality. Each of these practices will enable me to walk in a way that will keep me from fulfilling the "lusts of the flesh". If we walk in the Spirit, this will be true of each of us as a natural product of that walk.

# THE SOURCES OF TEMPTATION

## Basic Christianity

- 2 The Six Main Points of the Gospel
- 3 The Bridge
- 4 The New Life I Have in Christ
- 5 Assurance of Salvation
- 6 Positional Truth
- 7 Spiritual Maturity
- 8 What it Means to Grow as a Christian
- 9 Practicing Spirituality
- 10 Flourishing in the Spirit
- 11 **The Sources of Temptation**
- 12 The Misuse of the Tongue
- 13 Review Questions

**Purpose:** The purpose of this session is to give biblical understanding of the nature of temptation and sin, and acquaint you with our chief adversary, the devil. This is necessary to “fight the good fight” of faith against him and his emissaries (demons). We not only need to “walk by the Spirit,” which enables us to not fulfill the desires of our sinful nature, but we need also to understand the protection we have against the direct assaults of our enemy.



## Objectives

1. The disciple will understand how sin is deeply entrenched in our human natures, and is deceptive.
2. The disciple will understand the process of sin in order to be on guard and choose not to sin when you are tempted.
3. The disciple will understand more about demonic activity as it relates to temptation in everyday life.
4. The disciple will understand what happens to our fellowship with God when we sin.
5. The disciple will know the resources for victory provided by the Father.

## Scripture Memory

*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.*

Galatians 5:16

*Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.*

Ephesians 6:10-11



## Agenda

1. Pray together for various needs and requests.
2. Share memory verses.
3. Discuss the worksheet.
4. Review questions.
5. Discuss new terms.

This is an important session on the nature, development, and ultimate results of sin in the life of an individual. It is important because each of us is a sinner, and we are prone to sin. Sin can bring calamitous results to the life of a believer, as well as to an unbeliever. We need to learn how it develops and how to resist it.



## Worksheet

We are human beings. We are children of our first parents, Adam and Eve. Because Adam sinned, we are all sinners because we are his children. Romans 5:12 tells us that \_\_\_\_\_ entered the world by the sin of one man. That man was \_\_\_\_\_. Therefore, we are all born \_\_\_\_\_. Romans 3:23 tells us that we have all \_\_\_\_\_ and continually \_\_\_\_\_ of the glory of God. There is no way I will ever be able, in this life, to be free from sinning. Yet I am able to choose to not sin. I am no longer a \_\_\_\_\_ to sin, Romans 6:6,7.

## Two Sources of Temptation

### I. Temptation from Within.

Where does sin come from? There are two sources of temptation to sin that I need to be aware of. The first source is from my great enemy—my own sinful self. Let's look at this reality carefully.

I have experienced the new birth. I have been made a \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:17. My sins are forgiven and I now have \_\_\_\_\_, 1 John 5:11,12. However, I still find myself being drawn away and I sin. I find that saying I have no sin is \_\_\_\_\_ myself, 1 John 1:8. The reality that sin is still in me is demonstrated by my continuing sinning. 1 John 2:16 calls these urges the \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_, and the boastful \_\_\_\_\_. They are still part of my makeup as a human. It is important for me to know that one of the reasons I have the Holy Spirit is related to this kind of temptation. Galatians 5:16 says that if I “\_\_\_\_\_”, I will not carry out the \_\_\_\_\_. So the greatest guard to help me

with temptations from within is to keep in step with the Holy Spirit.

## II. Temptation from Without.

This type of temptation is from our strongest enemy, Satan, and his hosts of demons. This truth is supported and explored in the worksheet that follows.

That there is progression in the development of sin, as well as in the continuance of sin itself, is taught in the Scripture. This study is one that will attempt to show this progression, as well as the devastating results of sin that is continued long-term in the life of an individual.

### **How Sin Develops in the Life of an Individual**

We have indicated that there are two main tempters in our lives. The first of these is our personal enemy. See if you can determine from the following verses what or who this enemy is.

James 1:14 says that temptation comes from our \_\_\_\_\_.  
Because we are \_\_\_\_\_, Psalm 51:5, we are subject to \_\_\_\_\_.  
Realizing and admitting this is a necessity if I am ever really to understand what goes on in me when I am tempted and sin. I have a nature that is negative to spiritual things. How is this taught in Galatians 5:17?

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These verses teach us that I am my own worst enemy. When I am tempted, I do not need the devil to tempt me. I have a nature that is prone to sin and in reality, can only please itself. I understand the fact that I have all the seeds of sinning in myself, and I do not have to be assaulted by anyone to be tempted and sin. James says sin begins when I am drawn away by my own desires.

But how does sin come about? Let's approach it by looking at three things Scripture speaks of that can be involved in sinning. In 1 John 2:16 there are three things that can pull me away from walking in the Spirit and cause me to sin.

The first of these is called the \_\_\_\_\_.  
When Jesus was tempted by Satan, how was this aspect of Him appealed to by

Satan? See Matthew 4:2, 3.

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Of course, Christ did not have a sinful nature so He could not be tempted in the same way man is tempted. There had to be an outside source (Satan). But Satan appealed to the craving of His human nature, which because He was human, was very real. He was man and He was hungry.

The craving of our sinful nature can get us into trouble with sin. What choices do we have? Much of this craving is related to normal human need gone awry. These may be legitimate needs, but the fulfillment of them becomes illegitimate and sinful. Christ's need for food after fasting for forty days was certainly legitimate. But food was not the supreme need for His sustenance. He spoke of this in His reply, in Matthew 4:4. Even the right thing, in the wrong way, is sin!

The second source of temptation John speaks of is \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (1 John 2:16). The eyes are involved in temptation to sin. Through the "eye-gate" many evils are introduced. What eye involvement did Eve have in the garden which resulted in sinning on her part? Genesis 3:6

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How did Satan use the eyes of Jesus in an attempt to get Him to sin? Matthew 4:8, 9 \_\_\_\_\_

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Of course, Jesus was not a sinner so He was not drawn away by His own desires. But for us, it is better to not look than to look and then try to deal with it. The Gospels are clear about the eye and its importance. Matthew 5:29 speaks of the severity of our dealing with an offending eye. Does this mean self mutilation? Of course not. We would be mutilating the temple of the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean? See Gal. 5:16 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How did the eye play an important part in the sin of King David? 2 Samuel 11:2? \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 6:22 tells us that if \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_, your whole body will be full of \_\_\_\_\_. What does light refer to here?

\_\_\_\_\_

In the mall by my building was a magazine shop. One could scarcely enter without noticing the large number of men who were gathered at one end of the shop. They were pouring over the magazines dedicated to offending the eye and bringing about great temptation.

The third source of temptation mentioned as a "gate" for sin is also seen in 1 John 2:16. It is the boastful \_\_\_\_\_. Pride is so very central in sinning, and in the acknowledgment of sin. In Matthew 4:6, Jesus experienced Satan tempting Him to demonstrate who He was. How can this part of the temptation of Jesus relate to the pride of life or who Jesus was?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

James 4:6 says that God \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_, but gives \_\_\_\_\_ to the \_\_\_\_\_.

In review to this point, note the avenues through which temptation most often occurs.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What are the mental processes one will experience as he moves toward sin?

See Proverbs 9:17. \_\_\_\_\_

The first process is probably the anticipated feeling of \_\_\_\_\_, Hebrews 11:25. That sin is enjoyable, as a rule, is clear. The anticipated pleasure involved in sin gets its grip on the thinking of a person. In the case of Moses, the pleasure of sin and its prospects were present, but he chose to be identified with the slaves. Regardless of what it is, most sin has pleasure connected with it. What fact about this kind of pleasure is evident from this verse? (Heb. 11:25)

The second process is rationalization for the behavior about to take place. This was true of Adam in the garden after he sinned, Genesis 3:12. Whom did Adam blame? \_\_\_\_\_ Rationalization is a process we all use when we choose to sin. We justify it, excuse it, or change it to meet our reasons for behavior we know is wrong.

The third process is \_\_\_\_\_, Hebrews 3:13. The deceitfulness of sin is well known. Let's look at some of the ways sin is deceitful.

1. Sin says "I can sin and get away with it."

Scripture says, Proverbs 28:13, that I cannot \_\_\_\_\_.

My ultimate lack of prosperity when I continue in sin is an indication of sin's deceptive character.

2. Sin says, "I can sin with no serious repercussions."

Proverbs 13:15 says the way of the unfaithful is \_\_\_\_\_.

In this way sin is deceptive. It is impossible to live in sin and not

\_\_\_\_\_, Galatians 6:7. In fact,

Scripture says we will often reap the \_\_\_\_\_, Hosea 8:7.

Being in a sin-induced whirlwind is not a light thing to experience.

Some personal experiences that result from sin are the following:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_, Hebrews 12:6. This



is corrective discipline. It can be severe!

b. \_\_\_\_\_, 1 Timothy 4:2b.

This searing would produce an in-\_\_\_\_\_ to sin.

Insensitivity means that I will gradually reach a place where sinning no longer hurts. "Now I can sin and get away with it for sure!"

c. \_\_\_\_\_, Isaiah 32:17. If righteousness brings peace and confidence, unrighteousness will bring \_\_\_\_\_, Isaiah 48:22.

d. Sin will bring scarring and injury, the effects of which can never be completely eliminated.

e. Sin forms a tendency which becomes a habit which molds a character, and ultimately becomes a destiny. It ruins and eliminates usefulness and misshapes a life.

Now we should observe the progression in James 1:14, 15. First, one is tempted when he is \_\_\_\_\_ (from what is good) by his own \_\_\_\_\_. He is \_\_\_\_\_. From that desire, \_\_\_\_\_ can be conceived. It seems at this point one can make a choice of sinning or not.

If the Word of God is in the heart, and there is a commitment to obedience, there can be a choice at this point to not sin. If such a choice is not made, sin can emerge. Even at this point one can deal with the sin and not let it become full-grown. What would be a description of a "full-grown" sin? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

And the result of this sin is "temporal" \_\_\_\_\_. What kind of death is this?

\_\_\_\_\_

Note: This does not mean that every time I fall into sin, I have lost my salvation. As we have pointed out in previous sections, death always has the inherent idea of separation. In this setting, death is **temporal** or **temporary**. It re-

fers to sin taking me out of fellowship with God. And I will continue to be out of fellowship until that sin is dealt with and I am restored.

### External Sources of Temptation.

The second source of temptation is a direct assault of Satanic forces. This too will be the experience of every Christian. The best example of this is the temptation of Jesus. This kind of temptation is what we can call “spiritual warfare.”

1. Some things to know and remember about Jesus.
  - a. He was born of a virgin and therefore had no sinful nature.
  - b. He was very much a human man who had all the needs of a human.
  - c. He was God incarnate - the God-man!
2. How this type of temptation is different.
  - a. Intelligence is involved.
  - b. The spirit-beings involved in this temptation are very strong.
  - c. We cannot bind these powers but we do have instructions concerning what to do.
  - d. Satan can only be one place at a time so his **fallen troops** are involved.

What would cause you to think that the temptation of Jesus was different than the temptation we have? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Satan and his agents are involved. How does Peter describe their work today? 1 Peter 5:8 \_\_\_\_\_

Would every temptation we have be an attack from Satan? \_\_\_\_\_

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

Who are Satan’s helpers? \_\_\_\_\_. These fallen angels fell when Satan fell, Isaiah 14:12-14.

A good example of spiritual warfare is seen in Daniel 10. What

do we find here? \_\_\_\_\_ Read also Matthew 8:28, 29; Mark 5. What examples are seen here? \_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 6 tells of his warfare with the church. It also includes instructions concerning how to be successful in our encounters with him.

Ephesians 6:14 tells us to \_\_\_\_\_. We are not told to engage him in warfare, but to stand, having \_\_\_\_\_, and having put on the \_\_\_\_\_. This armor is to enable us to withstand the assaults of Satan that are vicious and often unrelenting. Our winning the battle is dependent upon God. The victory is His.

### Putting on the Full Armor of God

In Ephesians 6:14-18 we are told of our armor. Note the first instruction given us. It is not to fight these powers but to \_\_\_\_\_. “Standing firm” does not mean to go out and try to beat the devil up or “bind him.” He is much too strong for any Christian to win the battle with him alone. God is the one who wins the battle with him. Our winning the battle depends upon our willingness to “stand still” and let the battle be God’s. We need also to put on our armor in its entirety. Then we can withstand the schemes of the \_\_\_\_\_.

The belt of \_\_\_\_\_ is the first piece of armor mentioned by Paul. It was really more than a belt in that it was important for holding everything together; his sword was also held by it. In some unique way it was related to everything else to be used to defend one’s self. Among whatever else it means, it speaks of an inner condition of our life that enables us to always choose \_\_\_\_\_ over untruth. Honesty should characterize the life of a believer. There would never be an option for one to lie. It will give Satan an opportunity to defeat us. **Truth** may also refer to sound doctrine as well.

*“Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ”*

Ephesians 6:13-14

*“...and having shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.”*

Ephesians 6: 15-17

The second piece of armor is \_\_\_\_\_, vs. 14. This is a covering of righteousness for our heart. Righteousness is, of course two-fold. It is im\_\_\_\_\_ righteousness and also p\_\_\_\_\_ righteousness. Imputed righteousness refers to my standing and personal righteous to my state. Since I am righteous before God’s eyes, being justified already, this piece of armor includes both. Could this possibly have any connection with practicing spirituality? \_\_\_\_\_ Could it possibly have something to do with a command to “guard our hearts?” \_\_\_\_\_ I do not guard my heart when I open it to pornography. When I grasp at making all the money I can (the love of money is the root of all evil), I lose some of my heart coverings. Perhaps it refers to all of these conditions.

The next piece of armor has to do with feet shod with the \_\_\_\_\_, vs. 15. The Lord speaks of the beauty of feet that \_\_\_\_\_, Isaiah 52:7. Should it not imply that I am to be a witness wherever I go. “G\_\_\_\_\_ an \_\_\_\_\_ for the hope that is within us . . .,” 1 Peter 3:15.

Then in Ephesians 6:16 there is the \_\_\_\_\_, with which we will be able to \_\_\_\_\_ of the evil one. The Roman soldier carried two kinds of shields when he went into battle. One was used in hand-to-hand combat. The other was a large shield which was wide enough to cover him, as the soldiers marched together in phalanxes. Paul likens faith to the latter type of shield. In what way does Hebrews 11:7 teach us the reliability of this piece of armor? \_\_\_\_\_.

Ephesians 6:17 gives us two pieces of the soldiers’ paraphernalia. The first is the h \_\_\_\_\_ of s \_\_\_\_\_. This helmet covers the head of the believer. The head is where our thinking takes place. It is where our basic essence is located. What do you think you can do to follow this command?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What is involved in the “renewing of our minds?” Romans 12:1, 2. What has taken place in the life of the believer that needs to be in the forefront of his life? 2 Corinthians 5:17 \_\_\_\_\_

What does 1 Thessalonians 5:8 have to do with this? \_\_\_\_\_

His entire perspective and approach to the world is different. He needs to see every experience in life in the light of his “being \_\_\_\_\_,” John 3:7. This means being born from above.

The final piece of armor that is discussed is the \_\_\_\_\_, Ephesians 6:17. How can we make the Word of God our sword? \_\_\_\_\_

How much are you utilizing this aspect of your weapons for the spiritual engagement you have encountered? \_\_\_\_\_

Now think through carefully how this armor is “put on” in a Christian’s life.

One aspect of spiritual warfare that has troubled me in the past deals with the number of pieces of armor (6) which might seem to be incomplete, and the fact that nothing is mentioned about our “backside.” I could possibly be vulnerable during battle. Then I became acquainted with Psalm 139:5 and its message to me. What is stated in this verse that is appropriate to this session?

How does this help us and in what way? \_\_\_\_\_



### Questions for Review and Discussion

*“Sin forms a  
tendency,  
which becomes  
a habit,  
which molds  
a character,  
and ultimately  
becomes a destiny.”*

1. Describe a time when you felt an experience of temptation was true spiritual warfare, and why was this true?

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Which area of temptation has been your greatest problem? \_\_\_\_\_

Elaborate on this \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Why do you think we are told to stand firm rather than go after the devil or demons that may assail us?

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3. What are some areas in which spiritual warfare truly has involved us?

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4. What’s wrong with the idea that we can **bind** Satan? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. List the lessons we can learn from the temptation of Jesus. \_\_\_\_\_

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6. What does Satan and his demons do to make us feel that temptation is not an ugly thing? 2 Corinthians 11:14

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7. How possible is it that temptation can be both from satanic sources and from my own sinful nature?

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### **Life Application**

Keep a journal. See and record how practicing spirituality carefully, and putting on the whole armor of God daily helps keep you from sinning.

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## *Notes*



# THE MISUSE OF THE TONGUE

## Basic Christianity

- 2 The Six Main Points of the Gospel
- 3 The Bridge
- 4 The New Life I Have in Christ
- 5 Assurance of Salvation
- 6 Positional Truth
- 7 Spiritual Maturity
- 8 What it Means to Grow as a Christian
- 9 Practicing Spirituality
- 10 Flourishing in the Spirit
- 11 The Sources of Temptation
- 12 **The Misuse of the Tongue**
- 13 Review Questions

**Purpose:** The purpose of this session is to magnify the importance of the use and misuse of the tongue.



## Objectives

1. The disciple will know that control of the tongue is the greatest mark of spiritual maturity.
2. The disciple will understand the destructive aspects of the misuse of the tongue.
3. The disciple will know ways the tongue can be misused.
4. The disciple will learn what things that can be done to control the tongue.
5. The disciple will learn what to do if he has misused his tongue.

## Scripture Memory

*Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

Ephesians 4:29-30



## Agenda

1. Mutual sharing and prayer.
2. Discuss the worksheet.
3. Discuss the questions.
4. Discuss any new terms.
5. Share memory verses.

## James 1:26

*“If anyone thinks himself to be religious and yet does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless.”*

One of the characteristics of sin is that it is subtle. One of the reasons we often have much difficulty with particular sins is that they are directly connected to our emotions. The emotion, though legitimate and really not bad, is powerful enough to control us, and we find ourselves doing things that we otherwise would not do.

This is true in the case of anxiety. When this emotion controls us, we often become faithless and end up not trusting God in difficult situations. The same is true of desires that overwhelm us.. Covetousness can lead to stealing. The desire becomes more than we wish to deal with and we simply surrender to that desire. Lust for anything can cause a person to rationalize his behavior and do things he would not otherwise do. Of course, anger is one of the most difficult emotions of all. Anger is not sin. But anger can certainly lead to sin, and one of the chief ways we sin when we become angry is through the misuse of the tongue. With this member of our body we can tear people to pieces and ruin them for a lifetime.

The study concerns the uses and abuses of the tongue. It concerns living as a Christian and has to do with the behavior that most clearly reveals our inner life and its true condition.

**Worksheet**

Read carefully James 3:1-12. What are the chief propositions of this passage?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

What is the mark of a perfect (mature) man? verse 2 \_\_\_\_\_

What apparent dangers are true of the tongue? verse 6

- a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

What obvious reality is true of the person who both praises God and curses men? Vs. 9-12 \_\_\_\_\_

How is the tongue like a fire? Vs. 5,6 \_\_\_\_\_

What enables a person to control his tongue? James 3:2, Galatians 5:22,23 \_\_\_\_\_

List some of the positive uses of the tongue.

a. James 3:9 \_\_\_\_\_

b. Philippians 4:6 \_\_\_\_\_

c. Romans 10:10; 14:11; Philippians 2:11 \_\_\_\_\_

d. Acts 1:8 \_\_\_\_\_

e. Colossians 3:16 \_\_\_\_\_

It is apparent that we all have within our power many uses of the tongue that are good and acceptable with God. But there are specific references to types of misuse of the tongue as well. We want to see how specifically the Scriptures speak out against sins of the tongue.

Two sins of the tongue are found in Matthew 15:19. What are they?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

The first sin involves speaking inaccurately. Someone has given three rules for determining if we should tell something about another person. They are as follows:

1. Is it true?

2. Is it kind?

3. Is it necessary? (Is there some real reason to tell?)

The first measure is basic. Is what I'm saying or telling really true, or is it something I've heard someone say and don't know if its true or not? The second measure covers broad issues. If it isn't kind, I would do well not to say it, because the misuse of the tongue is again an issue. If it isn't kind, it isn't edifying; I should drop it. The third measure just about rules out every other reason. If it isn't necessary, and usually it isn't, I should by all means simply say nothing.

The second sin mentioned in this text is \_\_\_\_\_.  
How is slander defined in the dictionary? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

There are many other sins of the tongue dealt with by the Scriptures. Read the following verses carefully and write what they say about sin.

Matthew 15:11 \_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 4:31 \_\_\_\_\_

Titus 3:2 \_\_\_\_\_

James 4:11 \_\_\_\_\_

What does this verse say we do when we slander another person?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1 Peter 2:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 11:13 \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 17:9 \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 18:8 \_\_\_\_\_

What do these verses tell us concerning the use of the tongue?

Proverbs 13:3 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 101:5 \_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 4:29 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

We do well to note that vs. 30 follows this verse. Might it be that we grieve the Spirit most readily when we misuse our tongues?

1. In what ways have you misused your tongue today?

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2. What are the greatest problems you have with your tongue?

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3. What else might be considered the misuse of the tongue?




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Someone has said, “a tale has no legs upon which to stand, but it has wings and will fly far and wide.” Never have part in such a sin!

### Questions for Review and Discussion

1. What are some of the common ways we misuse our tongues?

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2. You know something about another person that could be difficult for them if it were disclosed. What are some positive alternatives you could choose instead of telling another person?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

3. You have sinned by telling something about another person. What you have said is true, but you really needn't have said it. What should you do?

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4. What is so powerful about gossip? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What is the very best way to keep something confidential? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Key Concepts

Central in the understandings we wish to convey in this lesson is the reality that the tongue is the most abused member of our beings and personalities. Be sure that you recognize the central nature of sinning with the tongue, and all the ways we sin with our tongues. Also be sure that there is understanding concerning the dynamics involved in the tongue's misuse. What is involved in gossiping that makes the tongue so prone to speak when it should best be kept in reign? (Knowing something to tell gives one power over another).



There are gross inconsistencies in the life of a person who claims to know God and yet slanders and gossips. On the other hand, walking in the Spirit becomes the best way to control or bridle the tongue. A look back at the session on spirituality once again might be in order as a means of emphasizing how the tongue is best controlled.

# REVIEW QUESTIONS

**Purpose:** The review questions will be an overall review of the first section of this ministry.



## Objectives

1. The disciple will be able to talk about each issue in a more fully .
2. The disciple will be able to remember the materials more easily.
3. The disciple will be able to put into practice the practical things taught in this section.

## Scripture Memory

*Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*

Romans 6:12-13

## Basic Christianity

- 2 The Six Main Points of the Gospel
- 3 The Bridge
- 4 The New Life I Have in Christ
- 5 Assurance of Salvation
- 6 Positional Truth
- 7 Spiritual Maturity
- 8 What it Means to Grow as a Christian
- 9 Practicing Spirituality
- 10 Flourishing in the Spirit
- 11 The Sources of Temptation
- 12 The Misuse of the Tongue
- 13 **Review Questions**



## Agenda

1. Mutual accountability and prayer.
2. Discuss the questions.
3. Share Scripture memorization.

**Basic Christianity Review**

1. What are some of the implications of the term “eternal life?”

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2. How can salvation be a gift if it could be withdrawn for any reason?

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3. List aspects of sin in our lives...i.e., is sin always doing what is explicitly forbidden? What other things are considered sin?

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4. What is the basic meaning of “death” in the New Testament? List several kinds of death mentioned in Scripture.

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5. Elaborate on this thought. “We are not sinners because we sin, but rather we sin because we are sinners.”

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6. What are the basic differences between “experiential” indicators and “objective” indicators in the matter of assurance of salvation?

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7. How significant is “Lordship” in the broad aspects of salvation?

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8. Why is assurance of salvation so crucial?

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9. What specifically is the “testimony or witness of God?”

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10. Who is the god of this age? What everyday things are closely tied to this “world system?”

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11. What is positional truth? (In your own words)

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12. Describe and discuss the difference between “standing” and “state.”

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13. Elaborate on the meanings involved in the doctrine of justification and sanctification as these doctrines relate to the truth of positional relationship.

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14. Which is fixed and which is ongoing —justification and sanctification?

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15. If I know Christ, I am a saint. To which of the doctrines in question 14 is being a saint related?

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16. What are the central components of spiritual maturity?

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17. For what reason is stress important in spiritual maturity?

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18. How does the maturing of an individual relate to spirituality?

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19. Give a practical, accurate, and down to earth definition of spirituality.

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20. What does it mean to “practice spirituality?” To “confess on the run?”

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21. What is the Bema? Elaborate on its significance.

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22. What are the results of the practice of spirituality?

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23. “Fruit” is a word mentioned in relation to the results of the practice of spirituality. What are the implications of the word “fruit?”

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24. What is the meaning of the term “temporal fellowship?”

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25. Describe in your own words the way to practice “spirituality.”

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26. In your own words, contrast spirituality and maturity.

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27. What is the basic meaning of the word “confess?”

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28. What is the effect of spirituality on growth to maturity?

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29. How can one be sure his faith is “saving faith?”

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30. “Spiritual warfare” is a common phrase used today. Explain the difference between temptation related to the flesh and temptation that is a frontal and obvious attack by satan.

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31. It is not “that I cannot sin,” but rather that “I can not sin.” What is the difference?

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32. What are the chief things we can do to thwart a direct attack of satanic powers upon our lives today?

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33. Describe the armor of a Christian.

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34. What has been your most significant learning in this section?

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35. What can you describe regarding a temptation that might bring you to think it is “spiritual warfare?”

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36. List five significant things that have happened to you since coming to Christ.

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# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following pages contain some of the terms as used by the author in these discipleship materials. They may or may not be terms that are defined in the same way in other writings.

### DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. **ABSOLUTE** - All or nothing.
2. **ARMINIANISM** - A system of theological thought that is built around the teachings of Arminius who was an early student of John Calvin. There is more emphasis on human freedom and works in Arminianism.
3. **ASSURANCE** - Used in connection with the personal knowledge of the reality of my salvation and the possession of eternal life. To be able to say “I have assurance” is one of the foundational aspects of the Christian life. The effective life is lived when one knows he has eternal life.
4. **BEMA** - The Bema is literally the “award seat” at the Corinthian Olympics. Paul used the term in 2 Corinthians 5:10 to describe a future day when each child of God will come before the Savior and present the works for which he would logically expect reward. This event is called the Judgment Seat of Christ. Everyone will receive something.
5. **BRETHREN** - A term used to describe the relationship of those who know Christ and are members of the family of God. The term does not have gender implications.
6. **CALVINISM** - A system of theological thought that comes from the teachings of John Calvin and Reformed theology. The emphasis of Calvinism is on the sovereignty of God, rather than human freedom and works. The five points of Calvinism are (1) total depravity of man, (2) unconditional election, (3) limited atonement, (4) irresistible grace, and (5) the perseverance of the saints.
7. **CANON** - The basic meaning of the word is “measure” or “measuring rod”. “Canonicity” refers to the ability of writings to meet the criteria in choosing books for the completed canon. “Canonical” is an adjective used to describe a book that is included in the sacred writings. “Canon” refers to the complete

text of the authoritative Word of God.

8. CONFESS - A term that means simply to “admit”. In the original text, it conveys the idea of “agreeing with” something. The words *homo* and *logeo* combine to make the word “confess” from the original text. When I confess a sin, I am agreeing with God that a behavior is sin. Confession should always be with a heart for obedience.
9. CONFESSING ON THE RUN - This means to confess immediately when I realize I have sinned. I do not wait until a later time to confess, but I do it as soon as I recognize the behavior for what it is.
10. CONFIDENTIALITY - The grace or behavior of not telling anyone something you have heard about another person. It involves controlling one’s tongue.
11. DEATH - The basic meaning of “death” is separation. Various kinds of death are described in the Lifestyle Discipleship material.
12. DISCIPLE - One who is a disciplined learner. To disciple also refers to helping another become a disciplined learner, as well as helping another become a discipler themselves. There is a biblical description of a disciple in the course of this ministry.
13. DISCIPLINE - The term is always used in a proactive way. God disciplines His children because he loves them. This is never punishment although it might seem as such.
14. ETERNAL DEATH - When one dies physically when he is spiritually dead, eternal death takes place. This does not imply the loss of consciousness.
15. ETERNAL FELLOWSHIP - The position I have in Christ’s favor from which nothing can separate me, Romans 8:38,39.
16. EXPERIENTIAL - That which relates to experience in contrast with what the Father says in His Word.
17. EVANGELICAL - An approach that is relatively open but adheres strictly to the Scriptures as the rule for faith and doctrine.
18. EVANGELISM - The act or practice of carrying the Gospel to another. Evangelist is also one of the gifts of Christ to the church.
19. FELLOWSHIP - The significant sharing of my life with others who are members of the Body of Christ. This is from the word *koinonia* in the Greek text.

20. **FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT** - Christian graces that are generated by the Holy Spirit's control of my life, Galatians 5:22,23.
21. **GLORIFICATION** - The ultimate position I will have when practical sanctification is complete. The end process of conforming me into the image of the Lord Jesus. I will no longer sin when I am glorified. This is accomplished when I am changed at the coming of Christ, if we are alive when He returns. Total glorification is complete for the dead when He returns and dead bodies of believers are resurrected. Glorification includes a new body that is perfect and is like Christ's post-resurrection body.
22. **GODHEAD** - A term used in describing God in His tri-personal existence. The Trinity. The members of the Godhead are God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
23. **GRACE** - Grace is an extremely important term or doctrine. We are given eternal life by the grace of God. Grace basically comes from the word "gift", and means "unmerited favor". There is nothing one can do to deserve grace. Grace is only obvious in the face of the undeserving. Nothing can undo grace. It is everything for nothing to those who don't deserve anything, Ephesians 2:8-9.
24. **GRIEVING THE SPIRIT** - A term used in Scripture having to do with disobeying or breaking a commandment of Scripture. This usually involves moral or ethical issues.
25. **HOLY SPIRIT** - The third person of the Trinity. The person who does the "mothering" work in the Godhead. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer today. He baptizes them into the Body of Christ, calls men, regenerates, renews, gives gifts, empowers, and controls the believer. His purpose in the world is to point men to Christ and bring glory to Him.
26. **HUMAN GOODNESSES** - Any good work that is not generated by the Holy Spirit and His control. The work of God at the Bema seat will be to separate human goodness from the fruit of the Spirit. Human goodness will be destroyed at that time.
27. **HYPOSTATIC UNION** - The doctrine of the two natures of Christ. In the incarnation (Christ becoming man), Jesus had two natures. He was God and He was man. He was as much God as if He had never been man, and as much man as if He had never been God, and yet both in vital union — He was the God-man. Not half God and half man, nor man plus God or God plus man. He was fully God and fully man in eternal union.
28. **INCARNATION** - A term used in connection with the coming of Christ into the world as a man. Christ, who was God, became the God-man in the incarnation.

29. **INERRANCY** - A view that considers all of Scripture to be true and equally inspired, including the historical, geographical, and scientific teachings.
30. **INSPIRATION** - The means by which God has communicated to us His Word. Plenary Verbal Inspiration means that the Scriptures are wholly inspired and God-breathed. The Spirit of God has guarded the communication of Scripture through man so that we have the precise meaning the Father has wanted us to have in our possession. Yet He used the personalities of men through whom He spoke. An example are the writings of Luke when compared with John. Luke was a physician and used medical terms.
31. **JUSTIFICATION** - A legal declaration involving God's free grace in which He pardons the sinner, making him innocent, and reckons the believing sinner righteous. Justification gives the believing sinner perfect permanent standing before the Father.
32. **KENOSIS** - A term referring to the emptying of Christ in the incarnation, Phil 2:5-11. In the Kenosis, Christ surrendered the independent use of His divine attributes to the Holy Spirit. This He did perfectly during the years of His humiliation as a man. Today He exercises these attributes independently, though in concert with the Holy Spirit and the Father.
33. **NATURAL MAN** - A term used to describe man in his natural condition and state as he is from Adam in his unregenerated state.
34. **OIKOS** - The unique group of people around each individual who represent those to whom the individual can witness on a daily basis.
35. **OMNIPOTENT** - A term applied only to God. An attribute of God that means that He is all powerful. God can do anything that is consistent with His perfect character.
36. **OMNIPRESENT** - A term applied to God. An attribute of God that has to do with His being ever-present in every place. Not simply His influence, but God Himself is everywhere on earth and in heaven equally at the same time.
37. **OMNISCIENT** - An attribute of God that means that He is all-knowing. There is nothing that is not known to Him if He chooses to remember. It is also possible for this all-knowing One to choose to not remember when it concerns a sinner who confesses a sin. For both the confessing believer and the sinner who trusts Christ there is perfect non-remembrance by an act of His will.
38. **PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE** - A life statement that involves direction for daily behavior.



39. **PLENARY** - A word denoting the fullness of something. In this manual, it is used to denote the extent of inspiration when applied to Scripture.
40. **PRACTICING SPIRITUALITY** - Learning to live with my life controlled by the Holy Spirit. The term is used as it concerns a believers relationship with the Holy Spirit.
41. **QUENCHING THE SPIRIT** - A term used in Scripture that refers to not following the leadership and direction of the Holy Spirit in my daily life. It is saying “no” to Him and His direction. It is like throwing water on fire — He is quenched.
42. **RECONCILIATION** - Often used synonymously with atonement. Reconciliation is accomplished through the death of Christ and the acceptance of the work of Christ by the Christian as his own. God is reconciled to man through the death of Jesus. Man is reconciled to God through the new birth. There is no enmity between God and man when reconciliation is fully accomplished.
43. **REPENTANCE** - Meaning literally a change of mind or thinking. Implied is the fact that such change of thinking will result in a change of behavior going in a different direction. “Godly sorrow” will accompany true repentance.
44. **RESISTING THE SPIRIT** - A sin that is committed only by unbelievers. It refers to not responding to the Holy Spirit’s dealing with an individual and his need for salvation. This is the unpardonable sin— resistance to the overt movement of God in man by man himself.
45. **SAINT** - One who has made a covenant with God by sacrifice, Psalm 50:5. Every child of God has positional relationship with the Father and is a saint the moment He believes in Jesus.
46. **SANCTIFICATION** - Sanctification has two basic meanings. The first is positional sanctification which means “to be set apart.” In this sense, every Christian is a saint. I am set apart by the Father for His unique possession. The second meaning deals with practical aspects of my life, as I learn to live effectively and grow as a child of God. Practical sanctification is the process of growing and learning to “walk in the Spirit”. My state or temporal fellowship is involved with sanctification.
47. **SOTERIOLOGY** - An area of theology that relates to the doctrine of salvation. It includes all areas of salvation — past, present and future.
48. **SOUL-SLEEPING** - A teaching that there is no consciousness experience by the dead until the resurrection day.

49. SPIRITUAL GIFT - A spiritual gift is a unique ability given to a Christian by the Holy Spirit at conversion (when we are placed into the body of Christ). Spiritual gifts are distinct from natural abilities or talents and they have the unique purpose of enabling the body of Christ to function efficiently.
50. SPIRITUAL MAN - A term used to describe a man who is controlled by the Holy Spirit. It is an absolute, as is carnality, which is its opposite. When the Holy Spirit controls my life, I am spiritual.
51. STANDING - A term that has to do with my position as a child of God. My standing is permanent and something that is fixed as far as the Father is concerned. Standing is closely related to and is a vital part of the doctrine of justification.
52. STATE - A term that describes my everyday walk or condition which is always imperfect. State is transient (up and down) and varies from day to day. The goal for every Christian is to bring one's state more in line with his standing. State is related to the doctrine of sanctification.
53. TEMPORAL DEATH - "Temporal death" is the opposite of temporal fellowship. It means being out of fellowship with the Father because of unconfessed sin. The basic meaning of the word "death" is separation. When fellowship is broken, there is separation that takes place as far as fellowship is concerned. This does not mean that I have lost my salvation. David prayed, "restore unto me the joy of my salvation." He was in a state of temporal death when he prayed this prayer. See also James 1:15 which refers to temporal death.
54. VOLITION - Taking action. An act of one's will.
55. WEAKER BROTHER - A brother who doesn't understand liberty. Usually he is a relatively new believer or one who is quite immature in the faith. He should not be considered a legalist who knows truth but adds his own interpretation to a situation which is not a Scriptural prohibition. One who is tabooistic is a legalist. Both "legalists" and "weaker brothers" live by external standards rather than by an inward life controlled by the Holy Spirit.

# COMMITMENT

## Commitment

### An Elaboration on the Nature and Effect of Commitment

Emery Nester, Ed.D., D.Min.

"Nothing ever seems to work out for me." Good things that happen to others never take place in my life." "I just don't find it possible to stick to anything and find it truly meaningful." Discouraging statements like these are spilled out to counselors without end. Few people seem to find purpose today. This writing is about this kind of struggle. And the same basic problem underlies most experiences that create such cries.

Commitment has been a matter of personal concern for years. I have been aware of its implications and importance, yet many things have puzzled me. I want to share some of the aspects of this variable that are now clearer to me.

Although I have felt commitment has paramount importance, I guess I had no idea so many people were committed to nothing—indeed had never even thought about being committed to something. I have asked many people in recent years to describe what was really important in their lives. To my amazement, many have been unable to answer, or if they do, they stumble around and give only vague responses (a common response is "to be happy"). Yet to be able to give a firm and clear answer to this question is absolutely necessary for effective functioning in the world at present. Lack of specificity in commitment characterizes the "instant society" in which we live.

### Commitment and Psychological Health

Commitment has supreme significance in my life when mental health is considered. I know of no variable included in a lifestyle more important than an adequate, healthy, goal which has become central to me—things that give life purpose and meaning—direction! The individual who is not committed, or is vague in his commitments, will be a person who wanders around in life with little direction or achievement. He characteristically moves from one person to another, from one career to another, and his neurosis is shared as unhappiness with his lack of accomplishment in anything or any relationship. It is impossible to be successful without commitment...to be stable in relationships or careers unless one is committed...to ever find meaning and purpose in life without a te-

nacity that is characterized by firm commitments to something.

This is true because commitment prevents disintegration in an individual's life. The problem with survival in a relationship, career or in anything I do in life is really not that which is outside of me. More often it's the movement of my inner strength and tenacity that enables me to endure, succeed, and conquer. For this reason, commitment to Jesus produces sweeping changes in the life of any individual who makes Him his object of commitment. The God of the universe dwells in me when I am committed to Him. Scripture describes this as becoming a new creation in Christ, with old things passing away and all things becoming new, 2 Corinthians 5:17. In another sense, it might be called the reorganizing of the core of my life; a reshaping of my heart and its desires. And with this reorganization, I am able to mold with new vigor the environment and directions I truly desire to pursue. I am no longer like the keys of a piano played upon by forces beyond me and my control.

Perhaps no psychological variable is more important to my overall health than commitment. What is of supreme importance to me will become the focus of my entire life. Conversely, the direction of my behavior usually tells the story of my true commitments. Consider the reasons for the significance of commitments. First let me say that a goal to be of highest value to my mental health must be both enduring (lasting) and of greatest value. It is possible to have enduring goals that will lead to the destruction of an individual. A lifelong goal of hedonism or self-gratification will surely lead to ultimate disintegration and ruin. On the other hand, a goal may be of value and not enduring. One can pursue a college or graduate education, but when that is achieved (if it is the chief goal of life), what then? One is back to square one or first base and must look for other goals. So let's agree that to be of ultimate value psychologically, that to which I am committed must be both enduring and of value.

What is it then that helps me function effectively psychologically, spiritually, and physically, when I have valued and enduring commitments?

First, there is a sense of direction and purpose for my life. At last, I know where I am going and can begin to move in that direction in increments.

Secondly, I begin to experience a sense of accomplishment which almost everyone agrees is important. Maslow speaks of this as "self-actualization", and places it at the top of his hierarchy of human needs when discussing ultimate psychological health. Surely this is to be desired as a Christian for the glory of God.

Thirdly, systematic and progressive movements toward these goals lessen stress in my life that relates to indecision, uncertainty, and poor self-concept. These conditions are often the products of no direction.

In the fourth place, being committed to something of value ensures my movement towards an efficiency of functioning in my walk with God, my ministry, my interpersonal relationships and my vocational pursuits (which are the

ways I express myself to my environment). This, in turn, produces a healthy harmony in my life that moves me towards a place of honesty and fulfillment, purpose and meaning. Psychological health aids physical health and assists in long life and productivity.

I have wondered, incidentally, why people in helping professions are seldom ill? Could it be that their goals as true people helpers are more apt to be both of value and possessing endurance?

### Commitment and My Tomorrows

The matter of the future is sometimes important to people as they think of commitment. "I fear commitment because I am not really sure what the future holds for me." "Things could change so easily!" "What if this or that happens?" Thinking like this does not belong in the order of commitment. It simply doesn't fit! This is a call for passivity—just drifting with the stream—moving with passing events. It is like saying, "There is no purpose in committing because I'm just a victim anyway." But this kind of attitude, in reality, deprives an individual of inner stability and direction, as well as an opportunity to control the environment in a way that enables him to be where he would really like to be.

If I would like to have a successful relationship with a person, I might hope for that, try to have a relationship to see where it will lead, and even make a half-hearted effort if "all goes well". But if I never commit, when I experience problems, I will move away and begin to look for another relationship. Think of coming to God in that way and you think of something that assures failure in the life from the very beginning. I do not come to Him with the idea of seeing what it is like...being tentative in the sense of "if few difficulties arise perhaps I will be able to continue". Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn ME." Not "Come unto me and learn my benefits." "Yoke" is a word rich in meaning. It implies commitment to the Lordship of Jesus and in turn makes me an obedient servant and laborer with a will that is only HIS. This certainly rules out tentativeness in this commitment. We share His yoke. "Take my yoke!" Yoke implies submission. We are yoked together with Him through our commitment.

This is also true in the matter of interpersonal relationships. I have a desire for a relationship with a person. I get to know him deeply. I make a commitment to him and turn my life in his direction. Let me try to describe what it means to be committed.

1. This person or cause is supremely important in my life... almost a matter of life and death.
2. With an act of my will I make a commitment and the entire direction of my life is going to be turned toward it.
3. My inner life is reorganized at the core or heart to protect and enhance that commitment and fortify it against any enemy. 1 John 2:15-16 tells me not to love the world-system. I work to set my

affections on things above, Colossians 3:1. It is ever in my mind and heart to protect that commitment to the Lord Jesus. So also with the person I am committed to...ever protecting, ever enhancing, doing nothing that would threaten or endanger that commitment to the beloved one. I even approach my career or ministry in this way. We live in a day when characteristically people are involved in multiple projects or careers and fail to give full effort to anything.

4. Honesty will characterize my inner and outer life in an effort to become transparent in my overall behavior and be consistent with my commitment.
5. I will hang on with all my strength and life. Winston Churchill once asked an enemy why an English bulldog's nose slanted backward. Upon receiving no answer, he stated, "Because when he gets hold of you, he never lets go, and he still has to breathe." Commitment is getting hold of something and never letting go.

To live life without commitments is like drifting in the wide ocean with no oar or compass. It is to only hope that somehow I will find that situation, that person that promises me love and esteem, that paradise that gives me purpose, that involvement that will enable me to develop and become all I can become instead of knowing only stark meaninglessness and stunted usefulness.

No one models commitment more clearly than the Apostle Paul. A zealous Ph.D. rabbi, he tenaciously studied the Scriptures. He kept the law carefully and meticulously. He persecuted the early church with zeal, giving his approval to the murder of Stephen. And when the Lord seized him on the road to Damascus, he became a bold zealot for Christ. Hear him speak in Philippians 3:13,14, "...forgetting those things which are behind, and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Is this not commitment? Is this not reorganization...the turning a life completely in the direction of not only a cause, but more preeminently, a PERSON?

### Long Commitment in the Same Direction

It is important to consider that commitment usually implies long-term involvement...long movement in the same direction...not a "wait and see" attitude. A hesitant attitude only leads to the disintegration of the individual and true commitment. Such hesitance is the way to ensure no movement. One cannot ensure failure in a relationship more firmly. It will go nowhere if it lacks genuine positive commitment. There is no basis for working with ongoing everyday problems when one does not have the inner reorganization in the very heart of his person to make that relationship precious. Such a relationship is doomed when the newness wears off. It will assuredly fail. And those in such a relationship will stagger from one relationship to another experiencing their lack of success in relating, but never knowing why it's so bad.

In this "instant society", people tend to shun long commitments. There is a "tired look" at so much time being involved in the accomplishment of something worthwhile. Because of this, there is hesitance in working toward what could truly be of value; i.e., (1) a college education, (2) preparation for ministry, (3) a genuinely fulfilling career, (4) a loving and fulfilling relationship, or (5) the accomplishment of a ministry that would transform a region and significantly impact the world. This is reality...the passing of two years, the movement of three or four years into yesterday...these will speedily pass whether or not I commit myself to anything. And unless I am committed to something, they will simply become dead, wasted years like all my other "chunks of time".

### Commitment and My Decision-Making

Commitment involves a mental attitude and an act of one's volition. It is characteristic of commitment that one decides what is going to be his or what direction he is going to take.

Peter sat in my office struggling within himself to understand his personal commitments. He had achieved a place of leadership in his profession, but his life was in shambles. He brushed a tear as he sought to understand the direction of his life that had led him to such a place of misery. Commitments? Actually, he couldn't remember ever committing himself to anything. But there were unconscious commitments, and after struggling in silence for what seemed like hours, he burst into tears and exclaimed, "Pleasure and self-gratification are in reality my only commitments!" Then he wept profusely, but his heart seemed relieved. Peter is today committed to Christ and His ministry of discipleship.

Where are your commitments today? How committed are you to anything? Is only what brings you pleasure and self-gratification your true motivators? Are you "wishy-washy" and vague in what is truly important to you?

### Commitment and Flexibility

Many years ago, Gordon Allport wrote a little book entitled Becoming. In this brief homily, he coupled the concept of tentativeness with commitment. His basic proposition was that tentativeness needed to accompany commitment in order to help us not become encapsulated. Otherwise growth would be blocked. Developing his basic ideas, he talked of the "half-sure—whole-hearted" person. I both like and dislike this term. I could surely never say that commitments—my commitment to God, the Scriptures, my major goals in life—are from a "half-sure" vantage point. There was nothing "half-sure" about my coming to Jesus that night many years ago in the middle of the North Atlantic. I was a tired, helpless and seemingly hopeless young sailor with no goals, feeling doomed. I crawled to the feet of the Savior wanting only Him, the for-



givenness of my sin, the cleansing of my wounds. Tentative? No—desperate! And needing to hook my life to something or Someone Who would give me hope and meaning. As a result of that commitment so many years ago, I KNOW Jesus! He lives! I could never doubt that. There is nothing tentative about that.

On the other hand, none of us want to feel trapped in a position where there is no room to think, rethink and grow. Human understanding is at best flawed and frayed. It would seem that tentativeness or openness does belong somewhere with commitment. Perhaps the concept of tentativeness should be replaced by "flexibility". Tentativeness does not seem to adequately relate to faith and hope. But flexibility can be consistent with growth and the allowing of adequate thought processes for further investigation and dealing with the unknown.

When commitment is not of supreme importance in an individual's life, the individual is usually characterized by tentativeness in what he does. And this is not commitment at all.

Consistent with growth and stability is commitment with the ability to make shifts and alterations as needed in the months and years that follow any commitment.

It would seem that I first turn my life in the direction of my chief desires—my dreams. I experience the reorganization of the core of my inner life as a result of these acts of my will or volition. My commitment dominates my thinking, and my way of thinking energizes my commitment. I allow nothing else to impinge upon that choice—that desire—that passion. I cultivate it, facilitate it, guard it! If I must ultimately reevaluate it, that in itself can only make commitment stronger. It is unlikely that commitment to something of real continuing value and enrichment will be shaken by a flexibility that allows rethinking and new ways to enhance and strengthen that commitment.

But I do not begin with tentative ideas that exclude FIRM commitments. That kind of commitment leads nowhere. That is nothing! Commitment, not tentativeness, is for the strong, the resolute, the courageous; for dreamers and acquirers, and achievers!

### Illustrating Commitment and Flexibility in Proper Perspective

I would like to give two illustrations that describe what we have just been talking about. These are illustrations of tentative commitments as opposed to commitments with flexibility.

The first involves participation in a discipling ministry. Tentative commitments involve this kind of thinking.



"I know I should grow, learn how to study the Scriptures, witness and pray. I'm really very busy (who isn't), but perhaps I can work it into my busy schedule cluttered with my many other (tentative) commitments. So I'll try! I'm going to try to make it a part of my life."

The basic commitment in this instance is to tentativeness rather than discipleship. My prediction is that this person will become a dropout—someone who falls by the wayside. Why? Simply because there is no real commitment.

Then there is the person who is committed, but is able to integrate flexibility into his commitment. The following is an illustration of how he thinks.

"I want to grow, learn to share the Gospel, perfect my walk and pray effectively. I'm going to make room for this and invest enough time to make this productive. If it becomes too difficult for me, I'll make some adjustments or changes so I can continue. But I will do it. It will become part of my life." In this instance, the basic commitment is to discipleship, and to the Lordship of Jesus.

A final illustration of the principles of commitment and tentativeness is one relating to interpersonal relationships. Part of the bond that God recognizes in a living relationship relates to commitment. The partners are to leave father and mother and be committed to each other—"leaving and cleaving".

But if my commitment is one that is tentative commitment, it is more like "I'll try. Let's see if we like each other, can live together compatibly, handle resources mutually, get along with each other and our families, and stay in love. If we are successful, we will continue until we tire of things, and then, perhaps, if we must, go our separate ways."

Again, this is not a commitment to another person. It is only a commitment to tentativeness in a relationship, but not a commitment to a person. And there is no "reorganization at the core of one's life." Direction, and power to move in that direction, is lacking. There is little that will make the relationship work. Again, this is no commitment at all, and given time, erosion will set in and the relationship will surely fail.

On the other hand, commitment to love a person—to cleave to that person—to enhance the relationship with flexibility and tentativeness that will enable one to deal effectively with the unknown...yet always in the context of loving that person and being committed to them...this is COMMITMENT! It is commitment that will enable a relationship to grow and flourish. This reorganizes my inner life, and that reorganization is the secret of strength and wisdom in dealing with the unknown.

### Commitment and the End of Life

Words about commitment would be incomplete without something concerning the importance of commitment in relation to the full scope of my existence. Erikson has written extensively in the area of psychosocial development. His works are held in high regard in academic circles. He has suggested stages of development that are helpful in understanding problems that individuals face as they grow and experience life.

Following the period that relates to mid-life, which is almost always a struggle for adults in contemporary society, we approach a time he describes as "Integrity verses Despair". This is when an individual begins to look backward (not around as in mid-life) and attempts to see his life in terms of accomplishments. He says one will have a sense of integrity if he sees he has made a difference. If not, there can only be continuing despair. We psychologists will often encounter a person about to enter old age who is in a state of all-consuming depression. This has been called involuntional melancholia and it is a depression specifically related to the despair of having made no difference in the world, and the awareness that it probably isn't ever going to be any different.

Of course, Christ and commitment to Him can make a difference at any age. But try to imagine what your life will be like twenty or thirty years from now with the same level of commitment that characterizes your present life. Will you feel positive about the impact and difference you have made?

Then think of Paul, the apostle. Listen to his words at the end of his life. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith," 2 Timothy 4:7. Again, he could write the church at Thessalonica and say, "For who is our hope or joy or crown of exulting? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?" 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20. Again in the book of Daniel, chapter 12 and verse 3 we read, "And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."

Being able to participate in these kinds of riches toward the later years of one's life speaks of the need of strong and early commitments. There will be a time in most of our lives when we will take a hard look backwards and review what is now unchangeable for all eternity. Will you be able to see solid relationships, trophies of grace, consistent growth and development toward being conformed to the image of God's dear Son? Or will it be a relaxed "laissez-faire" tentative approach to life that has produced a trail of nothing!

Someone once said..."To sow a thought is to reap an act. To sow an act is to reap a tendency. To sow a tendency is to reap a habit. To sow a habit is to reap a character. To sow a character is to reap a destiny." What I am committed to today will determine my tomorrows. Commitment to Jesus and His Lordship is the only valid action that assures integrity and joy in the future.

## AN INTRODUCTION TO DISPENSATIONAL TEACHING

### An Introduction To Dispensational Teaching

Not every Bible student accepts the idea of "arrangements" or dispensations. Nor will every teacher who accepts the idea hold to seven. Someone said, "Anyone who believes that salvation is through the Blood of Christ rather than through the blood of bulls and goats is a dispensationalist." For this writer, Scripture is more easily handled when it is looked at in this way. Accepting the full validity of this approach is not necessary for growth and certainly it is not necessary for salvation or being considered a lover of the Scripture or the Lord Jesus Himself.

There are two basic ways of approaching the Scripture and its interpretation. One is through **covenant theology** and thinking. The other is through what we will call **dispensational** approaches. Among the differences are those listed below:

1. The place of the Jewish race in history and in the economy of God.
2. The place of the Kingdom of God on the earth.
3. The Church—its beginning, existence, and ultimate place.
4. The coming of the Lord Jesus and His personal reign on earth.
5. The relationship between circumcision and baptism and their place and meaning in the Church today.
6. Many things that relate to the doctrine of last things such as various judgments as opposed to one general judgment.

#### **Definition: What is a dispensation?**

We will define a dispensation with a very simple statement. "A dispensation is a period of time in which God deals with a particular people in a particular way." This is a rather simple definition, but it adequately covers the concept. Another definition might be stated as a particular arrangement God has with His people.

### The Seven Dispensations

Creation of the universes

Creation of man and present earth

Covenant	Genesis 1:27-31; 2:15-17
Failure	Genesis 3:1-7
Judgment	Genesis 3:14-24 - Expulsion from Eden

Covenant	Genesis 4:7
Failure	Genesis 4:8; 6:2-5 - Flood needed to save the race
Judgment	Genesis 7 - Flood

Covenant	Genesis 9:1,6,7,11-17
Failure	Genesis 9:20,21 - Babel
Judgment	Genesis 11:6-9

Covenant	Genesis 12:1-3
Failure	Gen. 12:4; 13:1-18; 14:1-24
Judgment	Slavery in Egypt, Ex. 1-12

Covenant	Exodus 19,20
Failure	Matt. 27:32-56, Ex. 32.15-35
Judgment	Romans 11 and Titus' destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

Covenant	Acts 16:31
Failure	Man's unbelief
The Rapture	The Great Tribulation
Judgment	Rev. 4:19 - Daniel's 70th week

Covenant	Rev. 20:1-6, Matt. 25:31-46 - Satan bound
Failure	Rev. 20:7-9
Judgment	Rev. 20:9-11 - Great White Throne

New Jerusalem

## Characteristics of Each Dispensation

1. A covenant between God and man.
2. Man's failure in relation to that covenant.
3. God's punishment for failure.
4. Salvation by faith. Grace and faith form an unmistakably clear means of salvation in any age.

## The Dispensations

### I. Innocence

#### A. The Covenant

Location of man--in the Garden of Eden, Genesis 1,2.

Content of the Covenant, Genesis 1:27-31; 2:15-17. "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth." To work the Garden of Eden and take care of it. "You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it, you will surely die."

#### B. Man's Failure--Genesis 3:1-7.

Eve allowed herself to be deceived by Satan and ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil then gave it to Adam.

They realized they were sinners and tried to cover their naked ness with fig leaves (symbolic of works).

They rationalized and displaced blame for their sin to the serpent. This was the beginning of mechanisms of defense or ego defenses.

#### C. God's response to their sin, Genesis 3:14-24.

He banished them from Eden, vs. 23.

He cursed the ground and introduced toil to labor, vs. 17.

Pain in childbearing and man's rule over his wife, vs. 16.

Physical death, vs. 19. The day they ate, they began to die.

*A dispensation is a period of time in which God deals with a particular people in a particular way."*

#### D. Grace and Salvation.

The first promise of a Redeemer, Genesis 3:15. (The seed of the woman--Christ. The first sacrifice, Genesis 3:21. Innocent life for the guilty (an animal).

The way to the tree of life is guarded, 3:24.

### II. Conscience

#### A. The Covenant

The location of man outside the Garden.

Content of the Covenant.

It begins in Genesis 4:7. Man is to live and let conscience be his guide. If he does not do well, sin lies at his door ready to pounce on him.

#### B. Man's failure.

The first murder — Cain killed Abel, Genesis 4:8.

Cain's lack of **faith** in the offering he brought.

Sons of God took the daughters of men and cohabited with them. Genesis 6:2-5. See also 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6. The result of this sort of union was great wickedness in the earth and a contamination of the human race. God was sorry that He made man.

#### C. God's **judgment** upon the earth, Genesis 7.

The flood destroyed all but Noah and his family.

#### D. Grace and Salvation.

The sacrificial system was established--See Abel's offering.

The birth of Methuselah suggests the longsuffering of God. The name **Methuselah** means "when he is dead, it shall come." This man lived longer than any man has ever lived. The year he died, the flood came, Genesis 5:21.

The ark was a type of Christ. It had only one door of entrance. It was the only refuge from the ravages of judgment that God sent to

destroy the earth. Entrance to the ark was open to all. One only had to enter the ark to be spared.

Immediately after the flood, the length of man's life was shortened, taking away longer years for man to get himself into more difficulty.

Enoch walked with God and God took him. He was the father of Methuselah, Genesis 5:24. Enoch was like believers who will be alive when the Lord returns. They will never die.

### III. Human Government

#### A. The Covenant

Be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth, Genesis 9:1.

Capital punishment — a life for a life — was established, Genesis 9:6-7.

God will never again destroy the entire earth with water, Genesis 9:11-17. He set a rainbow in the heavens to remind Himself of this promise.

#### B. Man's failure

Noah's drunkenness, Genesis 9:20-21 (though he may not have known the wine would make him drunk).

Man gathered in rebellion against God and in disobedience to His command. They deliberately violated His command to disperse and cover the entire earth.

Man built a tower in defiance of God...Babel.

#### C. God's punishment, Genesis 11:6-9

He confused their languages so they wouldn't understand each other and therefore would have to go elsewhere.

The place was called Babel, and here different languages began.

#### D. Grace and salvation.

The sacrificial system and shedding of blood spoke of salvation by grace.

#### IV. Promise

Up to this point, God had dealt with larger groups of people. Now He turns to one man, Abraham.

##### A. The Covenant, Genesis 12:1-3.

Abraham would leave his family.

He would go to a place God would show him.

God would make Abraham a great nation.

God would bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him.

This was an unconditional covenant.

##### B. Abraham's failure.

His obedience was incomplete.

He took Lot, his nephew, who was to be a source of difficulty for him. Genesis 12:4; 13:1-18; 14:1-24; Chapter 18.

Abraham fled to Egypt when there was a famine in the land of plenty.

Abraham took Hagar, an Egyptian handmaiden, for a wife. Genesis 16.

##### C. God's punishment or response. Slavery in Egypt.

The book of Genesis begins with God and ends in a "coffin in Egypt".

##### D. Salvation and grace are seen in the justifying and giving righteousness to Abraham, Genesis 15:6. He was justified by faith. Joseph, a person, exemplified and typified Christ.



## V. Dispensation of Law

### A. The Covenant, Exodus 19-20. Jehovah, Who had borne them on eagles' wings, (grace) Exodus 19:4, was now giving the law.

"Keep my covenant and be a treasured people among all nations."

The response of the people, Exodus 19:8, "we will do everything the Lord has said."

The Lord gave the LAW.

Please observe: the law immediately separated Israel from God, Exodus 19:12-14. And so is its effect today in the world.

The purpose of the giving of the law.

To hold us prisoners and lead us to Christ, Galatians 3:23-24.

We become conscious of sin, Romans 3:20.

The law enables us to see the sinfulness of sin, Romans 7:7-12.

It seems that the law was never given for the purpose of giving life, but rather for the purpose of helping man see his sinfulness and failure more clearly.

### B. Man's failure.

Exodus 32:15-35. While Moses was getting the law, Israel was practicing idolatry and worshipping the golden calf.

Continual failure and unbelief on the part of Israel, during the period of the judges and kings. There was a continual return to idolatry.

The crucifixion of the Savior sent by the Father--the rejection of the Messiah of Israel, Matthew 27:32-56.

### C. God's punishment for failure.

The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. by Titus.

The removal of Israel from her land of promise.

The cutting off of the natural branches and the grafting in of the wild olive branches, Romans 11. Salvation is come to the Gentiles.

*"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 God."*

D. Salvation and grace is seen through the sacrificial system. The Passover lamb and its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God's providing.

## VI. Dispensation of The Church

Time: From the day of Pentecost to the second coming of Jesus to reign in His kingdom.

- A. Covenant with man, Acts 16:31. "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved — you and your household."
- B. Man's failure — The majority of the world lies in darkness and has rejected the direct message of the grace of God.
- C. The punishment for man's failure — Daniel's 70th week, Daniel 9, the Great Tribulation, Revelation 4-19. The Tribulation is the fulfillment of the yet unfulfilled prophecy relating to the 70th week of Daniel's prophetic vision. See the book of Daniel in the Old Testament.
- D. Grace and salvation. Man is saved by believing in and placing hope for eternity in the Son of God, the Lamb of God's providing. The Church, which did not fail during this time is delivered from the final punishment and taken to heaven, Revelation 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17; 2 Thessalonians 2:7; John 14:1-3.

The Holy Spirit in the Church, which has been the Restraint of the working of the mystery of iniquity, 2 Thessalonians 2:7, will be taken out of the way before the beginning of the Tribulation. This will set the stage for the final drama which will culminate in the Great Tribulation and the return of the Lord to smite the antichrist and the binding of Satan for 1,000 years.

## VII. The Kingdom

The Millennial Reign of Christ over the Earth

This is the last of the arrangements God has with men and it will involve the personal reign of Jesus Christ over the earth. At last, the King is here! Men have long said, "If only Jesus were here in person, things would be different." Now He is here!

- A. The **covenant** with men, Matthew 25:31-46, (the judgment of the living nations who enter the kingdom and millennial reign) Revelation 20:1-6.

Satan bound for 1,000 years so he cannot deceive the nations.

Christ will reign from Jerusalem on the throne of David.

The first resurrection (all dead believers including Israel and the Church).

Glorified and unglorified people will be together on the earth.

War will end, Isaiah 2:1-5.

The former curse will be lifted, Isaiah 11:1-9.

These are only a few of the blessings involved in the covenant made during the kingdom age.

B. The FAILURE of men, Revelation 20:7-9.

Satan is released for a little while at the end of this time. Once again men are deceived by him, and they gather themselves to do battle against Jesus the King and His saints. It makes no difference if Jesus is here or not. Men are yet the same. With Satan again loose to lead rebellion against God, that rebellion comes.

C. The JUDGMENT of God, Revelation 20:9-15.

God's dealings in judgment result in fire that destroys Satan's armies, and the Great White Throne Judgment, which is the final judgment before the eternal state and the New Jerusalem.

D. Grace and salvation —There is no indication that there will be any other method of salvation during the Kingdom than has characterized all time. The Risen King and Sacrificial Lamb will be here. Jesus is the only Way, the Truth and the Life, John 14:6.

*Notes*

# MANY ASPIRE—FEW ATTAIN

## Many Aspire — Few Attain

by

Walt Henrichsen

War has plagued mankind from the dawn of time. The carnage of the twentieth century alone is unspeakable. We also fight a war in which conflicts between nations are merely a symptom. We wrestle in war day after day. We fight a spiritual conflict. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in the high places” (Ephesians 6:12). This war, which we who serve Christ have fought for centuries, is escalating.

When I was at Wycliffe Bible Translators’ jungle camp in Mexico many years ago, we used to go on survival hikes into the jungle. I loved camping out, building campfires and sleeping around them in lean-tos. We built big fires because fire drove the wild animals deep into the jungle. If, however, you happened to wake up during the night as the campfire dwindled, you would observe that the lower the fire got, the braver the animals became and the closer they would come. They often formed a circle around the camp, and you could see pairs of eyes looking at you. Those eyes gave us a strong incentive to throw another log on the fire, not because it was especially cold, but because we didn’t know exactly what lurked behind those eyes or in the darkness.

In many respects, evangelical Christianity today faces the same encroaching ring of malevolent eyes. Our society is becoming increasingly amoral. As the fires of evangelical Christianity grow dim through a diminishment of biblical preaching across the nation, the people, even those among the Church membership, increasingly give themselves over to sin, greed, the affluent life, permissiveness, a temporal hope, and other selfish pursuits. The eyes of the Evil One come closer and closer to our camp.

As a result of our abandonment of standards of ethical and moral behavior coupled with a repudiation of the inerrancy of scripture, we can see this encroachment of evil in ways not witnessed by past generations. Witch-

craft, demon-worship, Eastern religions, worship of “mother earth”, and the New Age movement, for example, have become prevalent in our society. Although in existence fifty years ago, these manifestations of Satan’s work lurked beneath the surface then, but now have boiled over into everyday life. Demons, demon-possession and sorcery are very, very real. When you dabble in things like astrology and Ouiji boards, you give expression to something which is not a figment of human imagination, but things against which the Bible, throughout its pages, warns us of. The devil is like a roaring lion, and his objective is to devour us. He seeks to do so through drugs, through promiscuity, through the pursuits of unbiblical goals and objectives.

Because of this, we live not only in perilous days, but in days of unprecedented opportunity. The glimmer of hope given us is that “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20). Our involvement in the spiritual battle is a voluntary one. In ancient Israel, before going to war, the officers said to the people, “What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted”? Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faints as his heart” (Deut. 20:8). We may elect not to fight in spiritual warfare as well.

The apostle Paul writes that a soldier must endure sufferings and hardship if he plans on getting into the battle (2 Tim. 2:3). The spiritual battle is a battle for keeps. Count the cost. Don’t enter it unless you plan on winning. Don’t enter it unless you plan on giving your life totally to it. Don’t enter it unless you plan on suffering and enduring hardship because your adversary and his legions of demons play dirty. They fight rough. They give no quarter.

Remember, however, that Christ who is in you is greater than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4). You fight on the winning side. You can take consolation and refuge in that, but it is a bloody campaign nonetheless. The deeper you get into it, the uglier and nastier it gets. The attrition rate in the Christian life is absolutely horrendous. In the final analysis, many aspire, but few attain. Many begin well, but precious few end well.

You can climb on the shelf and render yourself ineffective for God in many ways. You can sign peace treaties with Satan and let him go his way while you go yours. Satan willingly holds the ladder for any who want to climb onto that shelf and hang up their swords. You have that option.

Recruiting people to the battle is not easy. People have given themselves to mediocrity, compromised and gotten fat with self-interest. Even so, many people would love something for which they could give their lives.

After recruiting the idealist, however, it’s an uphill climb from there. The older a person gets, the more he feels like quitting because victory is always an indefinite goal somewhere in the future. It’s not just around the corner. People also tend toward complacency as they realize that progress in the spiritual fight is often intangible.

Fighting this war will take the rest of your lives and consume every ounce of your energy. I often talk to men in their thirties, forties and fifties who were fighting this battle when in their twenties. When I tell them that the objective of my life is to conquer the world for Jesus Christ, they become benevolent towards me. They pat me on the back and say, "That's idealism for you". When you encounter such a person, you will know that you've met someone who aspired, but did not attain. These people started well, and ended poorly. You have met a man who started out like you, but somewhere along the road opted for mediocrity.

Unfortunately, most Christians do the same thing. The cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches and the lust of unholy things enters their lives, choking out the Word. Their lives become unfruitful. They begin to give themselves to big screen TVs, BMWs, trips to Europe - to the acquisition of things. They begin to think in terms of retirement, the stock market, and wealth. They become encumbered with junk and are happily involved in it.

If you want to avoid becoming like so many of these people you'll encounter, if you want to attain as well as aspire, you'll have to make some resolutions in your own soul. You cannot give yourself or the enemy any quarter. Even Paul showed concern about this in his own life when he said, "...lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:27).

As a Christian in the battle, like Paul, you're in the business of reaching out to others. And like Paul, you must commit to not being a castaway. The following, although not an exhaustive list, are some suggestions to help you attain this goal and avoid being cast away. (These are not necessarily in the order of their importance.)

## **1. Have a heart for God**

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple" (Psalm 27:4).

David writes, "One thing I ... seek," not, "These forty things I dabble at." God commands, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6:5). This means with everything you've got. Stop now and evaluate your own life. Do you have a real heart for God? Do you love Him with everything you have in you? Do you find that your life is consumed with the desire to follow Him? I'm not referring to emotionalism or sentimentality. I'm talking about a resolute spirit. Have you committed to following God with all your heart, soul and mind?

The world is filled with many Christians, but very few godly people. There is a big difference between the two. Long before I was married, I prayed,

“Lord, if you ever want me to marry, I don’t want a Christian girl. Give me a godly woman. ‘Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised’ (Prov. 31:30). Lord, that’s what I want. A woman who fears You.”

## **2. Hate sin**

“Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good” (Rom. 12:9).

Close your eyes for a moment and think of something that really nauseates you. That feeling is the word that Paul uses when he says “abhor”. God wants you to view sin like you view the thing you're thinking about right now. That is what God wants your attitude to be. You hate sin so much you almost gag.

Do you have a hatred for sin? Do you find that you abhor that which is evil? We are all plagued with sin, but some Christians don’t hate evil. Some have sin that they embrace to their bosoms. These may be secret sins with which they pet and play. No one else may even know of them - no one but God.

Have you ever thought about the fact that people will do in the presence of the living God what they would never do in front of other people? We are all guilty of this. We do things in front of God that we would never let others see. We think thoughts and commit acts of sin in privacy that we would never think of doing in front of someone else.

God says, “I want you to hate sin. Abhor it.” If there are sins you have embraced, if you have allowed them to rule in your life, if you have never dealt the victory blow to them even though God has given you the power to do so if you'll just appropriate it, you will not survive the battle. If you don’t want to give up the sin because you enjoy it, you will never make it. You’ll end up being one of the casualties of the war.

## **3. Hunger for the Word**

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2).

The third way to lose in the spiritual conflict is to lack a hunger for the Word of God. The Bible, throughout its pages, emphasizes the importance of hiding the Word in your heart. “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col. 3:16). “Thy words were found and I did eat them” (Jer. 15:16). “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee” (Psalm 119:11). “For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12). Your only chance of survival is to take the Word of God and to hide it in your life. The Word cleanses. The Scriptures



give you the life and character of Jesus Christ. The Word of God gives you power and the ability to do the will of God.

How well are you hiding the Word of God in your life? Has the Word become perfunctory for you? Are you doing Bible study or are you studying the Bible? There's a big difference between the two. Most people do Bible study rather than actually studying the Bible. Are you really devoting time to study the Word of God?

I can fill in the blanks in a Bible study outline in about five minutes, but it takes me about twenty hours to really study a chapter of the Word. I can show up to a study with only a few minutes of preparation all the blanks filled in and look and sound pretty good. I have not, though, actually studied the Bible.

If you are not hiding the Word in your heart, if it isn't as milk and honey to you. If you do not regularly drink deep from its well, you won't make it. You, like so many others, will have started well, but finished poorly. You will not survive.

I run across people in the Christian community again and again who say to me, "You now, Henrichsen, you can't be legalistic about these things". They're absolutely right. They also say things like, "When I'm around people like you, they kind of squeeze me into their mold". I know exactly what they are talking about. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man" (1 Cor. 10:13). Remember, however, if you have that attitude, it's not the fault of your Bible study leader or those trying to encourage you in our faith. The fault belongs to you. It's the result of the coldness of your heart and your lack of hunger for God's Word.

Yours is not really a legalistic problem, but a spiritual one. The Bible encourages our daily study and meditation of its passages. When we encourage one another in this we are not being legalistic, unless we go beyond God's admonitions and manipulate others into following our rules, or unless, of course, you feel that you are gaining merit with God because of your effort.

I suggest three steps in an effort to help you use method to unlock the treasures of the Bible rather than becoming trapped in the web of method alone. First, spend a lot of time in the Word. Second, meditate and think on it rather than doing a perfunctory ritual of the form. If you do, you can really make the Word of God come alive. Third, apply what you read to your life. After all, the Word of God was given primarily to change your life, not to increase your knowledge. Make sure you're a doer of the Word and not a hearer only.

#### 4. Trust God

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own un-

derstanding” (Proverbs 3:5).

You are going to have times in your life when the living God is going to take all the chips, to use a gambling analogy, and push them into the middle of the table. He’s going to say, “Friend, we’re going for broke on this one. Let’s see how you’re doing in your Christian life”. More often than not, people when faced with this scenario, start pushing all kinds of panic buttons on the console of life, and end up punching out.

If you really want to walk with God, you have to learn to trust Him. Trusting God begins by trusting Him in the little things, so that when the big things come along, you have established a habit of trust with Him. God will put your faith to the test. A day is going to come when the bottom is going to drop out of your life, the roof is going to cave in.

Are you trusting God in the little things? How about your finances? It’s tough to really trust God in this area. For example, it’s hard to give when you can’t afford it. Giving when you can afford it doesn’t require any faith. Faith comes when you give and can’t afford it.

You can do many things in your life without biblical faith. Without faith you can get married, have a home, even become millionaire. Without faith you can live a normal, relatively happy life. Without faith, however, there is something you cannot do. “Without faith it is impossible to please Him: (Heb. 11:6). If you’re planning on pleasing God, you have got to walk by faith.

God is in control of this world. All He wants from you is intelligent co-operation. Boiled down to one word, it means trust. Many will never make it simply because they cannot muster up enough courage and faith in their soul to really trust Him when the going gets rough.

## **5. Burn bridges and ships**

“No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).

You’ll never attain if you refuse to burn your boats. When Hernando Cortez took his men to Mexico, his objective was to march on Mexico City and conquer Montezuma. When he landed at Vera Cruz, he put all his men on the beach and sent demolition teams out to destroy their ships. As the men stood on the shore watching the ships burn and sink, they realized they could only go forward into Mexico. They could not turn back.

Have you burned your ships? Have you taken the avenues of retreat that your mind maps and maintains and destroyed them? Take, for example, your career. You began your career with a goal and a hope for the future. There’s nothing wrong with that. The problem only arises when the job becomes an

end in itself. Have you given your vocational goals and the direction of your life back to God? If the marketplace is a mission field for you to accomplish God's will, you have a biblical perspective. If it is a means for you to accomplish your own selfish ends, you are living in sin. God wants you to burn that boat.

Have you given your boyfriend, girlfriend or spouse back to God? Many people have trouble with this one. They never make it because they are unwilling to commit this area of their lives to God. Many people spend their youth searching for a spouse. If you are single, have you given your desire to marry back to God? This surrender is especially difficult because God may decide never to bring a partner into your life. Are you content to be single for the rest of your life if this is the will of God? Are you willing to wait ten or fifteen years before you get married? It is better to wait for the person of God's choosing than to marry the wrong person just because you want to get married. If you are married, are you committed irrevocably to your spouse?

Sometime ago, some parents asked me to talk to their 18-year-old daughter. She was a beautiful young girl - sweet and attractive. She was in love with a fellow, and she wanted to marry him. I asked her if it was the will of God. She said, "No". I asked her if she was willing to give him back to God. Again, she said, "No". We talked about it until two or three in the morning, but she had made up her mind that she was going to marry this man, which she did.

About a year and a half later, I was talking to her parents, and I asked how their daughter was doing. They kind of dropped their heads and said, "Oh, fine". I asked what she was doing. "Well, she's got a baby girl...She's living in an apartment by herself. Her husband left her. She's divorced and doesn't know what to do."

"Be not deceived. God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7). The only way you can avoid that terrible, terrible plight is to burn your ships and let God make those decisions.

## **6. Beware the road of no return**

"But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me. And the Lord said unto me, 'Let it suffice then speak no more unto Me of this matter'" (Deut. 3:26).

In this passage Moses is making his closing remarks and reviewing his life with the children of Israel. Remember, he spent the first forty years of his life in the palace, the second forty years tending sheep and squeezing sand between his toes, and the third forty years wandering around the wilderness with a rebellious people, waiting for a generation of them to die. Can you imagine the number of funerals Moses had to attend? Forty years of burying his own gen-

eration, and there was a slug of them. Now he's reviewing his life and he says, "But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me".

Why was God angry? In the wilderness, the children of Israel complained about the water (among many other things). God told Moses to strike the rock and water would come out. Moses struck the rock and, sure enough, water came out. The second time that the same incident occurred, God told Moses to speak to the rock and it would produce water. Moses, however, was angry because of the rebelliousness of the people, and he struck the rock instead. The water came out, but God said, "Moses, you're all through. You will not go into the promised land". Moses had lived over one hundred years of his life with one thing on his mind - getting into that promised land. Over one hundred years! Now he couldn't go in because of one dumb mistake - not two or three or five, just one! Paul tells us that the rock was Jesus Christ, and that he should be smitten only once (1 Cor. 10:4). Because of that, God said, "You will not go into the promised land".

Now Moses pled with God, "Lord, change Your mind. Give me another chance." But, "The Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, 'Let it suffice then speak no more unto Me of this matter.'" In other words, "Moses, don't bring the matter up again." When God says, "Don't speak to me again of this," it's best that we drop it.

The sixth reason why people don't make it through the battle is that they enter the road of no return. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Although this is true, it is not the answer to some wrong decisions.

Take courtship and marriage, for example. If you get married and then wake up some morning and find out that you are lying next to the wrong person, 1 John 1:9 won't get you out of your predicament. God says, and you've promised that this is, "Until death do you part." It was an irrevocable decision. No amount of pleading with God can change it.

If you don't make certain decisions in the center of God's will, you will automatically become disqualified from the race. Like Moses, you'll be all through. God warns us that we cannot accurately estimate the price we must pay for sin, and so we are best served by obeying God in all things.

## **7. Avoid an independent spirit**

The seventh reason why people will never finish the race is they have an independent spirit. They are mavericks, loners. They want to serve God, but in their own way. Perhaps you are like the fellow I asked about the Episcopal form of government. He answered, "Well, I'm against bishops unless I can be one."

A lot of Christians have that attitude. They are against spiritual authority and leadership unless they are the authority and leader. But God says He will not give you that which is your own until you have been part of that which is another man's (Luke 16:12).

The prophet Elijah, as he was about to be taken out of this world, said to his follower Elisha, "Tarry here," (2 Kings 2:2). Elisha answered, "No way, friend. Where you go, I go. There's no way you can get rid of me." Where is the guy or gal you have committed yourself to in an Elijah/Elisha relationship? Where is your Elijah? Where is the person that you are going to lock into by the will of God, and go for broke with? You might say, "Well, God is my teacher. He can speak to me as easily as He can speak through someone else. After all, doesn't the Bible say that you shouldn't be like little tin gods?"

That's true. Nobody is your lord except Jesus. But I'm not referring to lordship. I'm talking about your independent spirit. Do you remember the argument that Dathan, Korah and Abiram gave Moses (Num. 16)? "You take too much upon yourself, Moses. God can speak to us just as easily as he can speak to you. We don't need to follow you." Don't we today say the same thing? Don't we believe in the priesthood of the believer? Don't our prayers get through to God? Can't God speak to us? After all, why should we follow someone else's leadership?

Moses, in response to this argument, said, "Well, let's talk this over with God and see what He says."

"Okay, let's do it."

So they went to God and He said, "Moses, step aside and let me show you what I think of that idea." So Moses stepped aside, and God opened up the earth and Dathan, Korah, Abiram and all that belonged to them fell in. God closed the earth back up and then sent fire and consumed the one hundred or so princes that were with them in rebellion.

God then asked the children of Israel, "Any more questions?" The children of Israel got mad at Moses after that and said, "Moses, you dirty rat, you sicked God on us!" Thousands more died of the plague that day because of their attitude.

Again God asked, "Any more questions?" This time the children of Israel answered, "No, we got the point."

God does not hanker to an independent spirit. You can be a maverick, you can be a loner and you can go your own way. It's up to you. But that's a quick way to climb up on that shelf. It is safer to have a servant's heart and submit to a spiritual authority. We need to make ourselves accountable to others.

## **8. Be wholehearted**

“And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart” (2 Chr. 25:2).

He did what was right, but one thing was lacking - his heart wasn't right, so God couldn't use him. Within a short time Amaziah, the man this verse refers to, was dead.

Some Christians create the impression that they are doing God and their Christian organization a favor by being around - that God Almighty is about the luckiest of the lucky to have them on His team. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Perhaps you have this attitude. God is delighted beyond words over the fact that you are His. He loves you with an everlasting love. But never deceive yourself into believing that you are doing either God or anyone else a favor by being faithful.

It is easy to be wholehearted in the things you like doing, but it's hard to be wholehearted in the things you don't like doing. When I moved into a Navigator home, one of my responsibilities every Saturday morning was to clean the bathroom in the master bedroom. I can remember being on my hands and knees over the toilet bowl with the cleanser and wondering to myself, “Henrichsen, what in the world are you doing here? There are millions of places you could be rather than sitting here looking inside a toilet.”

It's hard enough to clean your own dirt, but it's even harder to clean other people's dirt. How do you rate yourself in terms of your wholeheartedness in being a sergeant of God? I don't mind being a servant of Jesus Christ. In fact, I delight in it. I also don't mind you calling me a servant. You know what I do mind, though? I hate being treated like a servant.

Can you be wholehearted when people treat you like a servant of the Most High God? How about when you're treated like the servant of others? “As you do unto the least of these, you do unto me” (Matt. 25:40).

## **9. Be faithful in the little things**

“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much, and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much” (Luke 16:10).

Many aspire, but few attain because they are unfaithful in the little things. Lorne Sanny, former president of the Navigators, has said that. Charlie Riggs was one of the few men he has ever worked with who could be counted on to carry through a request. Lorne could check it off as accomplished without ever going back to see if it was done. That challenges me tremendously, and I hope you also.

Can people say that about you? When you are given an assignment, when somebody's asked you to do something, can they mark it off as being completed? No matter how small it is - whether it's picking up a couple of postage stamps or mailing a letter - when people have asked you to do something, can they count on you to get it done? Are you faithful in that which is least? Jesus said there is no way He is going to give you greater responsibilities until you have proven yourself faithful in the little things.

Promotion, when it comes, doesn't come from others, it comes from God. "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another" (Psalm 75:6,7). Make sure you commit yourself to faithfulness in even the smallest areas of responsibility.

## **10. Avoid the root of bitterness**

"Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God: lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" (Heb. 12:15).

The tenth reason many will never finish the battle is a bad attitude from envy, jealousy and bitterness - a lack of forgiveness. A bitter spirit, a spirit of resentment, poisons not only to you, but others.

A root of bitterness is the result of real or supposed ill-treatment - it doesn't matter which one. You can get just as bitter thinking people treated you badly as when they actually do. Feeling hurt and sorry for yourself are bedfellows of bitterness. Self pity is the other side of the coin of bitterness. Have you ever felt sorry for yourself? Have you ever felt hurt over the way people have treated you? Then you are bordering on bitterness.

George Washington Carver once said, "I will never let another man ruin my life by making me hate him." Those are profound words. When you hate, you destroy yourself.

If God is God (and He is), then no one can hurt you. No one. That simply means that anytime you are angry with another person, it's not really the other person that you're mad at - it's God. God is the one who allowed that to happen to you. He brought it into your life for a purpose. Whenever circumstances don't go the way you would like, and you become angry and resentful and bitterness begins to creep into your heart, remember your complaint is always with God, never with anyone else. There is no such thing as having a problem with another person. It doesn't exist. Bitterness will destroy you if you let it. The lack of forgiveness is also inconsistent with a relationship with God. Again and again Jesus cautions us that if we do not forgive others, God will not forgive us.



## 11. Accept rebuke

“For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth” (Heb. 12:6).

Some people never make it because they can't take rebuke; they aren't teachable. I don't mind God rebuking me, but the fact of the matter is that God uses other people in his correction of me. Solomon said, “He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul” (Prov. 15:32). If you refuse to take instruction, you are despising and destroying yourself. Why? Because the rebuke God brings into your life is for your own good.

“Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee; rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee” (Prov 9:8). Don't rebuke the foolish because not only is it a waste of time, but they will hate you for it. But if you rebuke the wise, they will love you.

When was the last time someone rebuked you? When was the last time someone sat you down to help point you in the right direction? If it hasn't been recently, it's because people don't consider you to be wise. They think you are a scorner, and they are afraid that if they rebuke you, you won't be able to take it. Don't deceive yourself into believing that you haven't been rebuked lately because you haven't needed it. You need it. The question is, are you getting it? You can tell whether or not people think you are wise by how often they rebuke you. Therefore, invite them into your life and thank them when they confront you.

Once, when a buddy and I were doing Bible study together, his application was to pray that God would send someone into his life to rebuke him at least once a week. What a challenge! How do you feel about praying this for your own life? Remember, the older you get, the harder this will be to accept.

## 12. Stay content

“Thus saith the Lord, ‘Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.’ But they said, ‘We will not walk therein.’ Also I set watchmen over you, saying, ‘Hearken to the sound of the trumpet.’ But they said, ‘We will not hearken.’ Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon the people even the fruit of their thought, because they have not hearkened unto My words, nor to My law, but rejected it” (Jer. 6:16-19).

Some people just want to be different - they don't want to be pushed into any particular mold. So they vacillate from one place to the next. For example, many people are excited about The Navigators or other Christian organizations when they first become involved. It's new; it's exciting; it's fresh. But



then they become critical of the clichés and the traditions of the group. They like feeling unique and different.

When people seek change just for the sake of change, all they end up doing is exchanging one type of conformity for another. While God has created everyone individually and uniquely, He has also set standards and given Christians instruction on how to be the kind of people who will survive the battle and be able to move forward in Christ. The greatest tool He has given us in this endeavor is His Word. It doesn't change with the seasons or conform to new thought patterns. It is applicable for all of time.

### **13. Stay in the People Business**

With age and a myriad of things competing with your time, these things begin to become more important than people. What you have, rather than what God can provide becomes your security. We can easily push this to the extreme. One woman I know does not like to have people in her home because they mess it up. If your home, or any of your possessions, become more important than people, you are already out of the battle. God is interested in people, and when our security is in Him, what happens to things is no longer important. If your rugs, sofa and cut glass bowls are more important than people, you will never qualify for the battle.

### **14. Perseverance, keeping the heart for the battle**

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1).

If you get used to seeing God do miracles, you quickly stop being thrilled and thankful. The things of God can become old hat, and you can fall into complacency. Remember the story of the hare and the tortoise? The hare started out great, but he was sidetracked along the way because it was so easy - success was assured, he thought. The tortoise, on the other hand, just kept plugging along, recognizing that in order to win the race, he needed to put all his efforts into it. And he won. He kept his eye on the objective and did not allow himself to be distracted.

Like the race between the tortoise and the hare, the battle which Christians face today needs to be won. It is for keeps. And also, like that fabled race, the racetrack today needs to be won. It is for keeps. And also like that fabled race, the racetrack contains many potential distractions. Have no doubt that Satan will try everything he can to disqualify you and get you out of the fight.

This list is just a few suggestions to help you from becoming a casualty of the fight, the war that is the Christian life. Too often, Satan is successful in

taking believers out of the battle. While many begin well, few end well. Many aspire, but few attain. My prayer is that you may be one of those that attains.

# MUTUAL DISCIPLESHIP

## Mutual Discipleship

### How to Use Lifestyle Discipleship Without a Discipler

The question sometimes arises concerning the use of Lifestyle Discipleship without a discipler. Obviously, if the manual is used by someone who is interested in developing a discipling ministry, but doesn't have someone near who has experience using the materials, some accommodation to the rules for use must be made.

It is the desire of the writer that it be used worldwide. There will, of necessity, be some who must begin without working with a formal discipler. What is necessary, what is to be expected, and what are some things such an individual can do? In this short discussion, I wish to help you get started on your own if you do not have someone who has used the materials and who will spend time discipling you.

### The Criteria

It is important for you to look at the criteria under the articles "Upon Considering Whom to Disciple, Consider This," and "Minimal Expectations for a Timothy". These are found in the section in the manual called, "Preparation for Discipling", (session 28).

Within these two brief articles, criteria for choosing a person to disciple are discussed. It is important that you meet these criteria. Perhaps I should list a few to reemphasize them.

1. Faithfulness is supreme. Unless you possess the characteristic of faithfulness, it will be difficult to do this on your own. We are urged to "consider the cost" before we set out to build something, and this is certainly important when we begin to build into a life.

2. There needs to be a willingness to make a long commitment. This can only be accomplished if you are willing to get going and become a visionary. Along with everything else, we need people who are willing to make commitments for a lifetime.

3. You may not agree with everything in the manual. That is perfectly all right. But at least, be willing to be taught.

### **Getting Started**

The most obvious way to get going is to find another person who would want to do this with you. Most of what I want to say is related to your being able to find this person.

You will need to review the criteria above and be in agreement. This is very important. You must agree that you will be accountable to each other. You will begin together and continue to work together, discussing the lessons, reviewing the Scripture verses, and praying together just as you would with a discipler. In reality, you will need to consider this person your discipler, and they would consider you the same. Meet together as each other's discipler.

When you reach the place about seven months into the study where we begin discipling another person, each of you will pick up your person and help and supervise each other as you begin meeting with a real live disciple for the first time.

At this point you are on your own as far as discipling is concerned, and you have accomplished this without the ordinary reality of being disciplined yourself. It is a bit sad that you have not had the privilege of enjoying someone coming alongside of you in the same way, but at least you are doing your part in the Great Commission.

Emery Nester

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# THE NEED OF THE HOUR

## The Need of The Hour

by

Dawson E. Trotman

What is the need of the hour? That depends upon the person who is thinking about it. If I'm walking along the street and see a beggar with a tin cup, what's the need of the hour? A dime. If a woman is being taken to the hospital, what's the need of the hour? A doctor. But in Christian work, what is the need of the hour? I started to list the things that we often feel are the need, which if supplied, would end our troubles.

Some say, "Well, if I just had a larger staff..." Would more staff be the answer? Today many a minister would like to have an assistant, and many a mission would like to have more missionaries. The cry of returned missionaries is always for more men and women to fill up the ranks...to them, the need of the hour.

Others say, "We don't need more workers, but if we had better facilities, if we just had more office space and more buildings and bigger grounds and a base of operation...if we had a place like Glen Eyrie...then we could do the job."

In certain areas of the world they say it's communication we lack, or better transportation, or better means to take care of health. The need of the hour on many a mission field is merely a radio. But if you get that radio, there's another need, and something else, and something else. Many feel it is literature. I hear that in my travels all over the world, "We just lack literature."

I know of people today who are saying, "If we could just get into a certain place." For years people have been on the borders of Nepal saying, "If we could just get in there." To them the need of the hour is an open door into Nepal. Right now hundreds of people are saying, "If we could just get into China." The Bible says, "My God shall supply all your needs." If the need were an open door into China, why doesn't God open it? "These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth...I have set before thee an open door."

Paul found closed doors, but closed doors to him weren't the problem. I

really believe these closed doors were used of God to show him the open doors he was to go through next. I believe if God wanted to put His hand over the great country of China tonight, turning the Reds into confusion so they would start killing each other (a good deal of which they are already doing), He could do it. I believe in forty-eight hours the door to China could be opened.

Some say, "We need more time. If we just had more time..." Others say, "If I just weren't so old, if I were young again." People have said to me, "Daws, if I had known when I was twenty years old what I know now, I could have done a hundred times more for the Lord. Why didn't I."

Often the biggest need of the hour seems to be money. "If we just had money...That's the answer for a larger staff, more facilities, literature, communications and transportation...If we just had money."

What is the need of the hour? Frankly, I don't believe it is any of these. I am convinced that the God of the universe is in control, and He will supply all of these needs in His own way and in His own time, all else being right.

Let me tell you what I believe the need of the hour is. Maybe I should call it the answer to the need of the hour. I believe it is an army of soldiers, dedicated to Jesus Christ, who believe not only that He is God, but that He can fulfill every promise He has ever made, and that there isn't anything too hard for Him. It is the only way we can accomplish the thing that is on His heart...getting the Gospel to every creature.

In 1948 I was in Germany for six days. I had been put in touch with Colonel Paul Maddox, Chief of Chaplains for all of Europe, and through his recommendation to the Commanding General I got into Germany. I invited fifty German fellows to meet with me for three days, and twenty-five of them came. I talked to them every evening for three hours, beginning to lay before them the Great Commission, and the idea that I felt Germany not only needed to hear the Gospel, but that Germans themselves needed to obey the Great Commission by sending missionaries.

I gave them the privilege of asking questions during the meetings, and every once in a while a hand would go up. I was trying to lay upon their hearts the very thing the Lord laid on the hearts of the disciples when He told them to go to every creature, make disciples of every nation, start in Jerusalem and go to the ends of the earth. One German spoke up, "But, Mr. Trotman, you don't understand. Here in Germany some of us right in this room don't even have an Old Testament; we only have a New Testament." I said, "When Jesus Christ gave these commandments, they didn't have even a New Testament."

Later one of them said, "But, Mr. Trotman, we have very few good evangelical books in this country. In America you have thus and so." I asked, "How many books did the disciples have?" A little further on one of them said, "Is it true that in America you can hear the Gospel any day?" I answered, "Yes." He said, "If we had that...but we can't get the message out on any radio." They said, "You have automobiles, we ride bicycles." I reminded them, "The disciples didn't have bicycles. Jesus rode a borrowed burro."

Now these questions didn't come up one right after the other or they would have caught on, but they arose during the nine hours together.

Finally one fellow spoke up and said, "In America you have money. I



work twelve hours a day for sixty cents. We don't have much money. I replied, "The disciples were sent out without purse and without script.

Every excuse in the books was brought up. "We don't have this, and we don't have that. We don't have buildings; we don't have facilities." Each time I replied, "But the twelve didn't and He sent them out."

Then finally near the end one fellow, a little older than the rest and with almost a bitter expression on his face, got up and said, "Mr. Trotman, you in America have never had an occupation force in your land. You don't know what it is to have soldiers of another country roaming your streets. Our souls are not our own." I said, "The disciples lived at the time Jesus Christ lived, and their souls weren't their own. The Roman soldiers were in charge."

Then it dawned on me in a way I had never considered before, that when Jesus Christ sent the eleven out, he let a situation exist which was so bad that there could never be a worse one. No printing presses, no automobiles, no radios, no television, no telephones, no buildings, not one single church, no uniforms, nothing for the vestry...He didn't even leave them a little emblem.

He left them only a job to do, but with it He said, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore..." What does the "therefore" mean? It means, "I have the power to give you the order and I have the power to back you to the hilt." He has all power in heaven and earth...not just heaven, but in the earth; all power, not part of the power, but all power, which means power over the Romans and power over the Communists.

Earlier Jesus Christ had said to this same little group, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me..." He that what? "...believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do." Do you believe that statement is true? Or must you say that for a moment it makes you stop to wonder. Could it possibly be true that the Son of God would say to a human being, "The things that I do, you shall do, and greater things than these you shall do"?

I believe with all my heart that the reason so many wonderful Christians don't accomplish more in their lives is they don't believe Jesus meant what He said. They have never come to the place where they believe that the all-powerful One, Who commissioned them, could enable them to do these greater works. The last thing He said was, "All power is given unto Me. I'm giving you your orders now. Go and teach all nations and see that every created being hears the Word."

Now, gang, we think it is going to be a tough job, even with the printing press, the radio, the airplane, and modern medicine. What do you think the early disciples thought about it? When Paul wrote to the Romans, he said, "I thank my God that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." When he wrote to the Thessalonian church, he said, "For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." And he said to the Thessalonians, who were not even as strong as the Bereans, "For from you sounded out the Word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad."

How did the message go? Not by telephone, not by television, but by

tell-a-person. That's the only method they had. It was as simple as that. Everyone was to tell someone else. "I cannot help but speak the things which I have seen and heard," was the impelling force. That's how it spread, and it did spread. They didn't need the printing press and they didn't need materials.

Over in England they really went for the Bible study and memory materials. It was hard to get them to see their value at first, but when they did, some of them felt they were a necessity. One rainy night during the Billy Graham Crusade at Wembley Stadium around 3000 came forward at the invitation. Two clergymen came running up to me, "Mr. Trotman, Mr. Trotman, we ran out of materials! What will we do? I said, "Relax. They probably ran out of them at Pentecost, too!" They looked at me for a minute and, obviously getting the point, said, "That's right!"

The answer is the man, not materials. Maybe the greatest problem today is that we try to put into printed form that which should go from lip to ear and heart to heart. We de-emphasize materials, and people can't understand why. Materials are the tools. Tools by themselves are useless. If there were a young fellow beginning his study of medicine who had all the necessary instruments for a major operation, and an old doctor who just had a razor blade and a plain, ordinary crooked needle and some strong string, I'd put myself into the hands of the old doctor for surgery rather than this boy over here with all the instruments, wouldn't you? It's not only the tools; it's the man who has the tools in his hands.

What is the need of the hour, gang? I'll tell you the need of the hour. It is to believe that our God controls the universe, and when He said, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," He meant it. That is exactly what is going to happen. The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord!

Today more people than ever in a lot of our civilized countries know about Jesus Christ because of the radio, literature, mission societies, Billy Graham, etc. But they only know about Him; they don't know Him. The Book says, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." How much does the water cover the sea? Do you think that every square inch of sea has water in it? Yes! That's how every tongue and tribe and nation in every single nook and corner of this earth is going to hear about Jesus Christ and His glory.

What is the need of the hour? It is to believe that "Thy God reigneth." The rain isn't coming down like you feel it should in order to have good crops. Can He send it if it's necessary? If He doesn't, can you say, "Thank you, Lord"? That's what He wants. "In everything give thanks."

You don't need anything that He can't supply. Is it knowledge? Is it strength? God can do more through a weakling who is yielded and trusting than He can through a strong man who isn't. "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (II Corinthians 1:20).

I want the fellows and girls who come to Glen Eyrie to go away with this thought securely in their minds: "God, I'll never come to the place where

I'm going to let the lack of anything persuade me that You are being hindered." I would rather you would go away with that in your hearts than with methods or materials or ideas that we may have to share with you, because I know the potential of the man who will come to the place where he can say hour after hour, day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year, "Lord, I believe my God reigneth."

Listen! You have an excuse if you want one. You have more than an excuse: you have hundreds of them. That isn't what's holding us back. It's that we don't live and preach the fact that He is on the throne. And when He's running the show, He will take care of all the props, even the transportation.

I was in Hong Kong on my way to India in 1948 when a Pan American flight was delayed long enough to make me miss my connection in Bangkok. I inquired if there were any way for me to get to Calcutta. The crew said, "No, not a chance in the world." Then one said, "We do have orders for this plane to go on to Calcutta, but because of regulations this crew can't take it." So I prayed, "Lord, You know about the meetings in Calcutta, and it's nothing for You to work this out."

We got to Bangkok and a radio message came, "We do not have a crew to bring this ship to Calcutta. Your crew ordered to bring it." Only four people were on that big DC-6, and the other three didn't have to go to India for three days. I arrived in time for those meetings, and as a result, a man from Nepal came to know the Lord, a man who later became a key for getting the Gospel to that closed country way up in the Himalayas.

The need of the hour, as far as I'm concerned, people, is to believe that God is God, and that He is a lot more interested in getting this job done than you and I are. Therefore, if He is more interested in getting the job done, He has all the power to do it, and has commissioned us to do it, our business is to obey Him...

reaching the world for Him and trusting Him to help us do it.

The Lord could easily have said to the disciples, "You fellows are only eleven men, and you lack facilities and transportation, so all I want you to do is start the fire in Jerusalem," but He didn't say that. The believers in South India testify they are glad Thomas believed Jesus Christ that he was to go to the uttermost part of the earth. I understand that the Mar Thoma Church, the largest in Southern India, traces its origin back 1900 years to the work of this disciple. Aren't you glad that Thomas didn't say to Jesus Christ, "I don't have a DC-6 jet?"

"Ye shall be witnesses unto Me in..." not EITHER Jerusalem OR Samaria OR Judea OR on the foreign field. You are to be witnesses, when you have the Holy Ghost, "BOTH in Jerusalem, AND in all Judea, AND in Samaria, AND unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Suppose you are a pastor. You have a responsibility to your people to be a shepherd to the flock. You also have a responsibility for people in other countries. You have to be concerned. The only reason you are not out there telling them about Jesus Christ is because you're training the lay people to love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ in your city, your state, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

I close with this...a little of the Nav story. I used to have a map of the world that I kept before me. I'd put my fingers on some of the islands—Australia, New Zealand, Okinawa, Formosa—and say, "Lord, let me win men for you in these places." I wasn't challenged to do this by hearing a sermon, but by a verse of Scripture, Jeremiah 33:3, "Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." It was in the previous chapter Jeremiah had said to the Lord, "Ah Lord God! behold, Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Thee." Ten verses later the Lord says to Jeremiah, "I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for Me?" Then just a few verses later He says, "All right, if you believe Me, call unto Me and I will answer."

I asked a buddy, "Do you believe this verse?" He said, "Yes." I said, "I do, too, but I've never seen these great and mighty things, and I'd like to." So we started a prayer meeting every morning. We decided to meet at a certain spot, have a fire built, and be in prayer by five o'clock. Not one minute after five...we just made it a date. We prayed two hours on weekdays but met at four on Sundays to pray for our Sunday school boys by name and for the Sunday school. We prayed for Harbor City, Torrance, Long Beach, San Pedro, Los Angeles, Pasadena, and the surrounding cities from which I had received calls from young Christian fellows saying, "Come over here and show us how you're reaching these boys."

The third and fourth weeks we started to include cities up the coast—San Francisco, Oakland, Seattle and Portland. We said, "Lord, use us in these cities." By the fourth or fifth week we had covered every state in the Union. As we listed them we prayed, "Lord, use us to win young men to You in the State of Oregon. Use us to win young men in Massachusetts." Every morning we prayed for every one of the forty-eight states. Then about the sixth week one of us said to the other something like this: "If we believe God is big enough to let us win men in every one of the forty-eight states, let's go all out!"

We bought a world map and left it up in the Palos Verdes hills. Each morning we'd pull this old map out and pray that the Lord would use us in China and in Japan and in Korea. At the end of forty-two days I felt a burden lift. We stopped asking God to use us and began thanking Him that He was going to do so. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for," and substance is substance. It's reality; it's something you can believe in. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. We claimed the promises as we prayed. These promises were the brick and prayer was the mortar that put them together.

After forty-two days we discontinued our prayer meeting. Forty-eight hours later I was in the hospital, flat on my back, for a week, and I had a lot of time to think. The Minute-Men idea came and from that The Navigators work was born.

Three or four years later I was rummaging around in a drawer of the living room table when I found a little purple card..."Washington, Oregon." In another drawer was a list of names—Les Spencer from Illinois, John Dedrick of Texas, Gurney Harris from Arkansas, Ed Goodrich of Wisconsin. I discov-

ered that men from every one of the forty-eight states had come to the Saviour during those three or four years. God had answered, and these men were being trained as disciples. Then I thought of the world. "Why, Lord, am I permitted to have a part in this?" For the same reason you are.

"All power in heaven and earth is Mine. It's Mine for you to appropriate." This is not only a privilege; it's an order. He wants nothing less. God doesn't want you to take an island...He wants you to take the world. For what are you asking God? What do you want? Do you want to win a few? You'll have to start with a few, and you'll have to be successful with the few. You can be because Jesus said, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." No man ever followed Jesus who didn't become a fisher of men. He never fails to do what He promised. If you're not fishing, you're not following. You have to win one before you can win five, and five before you can win five hundred. The world is before you. How big is your faith?

The need of the hour is men who want what Jesus Christ wants and believe He wants to give them the power to do what He has asked. Nothing in the world can stop those men. Do you believe that? Do you want to be one of them? You may, but you will have to ask. "Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." Years ago when I prayed for Formosa I couldn't have comprehended what I'm seeing now. But that's the way He has promised it will be, so when you call, ask big!



# THE PLIGHT OF BEING UNTEACHABLE

## **The Plight of Being Unteachable**

A Reading on Submission and Learning

by

Emery Nester, Ed.D., D.Min.

### **The Plight of Knowing Everything**

It is sad to observe someone who has at least one half of his life remaining who feels he has no more to learn.

Occasionally we will be confronted with this problem — an individual who does not demonstrate the characteristic (usually not ability) of being teachable. This is certainly not an inherited condition as far as learning is concerned. It is, rather, something that is learned...something that is environmental or experiential...that can account for this trait in an individual. Such a person will have difficulty being disciplined.

One of the true characteristics of a disciple is that of being a “disciplined learner” who is teachable. This brief paper is for the purpose of speaking to such an attitude and looking at the dynamics that are involved.

### **What are the Unteachable Like?**

Pride rather than humility. It is not difficult to see this condition in the experience of one who is having difficulty with being teachable. It is usually not that this person has decided that he need no longer learn. Rather, he considers himself the primary source of learning and knowledge and would rather simply pursue on his own any quest for additional growth. Pride is normally involved in such a condition. Humility is an absolute essential if one is to be a growing learner. Scripture speaks of the need for humility. Colossians 3:12 says, “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility gentleness, and patience.” Consider what it means to be “clothed with humility”! Again in 1 Peter 5:6,7 we read, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.” And yet again in

James 4:6, “But He gives us more grace.” That is why Scripture says:  
“God opposes the proud  
But gives grace to the humble.”

Humility is not the derogation of ourselves as persons, but a reasonable attitude toward ourselves that sees and understands with relative clarity how and what we truly are. Therefore, there is a need to learn. Pride tends to see no need to learn from anyone else...that admission assumes that another may have more wisdom than myself.

Dogmatism rather than openness. In academic circles as well as those that are church-oriented, it is pretty well established that the more dogmatic an individual is, the less able he is to learn. Being “unteachable” usually is a demonstration of relatively heavy dogmatism in one’s life. A definition of dogmatism would help. Let’s describe it in this way. “I am dogmatic to the extent that I am unable to process information that is contradictory to my own perceptions without distorting it by my own set of beliefs.” This means that I will not openly look at other points of view without calling up my own beliefs and contaminate the nature of what I may be investigating. The more dogmatic an individual is, the more he will seek to protect himself from contradictory constructs that intrude into his own belief system. In many respects, we are all somewhat dogmatic. But one who is heavily dogmatic will be unteachable. By the same token, one who is unteachable usually possesses a high degree of dogmatism.

A reactionary spirit rather than a submissive heart. Years ago a popular bumper sticker read, “Question Authority!” That was, of course, the battle cry of the generation of youth that had to deal with Viet Nam. Many picked up on that cry and to this day are reactionaries. They are simply unwilling to submit to authority. To learn from another requires submission in some very real sense.

Not that all the learning goes just one way. In every discipling situation, both the discipler and the disciple are learning. Every session together can be a time of sharpening for each person. But for this to be a reality requires one to have a submissive heart. Indeed, this should be one of the leading characteristics of the child of God—submission one to another, Ephesians 5:21: “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” It seems that those who maintain a reactionary spirit will never be able to be disciplers in the true sense of the Word. They are truly unteachable.

Insecurity rather than self-acceptance and contentment. It may seem strange to bring up the matter of insecurity at this point. Surely one who wraps the protective cloak of dogmatism around himself will not feel insecure. But this problem strikes deeply into the heart of one who is unteachable. For what other reason might such a person be unwilling to let his barriers down and expose himself to something new? And, of course, change is threatening in all cases. The person who is unteachable is often anxiety-ridden and resistant to change because of personal threat and insecurity. As I think of these things, I cannot but think of some lines I learned from English literature so many years ago:



“A little learning is a dangerous thing,  
 Drink deep, or taste not Perea spring.  
 There, shallow drafts intoxicate the brain,  
 But drinking largely sobers it again.”

Relative anger as opposed to tranquility. It is hard to imagine those possessing this quality as not being somewhat angry people. A dogmatic stance towards learning something new usually includes a considerable amount of anger. So the problems of being unteachable can spill over into psychological aspects of one's being as well as other areas.

### **Results of Being Unteachable**

When we look carefully at the individual who demonstrates this attribute, the following descriptive characteristics are likely to be present.

It is obvious that such a person will be one who does not grow with any vigor (if indeed there is growth at all). Such an individual deprives himself of opportunities to garner benefit from the growth and experience of others. He refuses to be ministered to and to receive the benefits of the spiritual gifts Christ has given to His body — the gifts of pastor-teacher, and the gift of teaching.

Another characteristic would probably be isolation from the Christian community. This is because Christian fellowship includes learning from one another, and one who becomes unteachable will not wish to interact with others, except in order to overpower them with “superior wisdom.” This, of course, does not lend itself to good fellowship and the individual becomes isolated.

Finally, there will be ultimate lack of productivity in service. To be unteachable is to develop a gnarled approach to life and the world. To be out of touch with humanity and the mainstream of life is to lose one's cutting edge as far as service is concerned. It puts one in the same position as the Pharisees. Such an one can only expect to surround himself with similar insecure and impotent believers who have dealt themselves out of touch with the realities of the true issues in the world.

### **What is Being “Teachable”?**

There are happy results for those who are teachable. Let me summarize a few of these.

1. Openness to other people. This has all kinds of practical benefits as far as Christian service is concerned.
2. Self-acceptance and a desire to grow personally and spiritually, and to do this in relationships with other people.
3. An inquisitive mind that can sort, process, and integrate.
4. An appreciation of the nature of Scripture and God's wisdom, Romans 11:33.

5. An uncloistered life that builds relationships.
6. An understanding of growth processes.
7. A willingness to pursue a goal of value and a desire to change.

In this, and any discipleship ministry, it is necessary to remain teachable. We can learn from the very young as well as those who are mature. May each of us always remain teachable! Let's summarize...

In those who are unteachable, these things are true...

There is pride rather than humility.  
There is dogmatism rather than openness.  
There is reaction rather than submission.  
There is insecurity rather than peace.  
There is anger rather than tranquility.

In review— in those who are teachable we find...

Openness to others.  
Self-acceptance and desire to grow.  
An inquisitive integrative mind.  
An appreciation of wisdom and the mind of God.  
An uncloistered life that builds relationships.  
An understanding of growth process.  
A willingness to pursue a goal of value and a desire to change.

# SOUL SLEEPING

## The Doctrine of "Soul Sleeping"

### Is There Consciousness After Death?

An investigation of this doctrine might be important because of the teaching of some Christian and some "cultish" sects that deny any personal conscious existence between death and resurrection. Among those who teach this doctrine are the Seventh Day Adventists, the Advent Christian Church, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

The doctrine, stated simply, is as follows. "Following death, the soul of an individual sleeps until the resurrection." Actually, such a belief should not be classified as heresy, but rather simply a doctrinal aberration from the teaching of Scripture.

Arguments for such a belief generally follow these principles of thinking:

1. Human existence involves a union of body and soul. Therefore, when the body ceases to function, the soul will not be able to function without it.
2. The use of the word "sleep" in the Authorized Version seems to imply soul-sleep and the cessation of consciousness. See 1 Corinthians 11:30, 15:51
3. The consciousness of the soul would be an unfair anticipation of the final state, which will only be determined at the last judgment.

Please remember that spirit can exist apart from body. How do the following verses teach this?

John 4:24 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 12:23 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Revelation 6:9-11 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

It is clear that the word "sleep" was often used in reference to the death of the body, although the individual might be referred to as sleeping. How is this reality taught in John 11:11?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Acts 13:36? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Concerning the third point, what light do the following verses shed on that point?

1. John 5:24 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. 1 John 5:11,12 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

That there is continuing consciousness in the intermediate state between death and resurrection seems to be the teaching of Scripture. In Luke 23:39-43, Jesus was on the cross between two criminals. What transpired that seems to teach consciousness after death?

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In response to this passage, Jehovah's Witnesses say that Jesus was saying to the dying thief, I say unto you today, you shall be with me in paradise. This would be the only time in recorded history that a person speaking at a particular time would remind another person that as he was speaking, he was speaking "today." It is much clearer to believe that Jesus was comforting the believing thief by telling him that on that very day, they would be together in paradise.

Two strong arguments come from the writings of Paul the Apostle. The first is in 2 Corinthians 5:8. See if you can find this argument yourself. Write it in the blank that follows.

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The second argument is in Philippians 1:23. Paul is in jail facing execution. He is contemplating what it would mean to die. In 1:21, he says, "To live is Christ, to die is \_\_\_\_\_. " What problems would present themselves if there is no consciousness after death? \_\_\_\_\_

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Surely, benumbing "nothingness" is not superior to serving Christ here on earth!

Finally, there is the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke 16:19-31. What indications are there in this account that there is consciousness after death?

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2. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. \_\_\_\_\_

Some may say that this is a parable. The Scripture does not call it such. In no parable does a name occur of one who actually lived. Yet in this account, Moses, Lazarus, Abraham, and a reference to the rich man and his five brothers occur. This cannot be a parable.



# TYRANNY OF THE URGENT

## Tyranny of the Urgent

by

Charles E. Hummel

Have you ever wished for a thirty-hour day? Surely this extra time would relieve the tremendous pressure under which we live. Our lives leave a trail of unfinished tasks. Unanswered letters, unvisited friends, unwritten articles, and unread books haunt quiet moments when we stop to evaluate. We desperately need relief.

But would a thirty-hour day really solve the problem? Wouldn't we soon be just as frustrated as we are now with our twenty-four allotment? A mother's work is never finished, and neither is that of any student, teacher, minister, or anyone else we know. Nor will the passage of time help us catch up. Children grow in number and age to require more of our time. Greater experience in profession and church brings more exacting assignments. So we find ourselves working more and enjoying it less.

### JUMBLED PRIORITIES...?

When we stop to evaluate, we realize that our dilemma goes deeper than shortage of time; it is basically the problem of priorities. Hard work does not hurt us. We all know what it is to go full speed for long hours, totally involved in an important task. The resulting weariness is matched by a sense of achievement and joy. Not hard work, but doubt and misgiving produce anxiety as we review a month or year and become oppressed by the pile of unfinished tasks. We sense uneasily that we may have failed to do the important. The winds of other people's demands have driven us onto a reef of frustration. We confess, quite apart from our sins, "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done."

Several years ago an experienced cotton mill manager said to me, "Your greatest danger is letting the urgent things crowd out the important." He didn't

realize how hard his maxim hit. It often returns to haunt and rebuke me by raising the critical problem of priorities.

We live in constant tension between the urgent and the important. The problem is that the important task rarely must be done today or even this week. Extra hours of prayer and Bible study, visit with that non-Christian friend, careful study of an important book: these projects can wait. But the urgent tasks call for instant action--endless demands; pressure every hour and day.

A man's home is no longer his castle; it is no longer a place away from urgent tasks because the telephone breaches the walls with imperious demands. The momentary appeal of these tasks seems irresistible and important, and they devour our energy. But in the light of time's perspective their deceptive promise fades; with a sense of loss we recall the important tasks pushed aside. We realize we've become slaves to the tyranny of the urgent.

### CAN YOU ESCAPE...?

Is there any escape from this pattern of living? The answer lies in the life of our Lord. On the night before He died, Jesus made an astonishing claim. In the great prayer of John 17 He said, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (verse 4).

How could Jesus use the word "finished"? His three year ministry seemed all too short. A prostitute at Simon's banquet had found forgiveness and a new life, but many others still walked the street without forgiveness and a new life. For every ten withered muscles that had flexed into health, a hundred remained impotent. Yet on that last night, with many useful tasks undone and urgent human needs unmet, the Lord had peace; He knew He had finished God's work.

The Gospel records show that Jesus worked hard. After describing a busy day Mark writes, "That evening, at sundown, they brought to Him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered about the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons" (Mark 1:32-34).

On another occasion the demand of the ill and maimed caused Him to miss supper and to work so late that His disciples thought He was beside Himself (Mark 3:21). One day after a strenuous teaching session, Jesus and His disciples went out in a boat. Even a storm didn't awaken Him (Mark 4:37-38). What a picture of exhaustion.

Yet His life was never feverish; He had time for people. He could spend hours talking to one person, such as the Samaritan woman at the well. His life showed a wonderful balance, a sense of timing. When His brothers wanted Him to go to Judea, He replied, "My time has not yet come" (John 7:6).



Jesus did not ruin His gifts by haste. In the *Discipline and Culture of the Spiritual Life*, A. E. Whiteham observes: "Here in this Man is adequate purpose...inward rest, that gives an air of leisure to His crowded life: above all there is in this Man a secret and a power of dealing with the waste-products of life, the waste of pain, disappointment, enmity, death--turning to divine uses the abuses of man, transforming arid places of pain to fruitfulness, triumphing at last in death, and making a short life of thirty years or so, abruptly cut off, to be a 'finished' life. We cannot admire the poise and beauty of this human life, and then ignore the things that made it."

### WAIT FOR INSTRUCTIONS...

What was the secret of Jesus' work? We find a clue following Mark's account of Jesus' busy day. Mark observes that "...in the morning, a great while before day, He rose and went out to a lonely place, and there He prayed" (Mark 1:35). Here is the secret of Jesus' life and work for God: He prayerfully waited for His Father's instructions and for the strength to follow them. Jesus had no divinely-drawn blueprint; He discerned the Father's will day by day in a life of prayer. By this means He warded off the urgent and accomplished the important.

Lazarus' death illustrates this principle. What could have been more important than the urgent message from Mary and Martha, "Lord, he whom You love is ill" (John 11:3)? John records the Lord's response in these paradoxical words: "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when He heard that he was ill, He stayed two days longer in the place where He was" (John 11:5,6). What was the urgent need? Obviously to prevent the death of his beloved brother. But the important thing from God's point of view was to raise Lazarus from the dead. So Lazarus was allowed to die. Later Jesus revived him as a sign of His magnificent claim, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

We may wonder why our Lord's ministry was so short, why it could not have lasted another five or ten years, why so many wretched sufferers were left in their misery. Scripture gives no answer to these questions, and we leave them in the mystery of God's purposes, but we do know that Jesus' prayerful waiting for God's instructions freed Him from the tyranny of the urgent. It gave Him a sense of direction, set a steady pace, and enabled Him to do every task God assigned. And on the last night He could say, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

### DEPENDENCE MAKES YOU FREE...

Freedom from the tyranny of the urgent is found in the example and promise of our Lord. At the end of a vigorous debate with the Pharisees in Jerusalem, Jesus said to those who believed in Him: "If you continue in My Word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth

will make you free... Truly, truly, I say to you, every one who commits sin is a slave to sin...So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed (John 8:31-36).

Many of us have experienced Christ's deliverance from the penalty of sin. Are we letting Him free us from the tyranny of the urgent? He points the way: "If you continue in my Word." This is the way to freedom. Through prayerful meditation on God's Word we gain His perspective.

P. T. Forsyth once said, "The worst sin is prayerlessness." We usually think of murder, adultery, or theft as among the worst. But the root of all sin is self-sufficiency--independence from God. When we fail to wait prayerfully for God's guidance and strength we are saying, with our actions if not our lips, that we do not need Him. How much of our service is characterized by "going it alone"?

The opposite of such independence is prayer in which we acknowledge our need of God's instruction and supply. Concerning a dependent relationship with God, Donald Baillie says: "Jesus lived His life in complete dependence upon God, as we all ought to live our lives. But such dependence does not destroy human personality. Man is never so truly and fully personal as when he is living in complete dependence upon God. This is how personality comes into its own. This is humanity at its most personal."

Prayerful waiting on God is indispensable to effective service. Like the time-out in a football game, it enables us to catch our breath and fix new strategy. As we wait for directions the Lord frees us from the tyranny of the urgent. He shows us the truth about Himself, ourselves, and our tasks. He impresses on our minds the assignments He wants us to undertake. The need itself is not the call; the call must come from the God who knows our limitations. "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust" (Psalm 103:13-14). It is not God who loads us until we bend or crack with an ulcer, nervous breakdown, heart attack, or stroke. These come from our inner compulsions coupled with the pressure of circumstances.

#### EVALUATE...

The modern businessman recognizes this principle of taking time out for evaluation. When Greenwalt was president of DuPont, he said, "One minute spent in planning saves three or four minutes in execution." Many salesmen have revolutionized their business and multiplied their profits by setting aside Friday afternoon to plan carefully the major activities for the coming week. If an executive is too busy to stop and plan, he may find himself replaced by another man who takes time to plan. If the Christian is too busy to stop, take spiritual inventory, and receive his assignments from God, he becomes a slave to the tyranny of the urgent. He may work day and night to achieve much that

seems significant to himself and others, but he will not finish the work God has for him to do.

A quiet time of meditation and prayer at the start of the day refocuses our relationship with God. Recommit yourself to His will as you think of the hours that follow. In these unhurried moments list in order of priority the tasks to be done, taking into account commitments already made. A competent general always draws up his battle plan before he engages the enemy; he does not postpone basic decisions until the firing starts. But he is also prepared to change his plans if an emergency demands it. So try to implement the plans you have made before the day's battle against the clock begins. But be open to any emergency interruption or unexpected person who may call.

You may also find it necessary to resist the temptation to accept an engagement when the invitation first comes over the telephone. No matter how clear the calendar may look at the moment, ask for a day or two to pray for guidance before committing yourself. Surprisingly the engagement often appears less imperative after the pleading voice has become silent. If you can withstand the urgency of the initial moment, you will be in a better position to weigh the cost and discern whether the task is God's will for you.

In addition to your daily quiet time, set aside one hour a week for spiritual inventory. Write an evaluation of the past, record anything God may be teaching you and plan objectives for the future. Also try to reserve most of one day each month for a similar inventory of longer range. Often you will fail. Ironically, the busier you get the more you need this time of inventory, but the less you seem to be able to take it. You become like the fanatic, who, when unsure of his direction, doubles his speed. And frenetic service for God can become an escape from God. But when you prayerfully take inventory and plan your days, it provides fresh perspective on your work.

### CONTINUE THE EFFORT...

Over the years the greatest continuing struggle in the Christian life is the effort to make adequate time for daily waiting on God, weekly inventory, and monthly planning. Since this time for receiving marching orders is so important, Satan will do everything he can to squeeze it out. Yet we know from experience that only by this means can we escape the tyranny of the urgent. This is how Jesus succeeded. He did not finish all the urgent tasks in Palestine or all the things He would have liked to do, but He did finish the work which God gave Him to do. The only alternative to frustration is to be sure that we are doing what God wants.

Nothing substitutes for knowing that this day, this hour, in this place we are doing the will of the Father. Then and only then can we think of all the other unfinished tasks with equanimity and leave them with God.

Sometime ago Simba bullets killed a young man, Dr. Paul Carson. In the providence of God his life's work was finished. Most of us will live longer and die more quietly, but when the end comes, what could give us greater joy than being sure that we have finished the work God gave us to do? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ makes this fulfillment possible. He has promised deliverance from sin and the power to serve God in the tasks of His choice. The way is clear. If we continue in the Word of our Lord, we are truly His disciples. And He will free us from the tyranny of the urgent, free us to do the important, which is the will of God.