

ONE YEAR DISCIPLESHIP COURSE

Lessons in Christian Living
David Cloud



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Copyright 2010 by David W. Cloud
This edition August 23, 2012
ISBN 978-1-58318-118-8



Published by Way of Life Literature
PO Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061
866-295-4143 (toll free) - fbns@wayoflife.org
www.wayoflife.org

Canada: Bethel Baptist Church
4212 Campbell St. N., London Ont. N6P 1A6
519-652-2619

Printed in Canada by
Bethel Baptist Print Ministry

Ways These Lessons Can Be Used

As a Sunday School course

As a textbook in Bible Institutes

As part of a home schooling curriculum

As study lessons in jails and prisons

As discipleship lessons for new Christians

As private study lessons

As preaching outlines

Suggestions for Using This Material

1. Suggestions for use in a Sunday School or other public setting

a. These lessons can be used for ages ranging from Middle School to Adult.

b. Each teacher should familiarize himself thoroughly with the material before it is taught. An ill prepared Bible teacher is a disgrace to the service of Christ, weakens the ministry of the church, and discourages the hearts of the students. When I was a kid growing up in a Baptist church, my teachers would typically just read the Sunday School lesson. No significant preparation. No heart involvement. No clue! It was doubtless a factor in why the majority of the young people in that church left as soon as they could. The Bible is the living eternal Word of God, and Bible classes should not be dull and boring. This reminds us of the importance of choosing the right teachers in the first place. Pastor Ken Shaver of Greater Cumberland Baptist Church in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, observes, “The objective is not to teach a lesson but to teach the word of God. The lesson is just a tool to help the teacher accomplish this.”

c. In addition to going over the review questions, the teacher should try to think of some other questions that will help the students apply the lessons to their daily lives.

d. The memory verses should be used. They are carefully selected and are an important part of the course. They can be quoted at the beginning or end of the class. Or the teacher can have the students indicate by a show of hands if they have done the memory work and then pick out some of the students to quote the verses, alternating students each week. Or one or more faithful students can be assigned the task of hearing the verses quoted by the other students.

e. Since the *One Year Discipleship Course* lessons are not mere bare outlines

and all of the points are developed, it is a good idea for the teacher to make copies available to the students for future reference. One objective of any Bible class is for the students to be able to teach the material to someone else (Hebrews 5:12). The lessons are designed to help the child of God teach God's Word. Handing out copies of the lessons at the end of the class is also a good idea if the teacher is unable to cover every point and deal with every reference in the class. The students can be encouraged to go over the material later in private.

f. It is a good idea for pastors to meet with the teachers each week and go over the highlights of the material. This way the teachers are all on the same page and understand the main points to emphasize. Further, the pastor can answer any questions that the teachers might have about the material. This is a good opportunity for the pastor to give instruction about methods of teaching.

2. Suggestions for use as a personal study

The lessons are well developed so that they can be used effectively for private study.

a. The student needs to look up and read every verse. The Word of God is always more important than any commentary about it.

b. The memory verses are a very important part of the course. We suggest that the student ask someone to test his or her memorization work.

c. The review questions are also an important part of the course. Take the time to answer each question.

3. Suggestions for use as a "pass it on" discipleship course.

This material can be used as a discipleship program in churches, whereby more mature church members are taught how to teach others. For this purpose, it's not necessary to go through the entire course. Some of the lessons can be selected if the discipleship training needs to be shorter than one year.

The program has the following objectives:

Discipleship. The first goal is to disciple every new church member.

Teacher Training. The second goal is to provide a forum for training new teachers and an opportunity to develop spiritual gifts. The program provides opportunities for serious ministry, including opportunities for the more mature young people. It takes some of the teaching workload off of the leaders. And it helps disciple the disciplers. Few things motivate learning like teaching.

Fellowship. The third goal is to help develop close relationships between church members.

The program is set up in the following manner:

The first step is to select some church members who have grown in Christ and proven themselves faithful and that possess some basic ability to teach at a private level. These can include older teens that meet the standards. The basic requirements are that they have a good testimony, that they are faithful to church and submissive to the leaders, that they agree with the church's doctrine and practice, and that they have read the Bible through at least once.

After the potential teachers have had an opportunity to study the material on their own, the church leaders set up some training sessions. They go through the course with the potential teachers, hitting the high points and providing teaching tips. During the training sessions, the potential teachers get up one by one and present a portion of a lesson to the leaders and the other trainees, after which

they are critiqued.

When the teachers are deemed ready, they are prayerfully assigned a student, females being assigned to a female teacher and males to a male teacher.

The next step is for the teachers to set up appointments with their students to meet privately with them and go through the material. The leaders should try to attend some of the first lessons to provide further training.

Another option is to appoint two-person teams for discipling. This is what we do in our missionary church. A more mature and knowledgeable Christian is teamed with a younger or newer Christian. Both team members participate in the teaching, but the older team member is responsible to help develop the newer one. As the second members of the teams mature, they can become the leaders in new teams.

4. Suggestions for using the One Year Discipleship Course for evangelistic Bible studies.

Another way to use the One Year Discipleship Course is for evangelistic Bible studies.

Evangelistic home Bible studies can be an effective means for teaching the gospel in the careful, systematic way that is necessary for bringing sinners into a proper understanding of the gospel. The first several lessons of the course--Repentance, Faith, The Gospel, Baptism, and Eternal Security--can be used in this way.

Evangelistic Bible studies can be used as a follow-up for mass evangelistic campaigns (house to house literature distribution, radio broadcasts, etc.). Include a brochure announcing a course such as “Basic Christianity Bible Studies” or “Basic Bible Truths.” Instead of trying to get people to pray a sinner’s prayer

before they understand the gospel, focus instead on getting the interested ones involved in a series of Bible studies where a relationship can be established and they can be dealt with carefully. This is what the apostle Paul did. He preached the gospel to the masses, then took the interested ones aside and instructed them more carefully in the things of God (Acts 17:34; 18:5-11).

Evangelistic Bible studies can be used to reach out to specific neighborhoods.

Bible studies can be conducted in different neighborhoods by various men and women in the church and thus greatly expand the congregation's outreach. We are not talking about "cell groups." The evangelistic Bible studies have the goal of getting people saved and brought into the membership of the church (and incorporated into the full life of the church, including the regular services).

Evangelistic Bible studies can be used to target specific groups of people.

Basic Bible Studies can be geared to specific groups, such as women, teenagers, foreigners, professionals, uneducated, deaf, *etc.* By offering Bible studies for a particular group, the church can focus on their special needs in a way that cannot be done during regular church services or Sunday School. For example, in American cities today there are large numbers of immigrants and visitors and students from other countries and cultures. They often need special consideration when the Gospel is communicated to them. Oftentimes they do not speak English well. It is not uncommon for them to be completely ignorant of the gospel or even of the most basic facts of the Bible and Christianity. The typical "Romans Road" gospel presentation will often be insufficient. They need to be taught the very basics of biblical truth, such as creation, the fall of man, the character of God, and the uniqueness of the Bible, before they can understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. All of that can be taught out of Romans, of course, because Romans itself begins with creation and the fall of man, but this is not what most people do when they present the "Romans Road." Many immigrants and foreign visitors will not be familiar with any of the terms of the gospel, such as sin and repentance and grace and faith. Unless those terms are carefully explained, they will "hear" the gospel, but they will not understand it. Too much of the soul-winning activity in North America is simply too shallow and hurried. Missionaries who work in other parts of the world understand this and develop ways of teaching the gospel effectively to their people, but too often personal

workers in North America approach foreigners without proper knowledge of how they think and how to reach them. They try to reach them exactly as they would someone who has grown up in the Bible-belt of the United States, and they wonder why it doesn't work. Involving select groups of people in Bible studies that are geared to their needs and that are led by people who understand them can solve many of these problems.

Evangelistic Bible studies can be used in conjunction with evangelistic revival meetings. It is said that only about 5% of people making professions at large (mass or city-wide) revivals go on to become active church members. Of course, one would suppose the percentage to be higher in local church revivals. Still, the percentage of those who don't "stick" is appallingly high in all types of evangelistic programs today. There are many reasons for this, one of the chief being that scores of those making professions do not truly understand the gospel and are, therefore, not fully committing themselves to Christ in biblical repentance and faith. It's one thing to say, "Yea, I'll go along with that; it sounds good," and quite another to be truly born again of the Spirit of God. If most of those coming forward in revivals were strongly encouraged to commit themselves to a multi-week Bible study and if godly, mature church members faithfully taught the course, we can only imagine that the lasting fruit of our meetings would be ten-fold greater than would otherwise be the case.

Repentance

MEMORY VERSES: Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 20:21

In the first two lessons we will look at man's part in salvation. There are two things to consider: repentance and faith. Paul describes both of these in Acts 20:21, and he puts repentance first, so this is where we will start.

Following are the answers to some important questions about repentance:

Is repentance necessary for salvation?

Repentance is commanded by God. It is mentioned 60 times in the New Testament. It was preached by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1-2), by Christ (Luke 13:3), by Peter (2 Peter 3:9), and by Paul (Acts 17:30). Since the apostle Paul preached both repentance and faith, it is obvious that both are required for salvation (Acts 20:21).

What are some false views of repentance?

Repentance is not reformation or changing one's life. Salvation is not of human works; works follow salvation as the effect or fruit or product (Ephesians 2:8-10). Reformation deals with one's fellow man and with things in this life, whereas repentance deals with God and with eternal things. We must be careful not to give people the impression that they must change their lives and give up their sin in order to be saved. The life-changing part of salvation is God's part, not man's.

Repentance is not doing penance. Many Catholic Bibles translate "repentance"

as “do penance.” This involves confession to a priest, contrition, absolution (forgiveness pronounced by the priest), and satisfaction. Catholic penance is a works salvation which the Bible condemns.

Repentance is not mere remorse for wrong actions. The Bible tells us that men can be remorseful about their actions without exercising genuine repentance unto salvation. This is described as “the sorrow of the world” in 2 Corinthians 7:10. There are examples of this in the Old and the New Testaments. King Saul is the prime Old Testament example. He was sorry that he got caught in various sinful acts, but he did not demonstrate true repentance in that his actions didn’t change (1 Sam. 15:24; 24:17; 26:21). Judas is a New Testament example of a man who was remorseful of his actions but did not repent toward God (Mat. 27:3-4). A main difference between remorse and repentance is that repentance is directed toward God (“repentance toward God,” Acts 20:21). We see this in the Prodigal Son. He was not merely remorseful of how he had lived and of the consequences he had suffered; he came to the place where he acknowledged first and foremost that he had “sinned against heaven” (Lk. 15:18).

Repentance is not merely believing in Christ. Some have defined repentance as a synonym for believing. One well-known fundamental Baptist preacher defined it as “turning from unbelief to belief.” But if this is true, the Bible’s preachers would not have preached repentance *in addition to faith*. We have seen that Paul preached repentance toward God AND faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21). The reason why verses such as John 3:16 and Acts 16:31 don’t mention repentance is that true saving faith includes repentance and true repentance includes faith. Repentance and faith are sometimes spoken of in Scripture as both being necessary for salvation (i.e., Acts 20:21; Hebrews 6:1), while at other times only one or the other is said to be necessary. For example, salvation is referred to as coming to repentance with no mention of faith in the following passages: Matthew 9:13; 11:20-21; 21:32; Mark 1:4; 2:17; 6:12; Luke 15:7; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 11:18; 26:20; 2 Corinthians 7:10; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 2 Timothy 2:25; and 2 Peter 3:9. Then in other passages, such as John 3:16 and Acts 16:31, salvation is referred to as believing and repentance is not mentioned. By comparing Scripture with Scripture (rather than isolating Scripture), we conclude that saving faith includes repentance. Saving faith is a

repentant faith.

The true meaning of faith must be explained and emphasized. The common way that “faith” or “belief” is defined by people today involves a mere mental consent to something, such as “I believe that George Washington was America’s first president” or “I believe that Jesus was the Son of God and came to die on the cross.” That is not what the Bible means by saving faith. Saving faith is a faith that issues from a heart that is convinced of its own fallen condition and has stopped making excuses and hiding in self-righteousness. Saving faith issues from a heart that is convinced that Christ is the *only* Lord and Saviour and *that reaches out to Christ* in personal trust. Saving faith issues from a surrendered heart, which is the very essence of repentance.

That, and that alone, is saving “faith.” And when we are dealing with people’s souls we must be careful to explain the meaning of the terms of the gospel, as opposed to hastily running through some little “Roman’s Road” plan and then trying to get the person to pray a sinner’s prayer before he knows what he is doing.

What is biblical repentance?

Repentance is to admit that I am a sinner before God (Romans 3:23). The gospel says that Jesus died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3-4), so if I do not acknowledge that I am a sinner I cannot be saved. But acknowledging that I am a sinner doesn’t mean that I merely admit that “I am not perfect.” It means that I acknowledge that I am the type of sinner that God says I am, that I am not good (Romans 3:10) and that even my supposed righteousness is as filthy rags before a thrice holy God (Isaiah 64:6).

Repentance means to surrender to God’s rule (Acts 20:21; Isaiah 45:22-23). Repentance is “toward God” because it is God that we have offended. He made man for Himself, and He made man to obey His laws, but we have rejected His sovereignty and lived according to our own wills. Repentance is to acknowledge

that God is God, that He is the sovereign of life and that He has the right to rule my life, that He has the right to make the laws by which His creatures live, and that He has the right to punish the infraction of those laws. The Bible says the sinner is at enmity against God because of his rebellion to God's rule (Rom. 8:7). "Enmity" means "the quality of being an enemy." To repent means that I renounce this attitude and surrender to God's rule over my life. We see this surrender throughout the New Testament in the lives of those who were saved. In fact, there is no example in the New Testament of an individual who was saved and who continued to live at enmity to God's rule. Those who did this were hypocritical false Christians like Judas.

Repentance is to receive Christ as Lord (Romans 10:9-13). To believe is to receive Jesus Christ as my only Saviour and to repent is to receive Him as my only Lord. Those who received Jesus in a saving manner called upon Him as Lord (Luke 23:42). (By receiving Jesus as Lord we are not referring to any type of sinless perfection; we are simply referring to surrendering to Christ's rule. For more on this, see "Repentance and Lordship Salvation" and "Repentance and Lordship Salvation Revisited" at the Way of Life web site -- www.wayoflife.org.) *Repentance means to turn around, to change directions* (Acts 26:20). It is something that happens in the heart and mind. *Repentance is not a change of life; it is a change of mind about God and sin that results in a change of life.* Many who "believe" or "pray the sinner's prayer" have no intention to change or to allow God to take control of their lives. They are not interested in being a disciple of Christ. They want a ticket to heaven that keeps them out of hell, but they want to continue to live as they please. They want to "believe in Jesus," but they have no interest in obeying Him. That is not biblical salvation. The sinner must be ready to turn from his false gods, including self-worship, in order to worship and serve the true God ("ye turned to God from idols," 1 Thessalonians 1:9).

Repentance is an assassin laying down his knife. Evangelist James Stewart wrote: "The hand that clutches the assassin's knife must open 'ere it can grasp the gift its intended victim proffers; and opening that hand, though a single act, has a double aspect and purpose. Accepting the gift implies a turning from the crime the heart was bent on, and it was the gift itself that worked the change.

Faith is the open hand, relatively to the gift; repentance is the same hand, relatively, not only to the gift but more especially to the dagger that is flung from it” (Stewart, *Evangelism*, pp. 48, 49).

Repentance is a thief returning the stolen property. The late Lester Roloff said: “I believe we ought to make right what we can make right. What if I was staying with a group of preachers and one of them stole my wallet while I was sleeping? The next day he comes up to me and tells me he is terribly sorry and asks me to forgive him. I would be glad to hear that he is sorry for stealing my wallet, but I would certainly want and expect more than that from a repentant thief. I would want my wallet back! I don’t believe he has really repented unless he brings my billfold back. I DON’T BELIEVE YOU HAVE REPENTED UNTIL YOU GET RIGHT AND SAY, ‘LORD, I’M GOING TO LIVE DIFFERENT FROM NOW ON,’ and by the grace of God you will live different” (Roloff, *Repent or Perish*).

What are some Bible examples of repentance?

The best way to understand repentance is to examine examples of it in the Bible.

The Prodigal Son “came to himself” (Luke 15:17-20). This refers to conviction and spiritual enlightenment by the Holy Spirit. He humbled himself, acknowledged his sin against God and against his father, and turned around so that he was facing in a different direction. This is repentance. The evidence of his repentance is that he returned home and made things right with his father; he humbled himself and was willing to be a mere servant.

Zacchaeus repented and was converted so dramatically that he became an honest man who paid back those he had cheated (Luke 19:8).

The Thessalonians “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9). That is biblical repentance. Notice that they didn’t turn from idols to God; they turned to God from idols. The order is important. If a man turns to

God, he has his back to his old gods and old life. This is true repentance. It is “repentance toward God” (Acts 20:21). Unless a person rejects his false gods and false religions and self-righteousness and surrenders to Christ’s Lordship, he cannot be saved.

How do we use repentance in soul winning?

First, we must not skip over it; we must tell the people that God requires it and we must explain what it is.

One afternoon I accompanied a pastor to knock doors in a part of a city that was populated with university students. A few times in one afternoon he shared a five-minute Romans Road plan (i.e., all have sinned against God, the wages of sin is death, Jesus died for our sin, and those who believe can be saved) and then immediately asked three questions: “Does that make sense to you?” (All of them said it made sense.) “Do you have any questions?” (None of them did, because they didn’t appear the least bit interested, not interested enough even to invite us into the home.) And, “Would you pray to receive Christ right now?” (None of them did.) Not only was the program “quick,” to say the least, the pastor didn’t even hint to the people that there would need to be a change in the direction of their life, a turning, a surrender.

An independent Baptist church in Maine conducted a door-to-door campaign a few years ago in which the people were taught to say, “If I were to tell you today that you can be saved and go to heaven and you won’t have to change anything, would you be interested?”

Many gospel tracts don’t contain a hint of repentance.

This is not scriptural soul winning. If Christ and the apostles preached repentance, then we must preach repentance! We need to explain that the individual must be ready to surrender to God, and not give him the false

impression that it is possible to be saved without this.

Of course, we also explain that God will do the changing; repentance is not reformation or turning over a new leaf; but the sinner must be ready to accept God's working. He must surrender.

If the individual is not ready to surrender, he is not ready to be saved. I have dealt with hundreds of people who came to the place of understanding and believing that Christ died for their sins and that faith in Christ is the only way of salvation, but they simply were not ready to surrender to God. They refused to repent.

Repentance was the thing that was missing in my life as I grew up in a Baptist church. I don't recall a time when I did not believe in Christ. I had no doubt that He died on the cross for my sin. (What child growing up in a Bible-believing church does *not* "believe"?) I made a public profession of faith at about age 11-12, but it was empty because I had no intention of surrendering my life to Christ. I was already entranced by rock & roll and its lifestyle and bowing before Jesus as Lord was the farthest thing from my mind. Not surprisingly, the course of my life did not change one iota after I "believed."

When my wife and I first began our missionary work in South Asia in 1979, our landlord began coming to our house to have Bible studies. He was a wealthy middle-aged Hindu and had a concubine with whom he spent most of his time, though he was married and had grown children. After we went through the gospel a few times, he told me he felt that he understood what I was teaching and he "believed that Jesus died for his sins" and that he was interested in receiving Christ, but he wanted to know what he would have to do about two specific things in his life--his shady business practices and his illicit relationship with the concubine. He is the one who brought these things to my attention. I could have said, "Don't worry about that. Just pray to receive Christ and those things will work themselves out later." That's the method I was taught in Bible School, but I don't believe it would have been scriptural counsel. I don't believe he could receive Christ and be saved unless he repented of his immorality and

his dishonesty. Salvation requires surrendering. I explained to him that if he would turn to Christ, God would change his life and he would have different desires, but he didn't want that. He was entirely unwilling to surrender to God as God. The power to change one's life is from God, but the sinner must surrender to God's working. After I told him this, he never returned for a Bible study.

Consider Christ's dealings with the woman at the well in John 4. He faced her squarely with the immorality that had dominated her life.

Consider Christ's dealing with the rich young ruler. He faced the young man with his sin of self-righteousness and covetousness (Luke 18:18-23).

This is the way God deals with people. He reproves men for their sin in order to bring them to repentance (John 16:8). And this is the way we must deal with men, too, if we want to follow the Bible in our gospel work. To preach repentance means to deal with glaring sins that people are holding onto and to tell them plainly that they must repent of sinning against God; they must yield their lives to Him; they must change directions; they must surrender. God will do a glorious work in their lives but they must be ready for that to happen. They must have a change of mind about God and sin that will result in a change of life.

It appears that many soul-winning programs try to "slip the gospel by the sinner" and get him saved before he really knows what is happening! That is not possible. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, 5). There is no salvation without repentance, and it is a Holy Spirit-wrought change of mind that results in a change of life.

To tell sinners that God demands that they repent might cut down on the "decision" statistics, but it is the only honest and scriptural path. God has commanded that all men everywhere repent and Jesus said they can't be saved without it, so how can we fail to tell them this?

Second, it is not necessarily the word “repentance” that always has to be used; it is the concept that the soul winner must get across.

We must make the individual understand that God requires surrender.

Third, we need to deal with each case individually.

Preaching repentance depends on the context. We see this from the fact that the Bible sometimes mentions repentance and sometimes doesn't in the context of evangelism.

The example of the Philippian jailor. He was already under conviction when he cried out, “What must I do to be saved?” Doubtless Paul and Barnabas had been witnessing to him. We know that they had been singing and praising God. Further, the power of God displayed in the earthquake had shaken the jailor deeply. Now, through the Spirit's working, he was ready to do whatever God told him to do. In such a case there is no need to go into a lengthy study about repentance. He was already repenting! I, too, have met men in jails and other places that were ready to be saved. They had heard the gospel and God was working in their hearts; they knew that they were sinners and were sorry for their sin against God were tired of the old life and were ready to surrender to Him. In that context, all that is needed is to explain to the individual how to put his or her faith in Christ in a saving manner (e.g., Romans 10:8-13).

The example of the idolaters at Athens. On the other hand, when Paul preached to the idolaters at Athens who were treating the gospel as merely another philosophical debate, he told them that God “now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30). He didn't say, “Just believe in Jesus.” They needed to repent of their false gods, and particularly of their chief god, which was Self! They needed to be confronted with Almighty God and His claim on their lives.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON REPENTANCE

1. In what verse does Paul say that he preached both repentance and faith?
2. How many times is repentance mentioned in the New Testament?
3. What preachers in the New Testament preached repentance?
4. In what verse did Jesus say except you repent you will perish?
5. In what verse did Paul say that God now commands all men to repent?
6. In what verse did Peter say that God wants all men to come to repentance?
7. What are four false views of repentance?
8. What is the "sorrow of the world"?
9. How do we know that King Saul did not repent?
10. How do we know that repentance is not a synonym for believing?
11. Why doesn't John 3:16 mention repentance?
12. Why is repentance directed toward God?
13. In what verse did Paul demand that believers "do works meet for repentance"?
14. Repentance is a _____ about God and sin that _____.

15. Repentance means to _____ around.
16. Repentance means to change _____.
17. Repentance means to _____ to God's rule.
18. Repentance is not a change of _____; it is a change of _____.
19. What are three Bible examples of repentance?
20. How do we see biblical repentance in the life of the Prodigal Son?
21. How do we see biblical repentance in the life of Zacchaeus?
22. The Thessalonians _____ to God _____ idols.
23. Why is it necessary to preach repentance when we are soul winning?
24. If the individual is not ready to _____, he is not ready to be saved.
25. What kept my landlord in Nepal from coming to Christ?
26. How did Christ deal with the woman at the well in regard to her sin?
27. What sins did Christ point out in the life of the rich young ruler?
28. Why did Paul tell the philosophers at Athens to repent but he didn't say that to the Philippian jailor?

Saving Faith

MEMORY VERSES: *Matthew 11:28-29; John 1:11-12; 3:16; 6:28-29; 14:6; Acts 16:30; Ephesians 2:8-9*

In these first two lessons we are considering man's part in salvation. There are two things: *repentance* and *faith*. Having examined repentance in the first lesson, we will now examine faith.

Acts 20:21

As we saw in the first lesson, Paul preached repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ. The sinner must repent toward God, because it is God that he has offended by his self-will and disobedience. The sinner must put his faith in Jesus, because He died for our sins.

Consider three important questions about saving faith:

What is saving faith?

It is important to understand that saving faith is not simply believing some historical fact with one's mind. For example, we believe that George Washington was the first president of the United States and that Hitler ruled Germany in World War II and that Mahatma Gandhi lived in India. But such beliefs do not change the lives of those who believe. Likewise, many people believe that Jesus Christ lived long ago and that He did many wonderful things, but this belief does not change their lives. Saving faith is different from this.

Saving faith is an undivided faith.

The Bible says that Jesus is the *only* Lord and Saviour. See John 14:6; Acts 4:12. To be saved I must believe that Jesus Christ ALONE is Lord and Saviour, just as the Bible says. Some people try to add Jesus to their other gods. They want to believe in Jesus while believing in other lords as well. No one can be saved this way.

Saving faith is a trusting faith.

The word “believe” in the Bible means to trust, to depend upon, to commit oneself to. To be saved a person must fully trust his soul and eternal destiny to the Lord Jesus. He must rely upon Jesus and Jesus alone to forgive his sin and make him right with God and carry him to heaven.

Trusting Jesus is like trusting a boat to carry me across a lake. It is not enough to look at the boat and to admire it. You must actually get into the boat and trust it to carry you safely to the other side. Have you trusted Jesus to take away your sin? Some people say they believe in Jesus, but they continue to go through their old religious rituals. This proves they are not truly trusting in Jesus. When we trust Jesus, we realize that we do not need any vain religious rituals for salvation.

Saving faith is a convinced faith.

To be saved I must be fully convinced that Jesus is Lord and Saviour and that He will fulfill His promises to me. True salvation is a know-so salvation. This is the kind of faith that Jesus’ early disciples had. See Peter’s testimony in John 6:66-69. This is the testimony of a genuinely saved person. We can be sure because of God’s promises (1 John 5:11-13). In contrast is the “faith” of those who say they “hope” they will be saved, meaning they aren’t sure. I once met a Nepali who said he had 99% faith in Jesus. That isn’t enough!

Saving faith is an unmixed faith.

Saving faith cannot be mixed with human works. See Romans 3:24; 4:4-5; 6:23; 11:6; Ephesians 2:8-9. A person must receive Christ's salvation as a free gift, not as a reward for good works. A gift is something that someone else purchases and then gives to me freely. If I try to pay anything whatsoever, it is no longer a gift. Jesus is the one who purchased our salvation at great cost with His death and the blood. Are you enjoying God's free salvation in Jesus Christ today, or are you still trying to do something to earn your salvation?

Saving faith is a receiving faith.

Saving faith receives Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Saving faith doesn't merely believe in Jesus as a historical person; it calls out to Him and asks Him for salvation. See Matthew 11:28-29; John 1:11-12; and Romans 10:13. Salvation is a personal relationship with Christ.

What is the place of works in the Christian life?

Does believing in Christ mean that I don't have to do any works in the Christian life? What is the place of works?

Again we will look at Ephesians 2:8-9, but this time we will examine verse 10, as well.

God wants us to live obedient, holy lives, but this comes *after* salvation. Good works are *the product and fruit of* salvation, not *the way of* salvation. Good works are produced in the believer by the Holy Spirit.

In the epistle of Ephesians, there are nearly 90 commandments that the believer is to obey. These include being humble (Eph. 4:1), longsuffering (Eph. 4:1), putting away lying (Eph. 4:25), putting away anger (Eph. 4:26), not stealing (Eph. 4:28), not speaking any corrupt thing (Eph. 4:29), being kind (Eph. 4:32),

forgiving (Eph. 4:32), putting away fornication and uncleanness (Eph. 5:3), having no fellowship with the works of darkness (Eph. 5:11), redeeming the time (Eph. 5:16), understanding God's will (Eph. 5:17), not being drunk (Eph. 5:18), being filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18), wives submitting to their husbands (Eph. 5:22), husbands loving their wives (Eph. 5:25), children obeying their parents (Eph. 6:1-3), fathers training their children and not provoking them to wrath (Eph. 6:4), servants being obedient to their masters (Eph. 6:5), and masters treating their servants justly (Eph. 6:9).

These are some of the works that God wants the believer to obey, but we cannot do these things until first we are saved. We must be reconciled to God through Jesus, forgiven of our sins, and indwelt with the Holy Spirit. Only then can we serve God acceptably.

Is salvation a religious process?

A popular heresy today is the teaching that salvation is a *process*, but the Bible says it is a miraculous conversion *experience*. This was what Jesus taught. See Matthew 18:3 and John 3:3.

The new birth conversion is not a long process; it is a supernatural, life-changing event! And this happens when the sinner repents of his sin and puts his faith in Jesus as his only Saviour.

Coming to repentance and faith can be a process, but salvation itself is a birth and a conversion experience.

This is what we see in the Bible. Those who were saved in the book of Acts were saved on the very day they received Christ. This includes the Jews who believed on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41), the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:36-39), Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:44-48), Lydia (Acts 16:14-15), and the Philippian jailer and his household (Acts 16:30-34).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON FAITH

1. In what verse did Paul say that he preached both repentance and faith?
2. Does saving faith mean simply to believe some fact in the mind?
3. What are the five characteristics of saving faith?
4. In what verse does Jesus say that He is the way, the truth, and the life?
5. What verse says there is no other name under heaven whereby men might be saved?
6. How is trusting Jesus like trusting a boat to carry you across a lake?
7. In what verse did Peter say that he was sure that Jesus is the Son of God?
8. What verse says we can know that we have eternal life?
9. What verse says that those who receive Christ become sons of God?
10. What verse says, "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"?
11. What passage says that we are saved by grace without works but we are saved unto good works?
12. What verse says we must be converted?
13. What verse says we must be born again?

14. How long did it take people to be saved in the book of Acts?

The Gospel

MEMORY VERSES: *Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:10, 23; 6:23; 10:9-13; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 1 John 5:11-13*

Introduction

1. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 contains the gospel in a nutshell. Nowhere else in Scripture is the gospel summarized in this brief manner. This is therefore a most important passage.

a. We need to know the right gospel, because it is the only way of salvation (1 Cor. 15:2).

b. We need to know the right gospel, because Paul warned that every false gospel is cursed of God (Galatians 1:6-9).

c. We need to know the right gospel because Jesus commanded us to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15).

2. Paul addressed this presentation of the gospel to believers (1 Cor. 15:1). This teaches us that new believers need to learn the gospel properly so they can be grounded in its truths personally and preach it to others. This also teaches us that older believers need to learn the gospel better and better. We will never stop learning about the gospel.

Important Questions Answered about the Gospel

Every foundational truth about the gospel is covered in this important passage in

1 Corinthians 15.

What is the gospel?

There are three major parts to the gospel of Christ:

1. Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture (1 Cor. 15:3).

a. Notice who died: It was *Christ*. Jesus is the Christ promised in the Old Testament. The name “Christ” is a Greek word that means “anointed one.” The Hebrew word “Messiah” means the same thing (Psalm 2:2; 132:17). Jesus is the Anointed or Chosen One. The prophets said that Messiah would come to earth the first time to be cut off or die for man’s sins (Dan. 9:25-26), and He would come again to rule on the throne of David and to establish the kingdom of God on earth (Isaiah 9:6-7).

b. Notice why Christ died: *for our sins*.

(1) All men are sinners (Rom. 3:23). When Adam disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, he became a sinner, and all of his children inherited his fallen nature. We are sinners by nature. No one has to teach us how to sin. To sin is to break God’s laws (1 John 3:4). Sin is to turn away from God to our own way (Isaiah 53:6). It means that we are not righteous or good before the holy God (Rom. 3:10, 12). When measured by His holy standard, we all come short (Rom. 3:23).

(2) The Bible says that every sin will be punished (James 2:9-10), and the punishment is death (Rom. 6:23). There is both physical death and eternal death in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

(3) The good news of the gospel is that Christ died for our sins. He is the

sinless Son of God and did not deserve to die. He died in our place. He took our punishment. Salvation is an exchange. When we believe on Christ, He takes our sin and we take His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). No person can be saved unless he acknowledges that he is a sinner like the Bible says.

(4) To believe the gospel is to believe that you are a sinner like the Bible says. No one can be saved apart from this. If the person still thinks of himself as basically a good person, he cannot be saved. A pastor friend was on soul winning visitation in California with a veteran missionary one Saturday when a Roman Catholic man answered the door. In a few minutes, the missionary showed the man the Romans Road and led the man in a sinner's prayer, and while he was filling out the church report and getting the man's information so he could report him as "saved," my pastor friend asked the man whether he believed he was a good person and whether he believed it is possible for a person to go to heaven by being a good person. The man answered, "Yes." It is obvious that the man was not ready to get saved, and it is criminal to lead people in a sinner's prayer when they don't understand or don't agree with the basic truth of the gospel.

(5) Therefore, a major goal in soul winning is to help people see that they are lost sinners. We have to take the time to explain what sin is according to God's definition, because most people think of sin either only as some small matter (such as a Buddhist who thinks sin is stepping on an ant) or only as some "big" thing like murder. Hindus typically think of sin only in these terms. They will admit that they are sinners, but typically they do not mean that they are evil and deserving of God's judgment.

c. Notice that He died *according to the Scriptures*. This refers to the amazing prophecies that described His death in great detail. These were written down hundreds of years before Jesus was born. Following are just a few of these prophecies from Psalm 22:

The Scripture prophesied that Jesus would die by crucifixion (Psa. 22:14-16; Jn. 19:16-18). This is a perfect description of death by crucifixion, and

when the prophet David wrote it 1,000 years before Christ came, crucifixion was not yet practiced! It began to be practiced in the days of the Roman Empire not long before Jesus was born. To punish murderers and robbers, the Roman government would nail their hands and feet to a wooden cross and leave them there to die.

The Scripture prophesied that the soldiers would gamble for Jesus' robe at the foot of the cross (Psalm 22:18). The cruel soldiers did this while Jesus was suffering (Mat. 27:35).

The Scripture prophesied the words that Jesus spoke from the cross (Psa. 22:1; Mat. 27:46).

The Scripture prophesied that Jesus would thirst (Psa. 22:15; Jn. 19:28).

The Scripture prophesied that the people would mock Him (Psa. 22:6-8; Mat. 27:39, 41-43).

The Scripture prophesied that the people would sit and stare at Him (Psa. 22:17; Mat. 27:36).

2. Christ was buried (1 Cor. 15:4).

a. His burial proved that He really died. He did not merely faint or merely appear to die as some false teachers have claimed. The reason the soldiers did not break Jesus' legs is because He was already dead (Jn. 19:31-34).

b. He was in the grave for three days and nights (Mat. 12:40). For this reason we know that it was not possible that Jesus was buried on Friday as many churches teach. We know that Jesus rose from the dead early Sunday morning (Lk. 24:1) and if He was in the grave for three days and three nights, He died

either on Wednesday or Thursday.

c. His burial fulfilled prophecy. It was “*according to the Scriptures.*” The Bible prophesied that Jesus would be buried in the tomb of a rich man (Isaiah 53:9). This prophecy, written about 710 years before Jesus was born, was fulfilled when Jesus was taken down off the cross by a wealthy disciple and buried in that disciple’s own tomb (Mat. 27:57-60).

3. Christ rose again according to the Scripture (1 Cor. 15:4).

a. His resurrection was prophesied in Psalm 16:10. This was written about 1,000 years before Jesus came.

b. His resurrection proved that He is the Son of God (Rom. 1:4). Jesus prophesied that He would rise again the third day (Mat. 16:21), and if he had not done so it would have proven that he was a false prophet and not the Son of God that He claimed to be.

Is there evidence that the gospel is true?

Paul gives two great evidences of the truth of the gospel:

1. The Old Testament prophecies prove that the gospel is true. He died and rose again “according to the scriptures.” We have already looked at these. Bible prophecy is a great, great miracle. We don’t even know what will happen tomorrow, yet the Bible’s prophecies describe events hundreds and thousands of years in the future with detailed exactness.

2. The eyewitness testimonies prove that the gospel is true (1 Cor. 15:5-8). The Bible is not a “blind religious faith.” It is based on “many infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3). Biblical faith has “substance” and “evidence” (Hebrews 11:1).

a. The resurrected Christ was seen by more than 500 people on one occasion (1 Cor. 15:6). When Paul wrote this epistle, most of these eyewitnesses were still alive. Paul was not writing about things that had happened long ago and been passed down from generation-to-generation by word of mouth and dependance on man's fallible memory.

b. This resurrection dramatically changed the lives of those who saw Christ. Whereas before He rose, the disciples were fearful and in hiding from the authorities (John 20:19), after they saw the risen Christ they were bold and were willing to lay down their lives for their faith.

c. The resurrection convinced Jesus' own half brother James (1 Cor. 15:7). Compare John 7:5 where we see that Jesus' brothers did not believe on Him before His crucifixion.

d. The resurrection convinced Paul and converted him from being Christ's bitter enemy. From an earthly perspective, Paul had absolutely nothing to gain by following Christ. He was persecuted to the end of his life and lived a nomad existence without family or property. The reason that he was willing to suffer these things was that he was absolutely convinced that Jesus had risen from the dead thus proving that He is the Son of God.

What does it mean to “believe in vain” (1 Cor. 15:2)?

Paul probably means that there are ways to believe that do not result in salvation. Consider some of the ways that this is possible:

a. *One can believe in vain by believing the wrong thing* (Jn. 2:23-25). These Jews “believed” on Jesus as a worldly provider who would feed and protect them instead of believing on Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. See Jn. 6:14, 15, 26, 66. Likewise, many today believe on Jesus in wrong ways. They come to

Jesus and pray to Him so He will help them with their problems or build up their self-esteem or make them wealthy or heal them or some other thing rather than humbling themselves as sinners and trusting Him solely as their Saviour.

b. *One can believe in vain by “believing” without repentance* (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 20:21; 26:20). Repentance means to surrender to God. Many want to “believe in Jesus” without surrendering their lives to Him, but it is impossible to be saved without repentance. The devils “believe in God” but not in a saving sense (Jam. 2:19-20). They know He exists but they do not submit to Him. Many sinners do the same thing, but this is not saving faith.

c. *One can believe in vain by believing a false gospel or a false christ* (2 Cor. 11:3-4). Many believe in a different gospel or a different Jesus than that which is revealed in Scripture. For example, they believe in a gospel of faith plus works or Jesus plus sacraments or a Jesus that is not Almighty God in the flesh.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE GOSPEL

1. In what book and chapter did Paul give the gospel in a nutshell?
2. What are three reasons why we need to know the gospel?
3. In what book and chapter did Paul warn about false gospels?
4. What are the three parts to the gospel?
5. What verse says that all have sinned?
6. What verse says that sin is the transgression of God’s law?

7. What verse says that if we break God's law in even one point we are guilty of all?
8. What verse says the wages of sin is death?
9. What is the second death?
10. In what book and chapter is the second death described?
11. What does the Bible mean when it says that Christ died for our sins?
12. Why can a person not be saved if he does not fully believe that he is a sinner?
13. A major goal in soul winning is to help people see that they are _____.
14. What does the Bible mean when it says that Christ died according to the Scriptures?
15. What are four prophecies about Jesus' death?
16. What great prophecy described Jesus' death by crucifixion?
17. How do we know that Jesus did not die on Friday?
18. What two things did Jesus demonstrate by rising from the dead?
19. What are two evidences that the gospel is true?
20. What are three ways that someone can believe in vain?

Evidence of Salvation

MEMORY VERSES: 2 Corinthians 5:17; Titus 1:16; 1 John 2:3-4

The New Testament everywhere teaches that salvation will be accompanied by evidence.

1. Consider some of the Scriptures that teach that salvation is accompanied by evidence: Consider 1 John 2:3-4.

Consider 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Consider Titus 1:16, where Paul warned about those who profess Christ but deny Him by their works.

Consider 2 Timothy 2:19, where we see that the seal of salvation is the two-fold truth that God knows those who are His and that the true believer will demonstrate his salvation by departing from iniquity. To depart from iniquity is not the *way* of salvation; it is the *evidence* of salvation.

Consider Ephesians 2:8-10. Though salvation is “without works” in that it is God’s free gift through Christ, it is “*unto* good works” (Eph. 2:8-10). The good works are God’s works showing themselves in the individual’s life. The good works are the evidence.

Consider John 3:3, which teaches that salvation is a supernatural birth that changes the individual’s life.

Consider the conversions described in the Gospels under Christ’s earthly

ministry. In every case the individual's life was dramatically changed: e.g., the woman at the well (John 4), Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10).

Consider the conversions described in the book of Acts. Again, in every case the individual's life was dramatically changed: e.g., those who were saved on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41-42), the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39), Paul (Acts 9:1-21), Lydia (Acts 16:14-15), the Philippian jailor (Acts 16:27-35).

Consider the believers at Thessalonica who modeled genuine salvation (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10).

2. The following five evidences of salvation are described in the New Testament: a. A conversion experience (Matthew 18:3; John 3:3) b. Love for God's Word (John 8:47)

c. Love of righteousness (1 John 2:3-4)

d. God's chastening (Hebrews 12:6-8)

e. Looking for Christ's return (Hebrews 9:28)

3. Jesus warned that it is possible to "believe" without being saved.

a. In John 2:23-25, the people believed on Christ because of the miracles, but they did not believe savingly. Had they believed savingly, Christ would have "committed himself to them." Even the devils "believe," but they do not have saving faith (James 2:19). The Jews in John 2 did not believe on Jesus as Lord and Saviour; they believed on Him as a "a prophet" (John 6:14), as a miracle worker and a provider of their physical needs (John 6:26-27), and as one who would deliver them from the power of Rome, which was their concept of the Messiah: a political deliver rather than a personal Saviour from sin. That they

were not true believers is evident in that they turned away from Christ because of His preaching (John 6:60). In contrast to these false disciples, Peter refused to turn away even when the “going got rough,” because he had genuine saving faith (John 6:67-69).

b. In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus warned that many of those who call on Him as “Lord, Lord” will be false Christians. We see from the testimony of the people in verse 22 that they trust their works and their “sign gifts” rather than trusting Christ’s blood alone for salvation. Christianity today is filled with people who profess Christ but who are trusting their baptism, their church, priests, sacraments, sincerity, social-justice activity, *etc.*

4. When we say there is evidence of salvation, we are not saying there will be some sort of sinless perfection. That there is evidence of salvation does not mean that every believer will change at the same rate or bear the same fruit (Mat. 13:23). The believer still has the “old man” that he inherited from Adam, and the Christian life is a process of putting off the old man and putting on the new man, which is Christ (Eph. 2:22-24). Some believers are more passionate in living for Christ than others. We are not saying there will be a “total transformation”; we are saying that there will be at least some sort of transformation!

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE EVIDENCE OF SALVATION

1. What verse says, “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar”?
2. What type of people are described in Titus 1:16?
3. What is the two-fold seal of salvation described in 2 Timothy 2:19?
4. What verse says the believer is saved “unto good works”?
5. Jesus described salvation as a new birth. How does this prove that salvation

5. Jesus described salvation as a new birth. How does this prove that salvation has evidence?

6. What are four examples of salvations in the New Testament that involved a great change of life?

7. What are five evidences of salvation?

8. Why does John 2:24 says that Jesus did not commit Himself to those who believed in that situation?

Baptism

MEMORY VERSES: *Matthew 28:18-19; Acts 2:41; 8:36-37; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 1:17*

In this lesson we will answer six important questions about baptism.

What is the meaning of baptism?

1. Baptism is the first step of obedience after believing (Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus commanded baptism, and the believer submits to it as a step of obedience.

2. Baptism is a picture of the gospel, which is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

3. Baptism shows the believer's identification with Christ. It is symbolic of the believer's death with Christ and of his resurrection to new life in Christ. See Romans 6:3-4.

4. Baptism is a public testimony before the world that I have believed in Christ and that I intend to live a new life in Christ. It is an announcement of my discipleship to Christ. Each baptism in the New Testament was an event that was witnessed by other people.

Does baptism make one a Christian?

A vast number of people believe that baptism makes one a Christian. Roman Catholics believe that. Greek Orthodox believe that. Church of Christ believe that. Hindus and Buddhists and Muslims typically believe that baptism makes

one a Christian. But it does not. Personal faith in Jesus Christ makes one a Christian. True Christianity is not a religion; it is a personal relationship with Jesus. Baptism is only a picture and a testimony of one's faith. Water does not save us. Good works do not save us. Religious rituals do not save us. These things follow salvation, but it is personal faith in Christ that saves us. Salvation is a free gift of God's grace (Ephesians 2:8-9), and if I could add even one work to it, this would mean it is no longer a free gift.

What about Mark 16:15-16 and Acts 2:38?

The Church of Christ and some other false churches claim that baptism is a necessary part of salvation, and two of their favorite proof texts are Mark 16:15-16 and Acts 2:38.

Consider Mark 16:15-16. Here we are taught that baptism is closely associated with believing, but it is separated from salvation itself. The sinner is not damned because he doesn't get baptized; he is damned because he doesn't believe. The wording is very precise and important. Baptism is an evidence that the person has truly believed. Those who claim to believe in Jesus but refuse to be baptized are not true believers. Jesus said that those who love Him will obey Him (John 14:23).

Consider Acts 2:38. The believer does not get baptized in order to be forgiven of his sins; he is baptized because he *has been* forgiven of his sins. The expression "for the remission of sins" could mean "in order for your sins to be forgiven" or "because your sins have been forgiven." A similar expression is used in the latter way in Luke 5:13-14. The leper was instructed to offer himself to the priest "for thy cleansing," meaning because he had already been cleansed by Christ.

We know this is the meaning of Mark 16:15-16 and Acts 2:38 by comparing Scripture with Scripture. The apostle Paul said that it is the gospel of Christ that saves (Romans 1:16), and he taught that baptism is *not* the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:17; 15:1-4).

What is the mode of baptism?

It is sad that we even have to discuss the mode of baptism, because the Bible is so clear about it, but we must discuss it because most professing Christians practice sprinkling and pouring. Scriptural baptism, though, is immersion or burial in water. Following are five evidences for this:

1. This is the meaning of the word. The term *baptize* means to immerse or to dip.
2. This was the manner in which Jesus was baptized. He came “up out of the water” (Mark 1:10).
3. This is the example of the early Christians. In Acts 8:38-39 the preacher and the candidate “went down both into the water” and “came up out of the water.” The only reason for this would be to practice immersion. Otherwise, the preacher would merely have dipped up some water and applied it without getting wet.
4. This is the only mode that fits the biblical meaning of the practice. Baptism is a picture of burial and resurrection with Christ, and only immersion fits this symbolism. Sprinkling or pouring does not. See Romans 6:4.
5. Immersion was the only mode of baptism in the churches for many centuries. Many ancient baptistries testify to this. The most ancient baptistry in Rome, for example, is a large pool that was obviously used for immersions. I have stood in this baptistry and it comes up to my waist. The same is true for an ancient baptistry I have seen at a church in Ephesus.

Who has the authority to baptize?

The New Testament church has the authority to baptize. It is the Lord’s chosen

institution for this age, and it is the house of God, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). Every baptism in the book of Acts was conducted by a preacher.

What follows baptism?

The thing that follows baptism is Christian service and holy living (Acts 2:41-42). The individual that takes baptism is testifying that he has died to the old life and that he is going to follow Christ as the Lord of his or her life. It is a very serious and solemn practice. The Christians in the first church at Jerusalem “continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON BAPTISM

1. Baptism is the _____ step of _____ after believing.
2. Baptism is an _____ that the person has truly believed.
3. Baptism is a _____ of the gospel.
4. Baptism signifies the believer's _____ with Christ.
5. Baptism is a _____ before the world.
6. Does baptism make a person a Christian?
7. The believer does not get baptized _____ of his sins; he is baptized _____ of his sins.
8. In what verse did Paul say that God called him not to baptize but to preach the gospel

gospel.

9. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Paul summarized the gospel and he didn't say _____ about baptism.

10. The term *baptize* means _____.

11. How do we know that Jesus was immersed?

12. In what book and chapter did Philip baptize by going into the water and coming up out of the water?

13. In what book and chapter is baptism likened to a burial?

14. What mode of baptism was practiced by all of the churches in the beginning?

15. What did the first Christians do after they were baptized?

Eternal Security Part 1

MEMORY VERSES: *John 10:27-28; 1 Corinthians 1:8; Ephesians 1:3, 7; Philippians 1:6; 1 John 5:11-12; Hebrews 6:19; 9:12; 10:14*

The Bible does not use the term “eternal security” to describe the believer’s position in Christ, but it does use the terms “everlasting life (John 3:16) and “everlasting consolation” (2 Thessalonians 2:16). The Bible teaches that the child of God is eternally safe in Christ.

The doctrine of eternal security is very important for stability in the Christian life.

As we will see, eternal security is only promised to those who are born again. It does not refer to hypocrites, nominal professors, or to those who are merely dabbling in the things of Christ. Those who permanently fall away have never been born again.

1. Believers are secure because of what Jesus did for us.

Jesus died for the believer’s sin, all of it. His blood was the full price that God’s Law demanded; it was perfectly sufficient. Those who believe that the believer can lose his salvation do not understand what Jesus did. They do not understand the gospel properly.

See Ephesians 1:7. “Redemption” means to be bought with a price. Jesus bought us from the slave market of sin and delivered us *completely*.

See Romans 3:24-25. “Justification” means declared righteous by God. The

believer is not righteous in himself, but he is declared righteous by the great Judge. The basis of this declaration is the fact that Jesus paid the full price to take away the believer's sin before God.

“Propitiation” refers to this price. It means to satisfy a debt by paying the full amount that is owed. That is what Jesus did. The sinner has broken God's Law and is incapable of making proper restitution. Jesus paid the price of this debt in the sinner's place. We owed a debt we could not pay; He paid a debt He did not owe.

2. Believers are secure because of God's promises.

The following are just a few of the ways that salvation is described in the New Testament. These are promises that cannot be changed because they are given by a God who cannot lie and whose declarations are immutable. While there are a few passages in the New Testament that might appear on the surface to say that the believer can lose his salvation, there are hundreds that plainly say he cannot!

“shall never perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16) -- If God gives the believer everlasting life and promises that he shall never perish, how could he “lose” his salvation? How can the believer perish if God says he will *not* perish? God's promise would fall to the ground if this were to happen.

God shall “confirm you unto the end” (1 Corinthians 1:8) -- Promises like these guarantee the believer's salvation.

“blessed with all spiritual blessings” (Ephesians 1:3) -- If the believer already has been blessed with *all* spiritual blessings in Christ, how could he come short of this and lose his salvation? Notice that these blessings are “in Christ.” The believer's salvation is wrapped up in Christ and has absolutely nothing to do with his life and works.

“sealed with the Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 1:12-14) -- The sealing of the Holy Spirit is God’s promise of eternal redemption:

The sealing of the Holy Spirit means ownership. When I believe on Jesus, I become God’s possession. The Holy Spirit is the seal of this possession. This is like when a king seals something with his personal stamp.

The sealing of the Holy Spirit is a promise. It is the down payment, the guarantee, of the believer’s eternal salvation. It is like a man who gives a down payment for some land. The down payment is his promise to pay the rest. It is also like a plane ticket. If someone gives you a plane ticket to a certain place, you know that you can go to that place with the ticket. The ticket is the guarantee. Likewise, Jesus paid for our trip to heaven, and the Holy Spirit is His promise.

“seated in heavenly places” (Ephesians 2:5-6) -- The believer does not have to wait until he dies to go to heaven; he is already seated in heaven with Christ in God’s eyes; this is his new position. The believer’s salvation is all wrapped up in Christ. He has died with Him, risen with Him, and lives with Him.

“made fit for heaven” (Colossians 1:12-13) -- Christ has done everything necessary to take the believer to heaven; there is nothing left for the believer to do in this regard; our works do not fit us for heaven or add one jot or tittle to what Christ has already done and provided.

“a strong consolation” (Hebrews 6:17-19) -- The terms used to describe salvation in this passage are amazing. The word “immutable” means cannot be changed; when God makes a declaration or promise, it is sure. The word “consolation” means comfort and encouragement; the believer’s consolation is not weak and uncertain; it is “strong.” The term “hope” here does not refer to something uncertain, as it does in this world. It does not mean, “I hope I will be saved,” but, “I am sure I will be saved.” The believer’s hope is described as “an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.” The reason that all of this is true is

that Christ paid the full sin debt.

Conclusion

The knowledge of one's eternal security in Christ is the believer's "helmet" to protect him from the devil's fiery darts of doubt (1 Thessalonians 5:8).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON ETERNAL SECURITY PART 1

1. What are two ways that the Bible describes the believer's position in Christ?
2. What did Jesus do for the believer?
3. What is the meaning of "redemption"?
4. What is the meaning of "justification"?
5. What is the meaning of "propitiation"?
6. What verse says God will confirm the believer unto the end?
7. What verse says the believer is blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ?
8. What two things are meant by the "sealing of the Holy Spirit"?
9. What verse says the believer is seated in heavenly places in Christ?
10. What verse says the believer is made fit for heaven?
11. What does "immutable" mean?

12. What does "consolation" mean?

13. How do we know that the believer's hope is certain?

14. What is the believer's helmet?

Eternal Security Part 2

MEMORY VERSES: *John 10:27-28; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Titus 1:16; 1 John 2:4*

In this lesson we continue our study on the doctrine of eternal security by answering two more important questions on this subject: First, does the doctrine of eternal security mean anyone who professes Christ has eternal life? Second, does it cause people to live carelessly?

Does the doctrine of eternal security mean that anyone who professes Christ has eternal life?

No, the promise of eternal security is only for those who have been saved, not for mere professors. Salvation always changes a person's life.

1. Salvation demands repentance (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10).

God requires repentance for salvation, and repentance means a dramatic change of mind resulting in a change of life. It means to surrender to God. The person who has never surrendered has never been saved. The believers at Thessalonica exemplify biblical repentance. They “turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God.”

2. Salvation requires the new birth, and the new birth changes a man's life (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Jesus said, “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7), and the new birth is a great miracle that God does to and for the believer. It is a dramatic transformation, and

those who can continue to live as they did before they professed Christ have never been born again.

3. Those who are saved hear Christ's voice and follow Him (John 10:27-29).

In this passage, Jesus gives the definition of a true believer who has eternal life. Jesus' sheep hear His voice, meaning they respond to His Word, and they follow Christ, meaning they submit to Him as disciples. The promise of verses 28-29 cannot be divorced from the evidence of verse 27.

4. Saving faith always produces holy works (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Ephesians 2:8-10 describes the proper relationship between faith and works. It is faith that saves and works follow as the result. The works in the Christian life are God's works in the believer, thus there is no glory for man. To mix works together with faith for salvation is a false gospel (Romans 11:6). But it is also true that holy works always follow saving faith. James describes the Christian life from man's perspective (James 2:14-17). If a man "says" he has faith and does not have anything in his life to back it up, he does not have saving faith.

5. The Bible says true believers keep God's commandments and purify themselves (1 John 2:4; 3:2-3). In 1 John 3:2-3, God's Word says that those who have eternal life are those who purify themselves. The promise of verse 2 cannot be divorced from the evidence of verse 3.

6. The Bible warns about those who profess Christ but do not obey Him; they are false professors (Titus 1:16).

If a person claims to have faith in Christ but his life does not reflect this, he is deceived. A fruitless profession of faith cannot lay claim to God's promises of eternal security. If an individual professes Christ and then turns away, this is evidence that he never was saved.

Does the doctrine of eternal security cause people to live carelessly?

Those who do not believe in the doctrine of eternal security say that it causes people to live carelessly. In fact, the opposite is true. I began my preaching career in a part of Tennessee where Methodists had predominated for a couple of centuries. The doctrine of losing your salvation had devastated that area. It was filled with people who had “tried to live the Christian life” and failed and now lived like the devil.

1. The Bible teaches that the grace of God motivates believers to serve God with a thankful heart (Romans 2:4; Ephesians 3:14-19). The more a believer understands the unfathomable love that God has for him in Christ, the more he wants to please God. The Bible says, “We love him because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).
2. The true grace of God teaches people to live holy lives (Titus 2:11-14).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON ETERNAL SECURITY PART 2

1. What are six reasons why we know that salvation always changes a person's life.
2. What verse says if any man is in Christ he is a new creature?
3. In what book and chapter did Jesus say that His sheep hear His voice and follow Him?
4. What passage says the believer is saved unto good works?
5. What verse says that if salvation is of grace it is not of works?

6. What verse describes those who profess Christ but deny him in their works?

7. What are two reasons why we know that the doctrine of eternal security does not cause people to live carelessly?

8. What verse teaches that we love God because he first loved us?

9. In what book and chapter does Paul teach that the grace of God teaches us to live holy lives?

Eternal Security Part 3

MEMORY VERSES: *Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 12:8; 1 John 1:6; 2:1-2*

In this lesson we complete our study on the doctrine of eternal security by answering one final question.

If the disobedient believer does not lose his salvation, what does happen to him?

1. The sinning believer is out of fellowship with the Lord and his people (1 John 1:3-7).

John was writing to instruct believers in how to maintain fellowship with Christ (1 John 1:3). We do this by walking in the light rather than in darkness. Walking in the light is walking in obedience to God's Word. Walking in darkness is walking in disobedience. Thus, the sinning Christian is not in fellowship with Christ. He knows Christ as Lord and Saviour, but he is not walking in fellowship with Christ. The relationship is not broken, but the fellowship is broken. This is a serious loss. To live out of fellowship with Christ means I do not have His wisdom and power and blessing. If I make major decisions while in such a condition, those decisions will invariably be wrong and will take me farther out of God's will.

2. The sinning believer grieves the Holy Spirit that lives in him (Ephesians 4:30).

To grieve the Holy Spirit means that His ministration in my life is hindered. He is the believer's comforter and strength and guide and teacher. When He is grieved, I lose His blessing; I do not grow spiritually; I do not have spiritual power, enlightenment, and wisdom.

3. The sinning believer is helped by the Lord Jesus Christ (1 John 2:1-2).

When we sin, God does not abandon us; we have an Advocate, a Helper. The name “Jesus” means *Saviour*, and He does not cease to be my Saviour when I sin. Jesus is there helping me, interceding for me, caring for me, seeking to restore me, as He did for Peter when Peter denied Him thrice in one night.

4. The sinning believer is chastened by the Father (Hebrews 12:5-11).

God does not let His children sin without consequence. He spans us. There is even the sin unto death if the believer refuses to repent (1 John 5:16-17). Some of the believers at Corinth sinned this sin (1 Corinthians 11:27-30).

5. The sinning believer reaps corruption (Galatians 6:7-8).

There is a price to be paid for sin in this present world. Just because we are saved, does not mean that we escape the law of sowing and reaping. Many believers have paid a terrible price, such as losing their marriage over such things as adultery, anger, and worldliness; losing their kids’ hearts; and losing their ministries. Any sin can be forgiven by confession, but sin has consequences. For example, I know many divorced believers who have confessed their sin but the divorce is still a reality, with all of its ugly and hurtful lifelong ramifications.

6. The sinning believer loses irreplaceable opportunities for service and fruit (Ephesians 5:14-17).

The sinning Christian can be forgiven, but he cannot regain lost opportunities. When the Israelites doubted God, they were forced to walk in the wilderness for 40 years even after they repented (Deut. 1:37-45). Many believers have lost irreplaceable opportunities by making important decisions when they were backslidden and out of God’s will, such as marrying the wrong person and

taking the wrong job. We can't go back and start over in life, so we must live very cautiously and make sure that we are in God's will every step of the way.

7. *The sinning believer will suffer loss at the judgment seat of Christ* (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

This is one of the clearest promises of eternal security in the New Testament. The sinning Christian who displeases the Lord and whose earthly works are burned up will himself be saved. His works will burn, but he will not burn. This is a wonderful truth, but for one's earthly life to be wasted on something other than God's will, for Jesus to be sorely disappointed in me, to have no rewards for His glory, to not hear, "Well done, thy good and faithful servant," will be a very tragic loss.

Eternal security and problem passages

See the article "Eternal Security" at the Way of Life web site for a look at the passages that are used by those who deny the doctrine of eternal security. A more extensive list can be found in the book *Things Hard to Be Understood: A Handbook of Biblical Difficulties*.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON ETERNAL SECURITY PART 3

1. What are seven things that happen to the believer that sins?
2. What book and chapter says that we walk in the light by confessing our sin?
3. What verse warns against grieving the Holy Spirit?
4. What does it mean to grieve the Holy Spirit?

5. What happens when I grieve the Holy Spirit?
6. What book and chapter says God chastens His children?
7. What book and chapter warns about the sin unto death?
8. In which New Testament church did some of the members die for abusing the Lord's Supper?
9. What verse says that a man reaps whatsoever he sows?
10. What happened to the Israelites when they doubted God?
11. What book and chapter describes the judgment seat of Christ?
12. What happens to the believer at the judgment seat of Christ if his works burn up?

Position and Practice

MEMORY VERSES: Ephesians 1:3; 5:8; Hebrews 12:6-8

Another essential thing in the Christian life is to understand the difference between position and practice or relationship and fellowship. What we mean by this is that the believer has a new position and relationship before God that is eternal and perfect and unchanging and that depends entirely upon Christ, but the believer also has a practice in this present world that is less than perfect and that depends on his obedience.

Multitudes of professing Christians have become discouraged or even shipwrecked from failure to understand this truth. This almost happened to Harry Ironside, the famous Bible commentator. He began his Christian life as a zealous member of the Salvation Army. Believing their doctrine of a second blessing of sinless perfection, Harry set out to obtain this experience. He fasted and prayed and sought God as earnestly as he knew how. Finally he went out into the woods, determining to stay as long as necessary, and he experienced what he thought was the second blessing. He returned to a Salvation Army meeting and stood up to testify that he “had found it.” Soon, though, he realized that the “old man” was still present in his life, and he became so discouraged that he had a breakdown and ended up in a hospital. He determined to forget about the Christian life, since it “didn’t work,” but God sent two believers to instruct him properly in biblical sanctification. He was then able to establish his Christian life on a proper foundation and go on to be a very fruitful servant of Christ.

Relationship and Fellowship

The believer has been adopted into God’s family as a son because of Christ’s blood (Galatians 3:26), and this new relationship will never change. It is a gift that was purchased at great price. God will never “kick” the believer out of His family. At the same time, in this present world fellowship with God depends on

whether or not I walk in the light. Walking in fellowship with God is the subject of 1 John (1 John 1:5-7). If I walk in darkness I am out of fellowship, but this does not change my relationship. God does not throw away His children; He spans them to bring them back into fellowship (Hebrews 12:6-10).

Relationship and fellowship can be illustrated by human relationships. I was born into my father's family and I am his son. Nothing has ever changed that. There were times when I was disobedient and foolish and I displeased my father, and we did not have good fellowship together during those times. My father still loved me and yearned for my fellowship, but I had to repent and honor him before that could happen. The same is true in God's family.

Position and Practice, Standing and Walk Another way to describe this is position and practice or standing and walk. Consider the book of Ephesians.

The first three chapters describe the believer's new position or standing in Christ, whereas the last three chapters describe his practice or walk in this world.

The key phrase in chapters 1-3 is "in Christ" (Ephesians 1:1, 3, 10, 12, 20; 2:6, 10, 13; 3:6, 11). In God's eyes, the believer is in Christ. He is forgiven, justified (declared righteous), redeemed, adopted, and given eternal life. The believer is "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). This new position is not based on the believer's works. It is God's free gift in Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9). The price was Christ's own blood (Eph. 1:7). Therefore, the new position is sure and unchanging.

In chapters 4-6 the subject changes to the believer's practice in this present world. The key word here is "walk" (Ephesians 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15). This word describes Christian living. If the believer doesn't "walk" in obedience, he does not have right fellowship with the Lord. If he walks in sin, he displeases the Lord and grieves the indwelling Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). But he does not lose his position in Christ. That is settled and sure and eternal.

The two aspects of the Christian life are seen together in Ephesians 5:8. The believer is a child of light “now.” It is a present possession and position that was purchased by Christ and received as a free gift through faith. Since we *are* children of light, we should walk as children of light. In other words, since we are saved and have eternal life and are children of God, we should live like it.

Conclusion

1. If the believer does not understand these things, he can become very discouraged and confused when he sins. Those who believe that a born again child of God can lose his salvation do not understand this clear teaching of Scripture.

2. The fact that the believer’s position is not affected by his daily walk is no excuse to sin. We have already seen in these studies the terrible price that believer must pay if he does not walk in fellowship with his Lord. We have also seen that it is possible to be a *professor* of salvation without being a *possessor*.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON POSITION AND PRACTICE

1. What did Harry Ironside try to experience?
2. How did God help him to become grounded in the truth?
3. What verse says the believer becomes a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ?
4. What is the subject of 1 John?
5. What does God do His children when they sin?
6. How is relationship and fellowship illustrated by human families?

7. What is the theme of Ephesians 1-3?
8. What is the key phrase in those chapters?
9. What was the price that was paid to place the believer "in Christ"?
10. What is the theme of Ephesians 4-6?
11. What does the Christian's "walk" refer to?
12. Since we ____ children of light, we should _____ as children of light.
13. True or false: Since the believer cannot lose his salvation, it does not matter how he lives.

The Law and the New Testament Christian

MEMORY VERSES: Romans 3:19-24; 7:4; Galatians 3:10, 13, 24-26

There is a lot of confusion about the Law of Moses and what place it has in the Christian life, and it is essential for every believer to settle this issue on a solid Scriptural footing.

The following major New Testament passages clarify the matter: **Romans 3:19-24**

1. The Law of Moses or the Old Covenant was given to show men that God is holy and that they are sinners (Romans 3:19). Men naturally think that they are righteous. They compare themselves to human standards of righteousness and one with another rather than with God's perfect law. Men need to see that by God's standards we are all sinners because we have broken His laws.

Take the Ten Commandments, for example (Exodus 20:1-17). Men have broken all of these. We have put other gods before the one true God (Ex. 20:3). We have made idols and worshipped them (Ex. 20:4-5). We worship and serve ourselves more than God, thus making our own selves into idols. We have taken the name of the Lord in vain (Ex. 20:7). We have broken the Sabbath and treated all days the same, neglecting to set apart even one day for the worship of God (Ex. 20:8). We have dishonored and disobeyed our parents (Ex. 20:12). We have killed (Ex. 20:13). We have committed adultery (Ex. 20:14). We have stolen (Ex. 20:15). We have lied (Ex. 20:16). We have coveted (Ex. 20:17).

The law of Moses requires perfect obedience (Deuteronomy 27:26). To break one law is to break all (James 2:10).

Jesus taught that God not only requires perfect external obedience to the Law, but internal obedience as well. To hate my brother is the same, in God's eyes, as murder (Matthew 5:21-22). To lust after a woman is the same, in God's eyes, as adultery (Matthew 5:27-28).

Thus it is obvious that we are all guilty of breaking the law and are sinners in God's sight.

2. The Law of Moses cannot bring salvation (Romans 3:20).

The Old Testament cannot bring salvation because it requires perfect holiness, whereas man is a fallen sinner and cannot live up to its requirements. Thus, the Law of God can only curse us. The word "justified" means declared righteous by God. God cannot declare a sinner righteous on the basis of the Law of Moses, because it requires perfect obedience.

3. Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21-24).

The way of salvation is not through the Law of Moses, but through Jesus. The Law demanded that the sinner die, and Jesus died in our place (Romans 6:23). The Law demanded that blood be shed, and Jesus shed His righteous blood in payment for our sins (Hebrews 9:22). Because of what Jesus did on the cross, the believing sinner can receive the very righteousness of God through faith (Rom. 3:21-22). The believer is justified freely. This means that salvation is a gift of God that was purchased by Christ. We are redeemed by His blood. The word "propitiation" means satisfaction of a debt, and that is what Jesus did for us. He paid a price He did not owe to satisfy a debt we could not pay.

Romans 7:1-4

1. The Law is not the Christian's rule in life (Romans 7:1-2). Christ is our new husband and Lord, and He rules our lives through the New Covenant. Our rule in

life is not the Law of Moses but Christ as revealed in the New Testament Scriptures. Trying to serve God under the old Law is like a woman who serves a husband only out of fear. She cooks and cleans house because she is afraid not to. Serving God under the new Law is like a woman who serves a husband out of love. She cooks and cleans house for her master, but not because she is afraid of what he will do to her, but simply because he loves her and treats her so well and she, in turn, loves him.

2. The Law of Moses cannot condemn the believer (Romans 7:3). The believer is as dead to the Law as a wife is to a deceased husband. The Lord Jesus Christ took our condemnation upon Himself on the cross, and we are safe in Him from all fear of eternal judgment.

3. The Christian has a new power, which is the indwelling Holy Spirit (Romans 7:6; 8:1). The believer serves Christ through the Spirit, not through his own strength. Compare Galatians 2:20.

2 Corinthians 3:5-18

This passage compares the Old Covenant with the New.

1. The Old Covenant was the Law of Moses (2 Corinthians 3:7, 13). It was “written and engraven in stones.” That specifically refers to the Ten Commandments (Deut. 4:13; 5:6-22).

2. The Old Covenant was a ministration of death (2 Corinthians 3:7) and a ministration of condemnation (2 Cor. 3:9). This is because it required perfect obedience from the heart, and we being sinners are incapable of providing this level of obedience.

3. The Old Covenant has been done away in Christ (2 Cor. 3:11). It is not the believer’s rule of life.

4. The believer has a new law (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). The fact that the believer is not under the Law of Moses does not mean that we don't have a law. In fact, we have a higher law. It is the law of Christ. We are conformed to His image (Romans 8:29). As we see Him in the Scriptures, we are changed to His image.

Galatians 3:10-14, 24-26

1. The Law of Moses, or the Old Covenant, required perfect obedience in all things; men, therefore, cannot be saved by it (Galatians 3:10-12). Because it requires perfect holiness, it can only bring a curse upon a fallen sinner. We cannot live up to its holy requirements.

2. Christ took the punishment demanded by the Law (Galatians 3:13). He died in the sinner's place in order to provide us with eternal salvation.

3. The Law of Moses is our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). This is the major purpose of the Law. It is designed by God to show the sinner his fallen and lost condition and to lead him to put his faith in Christ.

4. The believer is not under the Law of Moses (Galatians 3:25). The believer's law is not the Law of Moses. The believer has a new law, which is the law of Christ. This means to be conformed to His image. The believer's new law is also called the law of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-18). By walking in the Spirit, which means obeying the Spirit and yielding to Him day by day, the believer does not fulfill the law of the flesh.

Colossians 2:13-17

1. Christ took away the Old Covenant, or the Law of Moses (Colossians 2:14). He did this by fulfilling its demands and paying the price that we owe for

breaking it.

2. The believer does not follow the Old Covenant (Colossians 2:16-17). The Law contains types and shadows that point to Christ, but the believer has Christ Himself.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE LAW OF MOSES

1. What are the five major New Testament passages that we examine in this lesson? (book and chapter only) 2. What is the purpose of the Law of Moses?

3. What verse says that to break one of God's laws is to break all of them?

4. In what book and chapter does Jesus say that to hate is the same as murder and to lust is the same as adultery?

5. Why can't men achieve salvation through the Law of Moses?

6. What verse says that without shedding of blood is no remission of sin?

7. When the Bible says the believer is justified "freely," what does this mean?

8. What is the believer's rule in life?

9. Why can't the old Law condemn the believer?

10. What is the power by which the believer serves God?

11. What was the Old Covenant?

12. What does Paul refer to when he writes of that which "was written and engraven in stones"?

13. Why is the Law of Moses a ministration of condemnation and death?
14. What is the believer's law?
15. What type of obedience does the old Law require?
16. The Law of Moses is our _____ to lead us to Christ.
17. What is the major purpose of the Law of Moses?
18. What is the law of the Spirit?
19. How did Christ take away the Law of Moses?
20. The Law of Moses contains _____ and _____ that point to Christ.

Christian Growth & Victory Part 1

MEMORY VERSES: 2 Peter 1:5-9

Few issues in the Christian life are more important than this. Practically every new believer is puzzled about why he still has a problem with indwelling sin and how can it be handled. That is the question that we will answer in these lessons.

Introduction

1. When the believer comes to Christ, God regenerates him and gives him a holy nature, but the old sin nature is still present. It is called the “old man.” This is why the New Testament everywhere instructs believers to put away sin (e.g., 1 Peter 2:1). The ongoing presence of sin in the Christian life is everywhere taken for granted in the New Testament Epistles. If sin were somehow eradicated, the Epistles would not everywhere address the need to deal with it. If sin could somehow be eradicated, the New Testament would explain how this could be accomplished, and this experience would everywhere be offered as the solution to the sin problem. But this is not what we find. There is a spiritual war that goes on in the believer’s life. The flesh wars against the Spirit; the old man wars against the new man.

2. There is no one secret or key to spiritual victory in the Christian life. Many “keys” have been proposed, such as the baptism of the Holy Spirit, a second blessing, the crucified life, and John Piper’s joy in God path. If there were one such thing that would give the believer victory, every New Testament epistle would say so. For example, when Paul wrote to Corinth to correct their sins, he would have spent the entire epistle explaining the “key.” Instead, Paul dealt with many different things. The same is true in the epistle of Ephesians. Chapter 4-6 is a treatise on the Christian life, and instead of one “secret” Paul dealt with all sorts of things, such as putting off the old man and putting on the new (4:22-24), not grieving the Holy Spirit (4:30), having no fellowship with evil (5:11),

walking circumspectly (5:15), redeeming the time (5:16), being filled with the Spirit (5:18), giving thanks always to the Lord (5:20), wives submitting to their husbands and husbands loving their wives (5:22-33), and putting on the whole armor of God (6:10-18).

3. Some of the things that we would ordinarily include in this section on Christian growth and spiritual victory, such as prayer and the church, are dealt with in their own separate sections.

4. In 2 Peter 1:3-11 we see several important truths about Christian growth:

a. Christian growth flows from God's abundant salvation (2 Pet. 1:3). At salvation the believer has everything he needs to grow and be fruitful. All he has to do is use it.

b. Christian growth is a process of adding to one's faith (2 Pet. 1:5-7). When we are saved, we only have one thing, and that is faith. The Christian life is adding every good thing to faith.

c. Christian growth is not instantaneous; it doesn't come overnight. The believer doesn't suddenly have perfect virtue, perfect patience, perfect charity. Growth is a gradual thing. You can't see a baby grow on a daily basis. We must therefore have faith and patience. We must keep on keeping on. This is one of the most important traits in the Christian life. It is described as *walking* with Christ (Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 5:8; 1 John 1:7). This is a step by step, day by day thing; the Christian life is not a leap or a flight, but a walk.

d. Christian growth requires "all diligence" (2 Pet. 1:5). The half-hearted Christian will not grow. He will remain a babe and will continue to cause trouble in the church and do more to hinder God's work than to help it. Jesus said that He hates lukewarmness (Rev. 3:15-16).

e. Christian growth is an individual path and process (2 Pet. 1:5-7). We cannot measure ourselves by one another; we have different handicaps, different spiritual and moral baggage that we brought into the Christian life.

f. Christian growth is to live by the new law, which is Christ (2 Pet. 1:5-7). Verses 5-7 describe Christ. He is all of these things incarnate: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. The goal of the Christian life is to reach the “measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13).

g. Christian growth requires patience (2 Pet. 1:6). This is one of the most important things in the Christian life. Patience is essential for growth because it is a process, and there are many trials and obstacles and enemies. You just have to keep on keeping on, keep on walking with the Lord and trusting Him and praying and reading your Bible and going to church and obeying Him.

h. Christian growth guarantees fruitfulness (2 Pet. 1:8). Every believer can have good fruit and blessing in this present life if he is willing to be diligent in seeking to grow in Christ.

i. If the believer is not growing, he is going backwards (2 Pet. 1:9). It is like traveling up a river against the flow of the current. As long as I keep paddling I can make progress, but as soon as I stop paddling I start being carried back down the river. Likewise, the believer cannot stand still spiritually. He cannot say, “I am satisfied with where I am, so I will just stay at this place in my Christian life.” We must keep pressing on to higher ground, or we will backslide.

j. Backsliding makes the believer nearsighted and forgetful (2 Pet. 1:9). He becomes filled with the cares and lusts of this world so that he does not think about eternity. His eyes are on man rather than on Christ. He forgets the important things and focuses on the unimportant things. Backsliding is a sad and unfruitful condition.

k. Christian growth does not save, but it does prove one's salvation (2 Pet. 1:10). Peter's challenge in 2 Peter 1:10 is the same as Paul's challenge in 2 Timothy 2:19 and James' in James 2:17-18. Those who profess Christ but do not live for Him have no biblical basis to say that they are saved.

l. Christian growth does not produce salvation; it produces rewards (2 Pet. 1:11). Peter is not saying that by growing we will make it into heaven; he is saying that by growing and serving Christ we will lay up treasures in heaven. Compare 1 Timothy 6:12.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON CHRISTIAN GROWTH PART 1

1. What is another name for the old sinful nature?
2. If sin could somehow be eradicated, the New Testament would explain how this could be _____, and this _____ would everywhere be offered as the _____ to the sin problem.
3. In what book and chapter is the believer taught how to add to his faith?
4. What is one of the most important traits in the Christian life?
5. The Christian life is not a _____ or a _____, but a _____.
6. What will happen if the Christian is not diligent in seeking to grow?
7. What is the believer's new law?
8. If the believer is not growing, he is _____.
9. How is the Christian life like paddling up a river?

10. What does backsliding produce in the Christian's life?

11. Christian growth does not save, but it does _____ one's salvation.

12. Christian growth does not produce _____; it produces
_____.

Christian Growth & Victory Part 2

MEMORY VERSES: *John 15:4; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:13-14; 1 John 1:9*

The “keys” to Christian growth are found in the entire New Testament, but the following are some of the major elements. In this lesson we will look at the first four: abiding in Christ, putting off the old man and putting on the new, confessing sin, and pressing toward the mark.

ABIDING IN CHRIST (John 15:1-10)

The true Christian life is not a religion. It is not merely a bunch of regulations and rituals; it is a personal relationship with the resurrected Christ. Those who have spiritual victory are those who know Him personally and walk in fellowship with Him day by day, serving Him and learning of Him. This is “abiding in Christ.” If the believer forgets Christ and starts living his life apart from conscious fellowship with Christ, he is in spiritual danger.

In John 15:1-10, Jesus emphasized that it is God’s will for the believer to bear fruit (verse 2), *more* fruit (verse 2), and *much* fruit (verse 8). We should be growing, and the growth is the product of abiding in Christ.

Jesus taught that the key to abiding in Him is obedience to His Word (John 15:7, 10). Abiding in Christ is not mystical in the sense of the popular contemplative philosophy. It is not a feeling or a sensual experience. It is not being “overcome by the Spirit,” speaking in tongues, falling on the floor, laughing hysterically, being swayed by powerful music, entering into a meditative state through contemplation, or being moved by candles and incense. It is simply walking in fellowship with Christ by honoring and obeying His Word.

PUTTING OFF THE OLD MAN AND PUTTING ON THE NEW (Ephesians 4:22-24)

The Christian life is presented in this passage as a matter of growing. It is a process of putting off the old man, which is the sinful nature that we inherited from Adam, and putting on the new man, which is Christ. Paul explains how to do this in the succeeding verses. Putting off the old man means to stop lying and to deal with anger and to stop stealing and to put away corrupt speech and many other such things (Eph. 4:25-29). To put on the new man is to speak the truth and to give to meet needs and to use edifying speech and other such things (Eph. 4:25-29).

These are high and holy standards that go much deeper and are farther reaching than the Law of Moses ever went. To stop lying involves learning to be honest in every way and situation. There are a thousand ways that the corrupt human heart, the old man, lies and dissimulates. To let NO corrupt communication proceed out of the mouth, to put away ALL bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour and evil speaking, is an amazingly high standard.

Confessing sin (1 John 1:5-10)

Again we see that the believer can and does sin, but to sin is to walk in the darkness rather than in the light. When we sin, God has given us a way to restore fellowship with Him, and that is confession. Confession of sin keeps me in the light and in fellowship with God. He is light and holiness and He will not fellowship with sin and darkness. He will not walk in fellowship with me in darkness. If I want to fellowship with Him, I must walk with Him in the light.

Confession of sin means to agree with God against my action. It is the opposite of making excuse for my sin. Making excuse and blaming others is the way of Adam. Our first father blamed his wife for the sin, while she blamed the serpent. We have a natural tendency to follow in these unwise footsteps. We blame our nationality, our age (“I’m young” or “I’m old”), our sex, our background, our

circumstances, and many other things for our sin. For example, if I get angry and bitter at my wife, that is a sin, but it is easy to make excuse and blame her or blame something else, such as the fact that I am having a bad day or that she is unreasonable, instead of admitting that I have done wrong in God's eyes. Or if I lie, I can make excuses and say, "Well, everyone lies sometimes." Or if I disobey and dishonor my parents, I can make an excuse and say that they are too demanding or they are hypocritical. On the other hand, I can admit to God that I have sinned and agree with Him that it is evil. If I make excuse for my sin, I am walking in darkness rather than light and I do not have fellowship with God.

God promises that He will forgive us and cleanse us if we confess our sins to Him. He is faithful and just to forgive us because Christ died for our sins.

How many times will God forgive? He will forgive as often as we confess. Doesn't He get tired of us sinning and then confessing? No, we have His promise that He will forgive and cleanse every time. Jesus taught that if someone sins against us we should forgive him 490 times (Matthew 18:21-22). If we are expected to forgive that many times, how much more will God forgive! Remember that God's mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:23), so get up and obtain fresh mercy (Hebrews 4:16) and move ahead!

Confession makes things right with God. It puts us in the light. It is the way of victory. It stops the spiral of sin. When we sin, we must not get discouraged and faint; we must confess it honestly and claim God's promise of forgiveness and stand on our spiritual birthright (Ephesians 1:3).

PRESSING TOWARD THE MARK (Philippians 3:13-14)

After we confess our sin we need to put it behind and not fall into the temptation to dwell on it and to fear that God hasn't forgiven. To do that cripples the Christian's life. The way to put sin behind is to keep one's eye on the goal of fulfilling God's perfect will. Keep looking ahead, not behind. When God convicts us of sin, He does so in order to lead us to confession and cleansing and

victory, but when the Devil accuses us he does so in order to discourage and devour us.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON CHRISTIAN GROWTH PART 2

1. The true Christian life is not a _____; it is a _____
_____ with Christ.
2. In what book and chapter did Jesus instruct the believer to bear fruit?
3. Jesus taught that the key to abiding in Him is what?
4. What is the "old man"?
5. How does the believer put off the old man?
6. What chapter and verse says that if we say we do not sin we are liars?
7. Confession of sin means to _____ against my action.
8. Confession of sin is the opposite of _____ for my sin.
9. Who was the first man who blamed others for his sin?
10. How many times did Jesus tell Peter that he should forgive others?
11. What verse says God's mercies are new every morning?
12. What verse invites the believer to come to God's throne of grace to obtain mercy?

13. In what book and chapter did Paul say he was pressing ahead?

Christian Growth & Victory Part 3

MEMORY VERSES: Matthew 13:22; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Ephesians 5:11; 1 Peter 2:1-2; 1 John 2:15-17

In the last lesson we looked at four important ways to grow spiritually and to have victory in Christ: abiding in Christ, putting off the old man and putting on the new, confessing sin, and pressing toward the mark.

In this lesson we will look at four more things: devouring the Word, protecting the Word, separation from the world, and separation from false teachers.

DEVOURING THE WORD (1 Peter 2:1-2)

An essential thing for growing in Christ and for spiritual victory is the Bible. The Bible is God's living Word and it has the power to make us grow (Heb. 4:12; Acts 20:32). It is spiritual meat. The believer must immerse Himself in it. It has been said, "A dusty Bible indicates a dirty heart," and, "The Bible will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from the Bible." The Christian that desires to have spiritual victory will make the Bible the Book of his life.

He must establish a habit of daily reading. He must also learn how to study it and interpret it. (We deal with this in the course *Fundamental Lessons in How to Study the Bible*.) He must attend a good church faithfully to hear the Bible taught and preached.

He must memorize the Bible and meditate on it throughout the day.

And he must base his decisions on its precepts.

Notice in 1 Peter 2:1-2 that as the believer receives the Word of God, he must also be laying aside sin. If we try to take in the Word while holding onto our old sinful ways, we will not grow.

The first thing I suggest to new believers or those who are struggling in their Christian lives is to get serious about reading and studying and memorizing the Bible. There are many ways this can be done. If you haven't been faithful in reading the Bible every day, commit yourself to this. Establish a time and a place and keep that divine appointment without fail. If you have been reading the Bible a chapter a day, commit yourself to tripling this or even more. You could add the reading of Psalms and Proverbs to your daily reading program. You can read through the Psalms in a month by reading five chapters a day and through Proverbs by reading one chapter a day. You could read Psalms in the morning and Proverbs in the evening, or any other plan that you decide on. A pastor recently told me that he is reading the Bible through in one month and that it has been one of the best things he has ever done. One couple told me that they spent a year doing this, reading the Bible every month together, and it greatly enriched their lives. A youth pastor told me that he is memorizing ten verses a day this year. Immersing oneself in the Scripture is the best way to grow and to get through spiritual difficulties.

PROTECTING THE WORD (Matthew 13:22)

In the Parable of the Sower Jesus warned that the Word can be choked by the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. Mark adds the "lusts of other things entering in" (Mark 4:19), and Luke adds the "pleasures of this life" (Lk. 8:14).

Countless believers have unwisely failed to protect the Word in their hearts. They attend church and hear God's Word and even read the Bible regularly, but in their day to day lives they allow the cares of life and the lusts of other things to dominate their hearts and thus choke out the effect of God's Word.

Consider the lusts of other things. The Lord showed me this as a new Christian, when I realized that though I was studying the Bible diligently, it was not having the desired effect because I was still feeding the old man through rock & roll and unwholesome movies.

Consider the care of this world. If a believer finds that the Word is being choked out of his life because of the care of this world, he needs to sit down before God and examine his situation. Sometimes there is no way to avoid a worrisome circumstance, but oftentimes the believer can escape it if he is willing to put God and God's will first. And one thing the believer can always do is cast his care upon the Lord (1 Peter 5:7). When reading the Bible, it is wise to have paper and pen at hand, and when some worry or concern comes to mind write it down and deal with it later instead of allowing it to choke God's Word.

Consider the deceitfulness of riches. Many believers have failed to grow and to do God's will because they allowed the "deceitfulness of riches" to choke God's Word. Riches are deceitful because they promise happiness and this is a lie. The richest people in the world are not the happiest! Riches are deceitful, too, because they are uncertain. They often "take wings and fly away" (Prov. 23:5). The solution to this problem is contentment (1 Timothy 6:6-10) and putting God and His will and His business first (Matthew 6:33). He has promised to take care of me if I put Him first.

SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD

Another thing that is necessary for spiritual growth and victory is to separate from evil. We mentioned this earlier in the context of obedience, but it bears repeating.

The Bible warns that evil communications corrupt good manners (1 Cor. 15:33). This refers to any sort of evil thing, whether it comes by way of literature or television or movies or the Internet or music or personal associates or friends or relatives. "Good manners" refers to the good Christian life. Paul is saying that

any kind of association with evil hurts the quality of one's Christian life.

We are instructed to have *no* fellowship with evil things (2 Cor. 6:14-18; Eph. 5:11). This is a very high standard. If the believer does not cut off his fellowship with evil, he will not grow.

The Bible says that if the believer loves the world, he does not love God (1 John 2:15-17). The world is defined as "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Therefore, the believer must make many hard choices. He must choose whether to love the world or to love God. This shows the error of the "Christian rock" philosophy. I cannot love the world's wicked pop culture and love Christ, too.

When I was a new Christian saved out of a hippie background, I had to make choices about many things in my life. I had to separate from rock music and filthy movies and smoking and drinking and many other things that I had enjoyed before I was saved. I did this because I wanted to please the Lord who had saved me, and I wanted to grow and to find His will.

SEPARATION FROM FALSE TEACHERS

God instructs His people to mark and avoid those who teach things contrary to the Bible (Romans 16:17-18).

Paul told Titus that he must stay away from heretics (Titus 3:9-11). This refers to false teachers who refuse to submit to the truth. Paul warned that heretics ask foolish questions. This refers to insincere questions that are asked with the objective of causing doubt about sound doctrine. For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses deny that Jesus is God. They ask questions to try to confuse the brethren on this issue. Their questions are not sincere. They don't want to hear a good Bible answer. They simply want to confuse people and draw them into their false doctrines. The Bible warns us to stay away from this type of thing,

because if you don't it will cause you to doubt the truth and to be devoured by the devil.

To separate from false teachers means to stay away from their churches, their Bible studies, their books, their television and radio programs, and their audio and video recordings.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON CHRISTIAN GROWTH PART 3

1. According to 1 Peter 2:1-2, what are two things the believer must do to grow?
2. What are five things the believer must do to make the Bible the Book of his life?
3. According to the Parable of the Sower, what kind of things can choke the Word in the believer's life?
4. What verse says the believer can cast his care upon God?
5. We can cast our care upon God, because he _____ for us.
6. Why are riches deceitful?
7. Proverbs warns that riches can take _____ and _____ away.
8. What verse says that if I put God first He will take care of me?
9. What verse says evil communications corrupt good manners?
10. What does this mean?

11. What verse says to have no fellowship with the works of darkness?
12. What book and chapter says to come out from the evil and to be separate?
13. What passage warns the believer not to love the world?
14. How does this passage define the world?
15. What verse says to mark and avoid those who teach things contrary to the Bible?
16. What is a heretic?
17. What type of question is a foolish question?
18. What is an example of a foolish question?

Christian Growth & Victory Part 4

MEMORY VERSES: *Ephesians 5:18-19; Hebrews 12:1-2*

In the last two lessons we looked at eight important ways to grow spiritually and to have victory in Christ: abiding in Christ, putting off the old man and putting on the new, confessing sin, pressing toward the mark, devouring the Word, protecting the Word, separation from the world, and separation from false teachers.

In this lesson we will look at four final things: yielding to the Spirit, establishing godly habits, keeping one's eyes on Christ, and drawing nigh to Christ.

BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT (Ephesians 5:18)

Spiritual victory in the Christian life is through surrender to and yielding to the indwelling Holy Spirit.

1. Being filled with the Spirit means to be under the Spirit's control. As a man is under the control of wine when he is drunk, so the believer is under the Spirit's control when he is filled with the Spirit. It is only in this one sense that being filled with the Spirit is likened to being drunk with wine. In truth, being filled with the Spirit is not likened to being drunk with wine; it is contrasted to being drunk with wine. Some Charismatics teach that Spirit filling is to be drunk with the Spirit, so that the individual falls down and laughs and acts like a drunk, but this is ridiculous and unscriptural. When the disciples were filled with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Peter plainly stated that they were not drunk (Acts 2:15). They were not stumbling around and falling on the ground and laughing hysterically! No, to be Spirit filled simply means to yield to God's control in my life. It means to die to self-will and self-desire and to live for Christ. It means to start each day by surrendering myself to the Lord for that day, and then as

choices come my way I choose to do God's will rather than my own. When the believer does this, God gives him spiritual strength and wisdom and guidance. This is walking in the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit.

2. To be filled with the Spirit is not a one-time act or experience; it is a process. The verb in Ephesians 5:18 is in the continuous tense. It is not a matter of achieving a state of perfection; it is a matter of growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. The believer must not get discouraged when he sins; he can be filled with the Spirit anew by confessing his sin and by yielding to the Spirit's leadership and control.

3. Observe that being filled with the Spirit is associated with singing spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19). There is power in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. In Ephesians 5, Paul associated the singing of spiritual songs with being filled with the Holy Spirit. Just as David's songs calmed the troubled king (1 Samuel 16:23), spiritual songs can feed and encourage the believer's "new man." It is a good practice to memorize hymns and spiritual songs so that they can be used when trials come. A godly woman told me that she once went through a hard trial during which she found it difficult to pray or read her Bible, but she kept singing a simple spiritual song over and over and the Lord gave her the victory.

It is wise to build a library of good sacred music and listen to it as one has opportunity, on a personal music player, in the car, and in the home. The late Pastor J.B. Buffington said,

"Worldly music produces a worldly environment and creates worldly attitudes. On the other hand, you can program temperament and stability and peace and quietness in your home if you get good sacred Christian music. You can play Bible stories in a room where a little baby is sleeping, and you are programming Bible stories into his little mind. Kids don't have to learn things formally; you just put it there and they are like a blotter. They absorb it. Put soothing, Christ-honoring, soul-stirring Christian music on and just let it play in your home, and you are programming something of security and tranquility and peace into the children's hearts" ("How to Lose

a Child Before He Is Five Years Old”).

We must warn against the carnal Christian music that is popular today. The Bible says we must sing “spiritual songs.” This is the opposite of worldly songs. Spiritual music is the opposite of music that feeds the flesh. It is the opposite of the world’s party music. We have already seen that God forbids us to associate with the evil things of the world (1 John 2:15-16).

A list of “Suggested Sacred Music Recordings” can be found at the Way of Life Literature web site.

4. Being filled with the Spirit is associated with giving thanks to God (Eph. 5:20). If I have a critical, complaining attitude, I am not filled with the Spirit, because He is grieved by such things (Eph. 4:30-31).

5. Being filled with the Spirit is associated with godly relationships (Eph. 5:21 - 6:9). To be filled with the Spirit requires obeying Him, and He wants us to treat one another in a godly manner. Spirit-filled wives submit to their husbands. Spirit-filled husbands love their wives. Spirit-filled children obey and honor their parents. Spirit-filled fathers do not provoke their children to wrath. Spirit-filled servants are obedient to their masters. Spirit-filled masters treat their servants justly.

ESTABLISHING GODLY HABITS (Luke 4:16)

Our lives are busy and it is essential to establish godly habits so that God is not crowded out. We should establish a habit of daily Bible reading and intercessory prayer, a habit of faithful church attendance, a habit of participating in organized evangelism, a habit of spending time with our families, and many such things.

This does not mean that we only think of God and only serve God during special times in the day and week. We are to pray *without ceasing* (1 Thess. 5:17), to

always have a conscience void of offence toward God (Acts 24:16), to *always* abound in the work of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58), to give thanks *always* (Eph. 5:20), to be ready *always* to give a testimony for Christ (1 Pet. 3:15).

We must beware, too, lest our spiritual habits become mere routine, lest our “form becomes formality.” We keep our spiritual habits fresh by staying in fellowship with Christ.

KEEPING ONE’S EYES ON CHRIST (Hebrews 12:1-2)

We must keep our eyes on Christ. He will never fail or offend. The believer stumbles when he gets his eyes off of Christ and on to anything else, such as his own sin, the world, difficulties in life, or other people. Those who have their eyes on Christ and are serving Him with an undivided heart don’t stumble when they see other believers commit sins or otherwise do things that offend. For example, when churches have troubles it soon becomes evident which of the members are truly walking with Christ. They continue to walk with Him regardless of what happens. But those who are looking at man and following man become discouraged and even quit when someone or something offends them.

ABIDING IN CHRIST (Matthew 11:28-30)

We started with this point, and we will end with it, because the most important thing the believer can do to grow spiritually and to have victory is to walk in fellowship with the Lord and to trust Him at all times. The Christian life is a personal relationship with Christ, the eternal Son of God. It is a matter of receiving Him and serving Him and learning of Him. This is the essence of true Christianity and it is the way of spiritual growth and victory.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON CHRISTIAN GROWTH PART 4

1. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?
2. What did Peter say when he was accused of being drunk on the Day of Pentecost?
3. To be filled with the Spirit is not a _____ act or experience; it is a _____.
4. Why is filling with the Spirit associated with singing spiritual songs?
5. Spiritual songs are the opposite of _____ songs.
6. Spiritual music is the opposite of music that _____.
7. How is being filled with the Spirit associated with giving thanks to God?
8. Why is it important to establish godly habits?
9. What are some godly habits that the Christian should establish in his life?
10. We must beware lest our _____ becomes _____.

Prayer

MEMORY VERSES: *Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2; James 5:16; 1 John 3:20-22*

Nothing in the Christian life is more important than prayer. There are more than 500 references to prayer in Bible.

Prayer changes things, and nothing is changed without prayer: no one saved, no sermon blessed, no marriage victorious, no child turn out right, no church stay in God's will

We have to learn to pray (Luke 11:1).

Prayer is acknowledging our inability and casting ourselves upon God. It is obtaining mercy and finding grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

To be effective, prayer needs to have the following simple but essential elements:

1. Prayer must be worshipful (Luke 11:1-2)

This was emphasized Jesus in His “model prayer.” This does not mean that it is always necessary to precede every prayer with a long period of worship, but the supplicant must always be aware that he is approach the Eternal Creator, the Majesty on High. Prayer should not be a flippant, half-hearted activity.

2. Prayer must be confessional (Psalm 66:18; 1 John 3:20-22)

We come to God through confession of our sins. By this means we obtain mercy and can pray with a good conscience and our prayers can have free course with God.

3. Prayer must be earnest (James 5:16; Colossians 4:12). Hasty, half-hearted, distracted praying is not very effective.

4. Prayer must be regular (Romans 1:9). The believer needs to establish a daily prayer time during which he meets with the Lord and prays for himself and others. Intercessory prayer is praying for others.

5. Prayer must be watchful (Ephesians 6:18). This refers to intercessory prayer. By prayer we can watch over the spiritual lives of others.

6. Prayer must be persistent (Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17). This is one of the most important aspects of effectual prayer and is often emphasized in Scripture. Jesus taught two parables to emphasize the importance of persistence in prayer: The unjust judge (Luke 18:1-5), and the man who needed the loaves of bread (Luke 11:5-10).

7. Prayer must flow from a sound husband-wife relationship (1 Peter 3:7). The husband that does not treat his wife right after a godly fashion will not have power with God in prayer.

8. Prayer should be in association with others (Romans 15:30; 2 Corinthians 1:11; Colossians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1). Paul constantly asked other believers to pray for him. If he saw the need for that, being an apostle and having seen the Lord face to face, how much more do we need it! In her conversations with me about prayer, my grandmother emphasized that having others pray with you about special needs is effectual.

9. Prayer should be combined with fasting at times (Matthew 6:17-18; 17:21).

In the context of Matthew 17:21, Jesus was referring to the case of a demon-possessed boy. He said that the reason the disciples couldn't cast out the demon was failure to fast. Prayer with fasting is particularly useful in spiritual warfare against demonic strongholds.

My maternal grandmother, Julia Pollock, was the first person that ever talked to me about fasting. Referring to Matthew 6:17-18, she told me that she had proven this promise several times in her life. On one occasion her husband, who was a deacon in a Baptist church and who had not taken a drink of liquor since before their marriage, got a job working on a roof with one of his old drinking buddies. He eventually allowed himself to be talked into having "just one drink." The one drink turned into many and they got so rip-roaring drunk that they began singing loudly and throwing tools off the roof. The police were called in and they were hauled off to jail. Julia had to get Deacon Pollock out of the slammer! He was deeply remorseful and promised her that he would never do it again, and he stood before the church and apologized profusely and was forgiven by the congregation. She was deeply shocked by this event, though, and was afraid that he might fall again, remembering that both her father and her husband's father were drunkards. So she determined to fast and pray until she was assured of his complete victory over this evil. I don't think she told me how long she fasted but it was many days. She would cook her delicious meals and when it was time for breakfast, lunch, or supper Monroe would say to her, "Come on, Julia, let's eat a mouthful," and she would reply, "Don't worry about me, Monroe." Finally she had peace in her heart that God was going to give him the victory and she ended her fast, and he never touched a drop of liquor again in his life. None of her boys ever drank, either.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PRAYER

1. What verse invites us to come boldly to God's throne?
2. What are nine essential elements of effective prayer?

3. Why should we approach God in prayer worshipfully?

4. What verse says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me"?

5. What verse says that the husband's prayers can be hindered if he doesn't treat his wife right?

6. What verse says that prayer with fasting is necessary to overcome demonic strongholds?

7. In what passage did Jesus promise that those who fast in secret God will reward openly?

Faith for Christian Living

MEMORY VERSES: *James 1:22; 2:26; Hebrews 11:1, 3, 6*

Hebrews 11 is one of those special passages that brings together all of the major teaching on one subject in one place. Other examples of this are the love chapter in 1 Corinthians 13 and the resurrection chapter in 1 Corinthians 15.

Following are eight major lessons on the subject of faith.

1. Faith is essential (Heb. 11:6).

The words “faith” and “believe” are mentioned 771 times in the Bible. The Christian life is “from faith to faith” (Romans 1:17). Jesus often reproved His disciples for lack of faith (Mat. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8).

2. Faith is based on God’s Word (Heb. 11:1).

Compare Romans 10:17.

Faith is simply believing God’s Word. This is the most important fact about faith. Consider Noah (Heb. 11:7), Abraham (Heb. 11:8), and Sarah (Heb. 11:11).

Biblical faith is not blind; it has evidence and substance (Heb. 11:1) and that is God’s Word itself, which is based upon “many infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3). This is in contrast to the “faith” of this world, which is based upon nothing substantive.

Biblical faith does not come by miracles or by feelings or by mystical experiences. Abraham told the rich man in hell that if men do not believe God's Word, they will not believe even if one rose from the dead before them (Luke 16:31).

That faith is based on God's Word means that the Bible is essential for Christian living. If we want our faith to grow, we must read and study the Bible (Rev. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:15) and hear the Bible (faithfulness to the preaching and teaching) and memorize the Bible (Psa. 119:11).

3. Faith steps out in obedience (Heb. 11:8).

See James 1:22. True faith is not something that is just in the mind and heart; it is something that acts on God's Word. James teaches us that faith without works is dead (James 2:26). It is not real faith.

Faith steps out to develop godly habits (e.g., church attendance, Heb. 10:25; Bible study, 2 Tim. 2:12; intercessory prayer, 1 Tim. 2:1-2).

Faith steps out when God calls. Jesus warned about putting off the call of God (Lk. 9:59-62).

4. Faith looks beyond this life (Heb. 11:10).

It looks at treasures laid up in heaven (Mat. 6:20). It looks at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10).

This will keep me from being lazy, selfish, carnal, lukewarm. Young people need to do this. New believers need to do this. Businessmen need to do this. Elderly believers need to do this. My mom starting reading the Bible every day when she was in her 70s and has read it through twice a year since then.

When the Bible commentator William Kelly's nephew attended university, his Greek professor learned that his uncle had taught him this language and offered him a position on the faculty of Trinity College, a Roman Catholic institution. He was offered prestige and was told he "would make a fortune." His wise reply was "For which world?"

5. Faith is tested (Heb. 11:17).

Faith is always tested. It is tested to see if it is real and it is tested to purify it. We see this in the lives of the Jews in the wilderness (Ex. 4:29-31; 5:4-23).

Faith is tested as soon as an individual believes in Christ (Mk. 4:18-19) and there is a process of testing and strengthening throughout the Christian life (1 Pet. 5:10). Faith is tested each time a new step of faith is taken, such as the decision to attend church faithfully or to read the Bible every day or to give a portion of my income to the Lord regularly or to love my wife as Christ loves the church. God wants to see if our faith is real or only superficial.

6. Faith gives us courage (Heb. 11:23).

Life is full of fears but faith in Christ overcomes every fear. We don't have to fear any problem or situation, because everything is in God's hands (Rom. 8:28). We don't have to fear for food and clothing (Mat. 6:33; Heb. 13:5-6). We don't have to fear for old age (Psa. 37:25).

7. Faith makes wise choices (Heb. 11:24-26).

Moses made a wise choice by faith, choosing to suffer affliction with God's people for a short season instead of living the life of ease as a son of Pharaoh. Faith can give us the same wisdom to make major decisions, such as these:

Whether to follow the crowd or to follow Christ. Whether to be wholehearted for Christ or not (Rom. 12:1). Whether to separate from the world or not (Rom. 12:2). Whether to serve God or mammon (Mat. 6:24). Whether to be lazy or diligent (Prov. 13:4). Whether to give to God's work richly or to keep it for myself (2 Cor. 9:6).

8. Faith overcomes and also endures (Heb. 11:32-38).

Some receive faith to overcome life's trials, while others receive faith to endure the trials. We can have faith whether the fire is quenched or whether it burns us, whether the lion's mouth is shut or whether he eats us, whether the jail doors are opened or whether we die there. We must trust God whether we are healed or not, whether the house sells or not, whether the bullet is stopped or not.

God gives faith according to His will; we must accept His will. This is why Jesus called Scripture "the word of my patience" (Rev. 3:10).

Conclusion

Thank God for His grace and the privilege of exercising faith in this wicked generation. Do you have saving faith in Christ? A faith that has changed your life (2 Cor. 5:17)?

Do you have an intimate relationship with the Bible so that your faith is growing?

Is your faith being tested? Just keep on keeping on!

What will be the story of my life in regard to faith? Every life is written in God's books (Heb. 11:39-40).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON FAITH FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

1. What is the major chapter in the Bible on faith?
2. What verse says that without faith it is impossible to please God?
3. What verse says that faith is the evidence of things not seen?
4. What verse says there are many infallible proofs for biblical faith?
5. What was the rich man in hell told when he asked for Lazarus to be raised from the dead so that his lost brothers would believe?
6. What must I do if I want my faith to grow?
7. What verse says "be ye doers of the word and not hearers only"?
8. What verse says "as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead"?
9. Why is faith tested?
10. What verse says that all things work together for good to those who love God?
11. What verse says, "I have never seen the righteous forsaken"?
12. What wise choice did Moses make?
13. What is enduring faith?

The Armor of God

MEMORY VERSES: Ephesians 6:10-20

Introduction

1. We are in a great battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. We must not be surprised at the constant warfare and the trouble. Soldiers don't like war but it is their job. We are not yet in heaven; we are in the enemy's territory and we must keep fighting until the war is over.

2. We stand in God's power; the believer's armor is provided by God ("the armor of God," Eph. 6:11). We don't stand in our own power. We have the victory; we don't have to be afraid of the devil, but we have to stand against him and be on guard.

3. Though the armor is available, we must put it on and learn how to use it.

The loins girt about with truth (Eph. 6:14)

1. The loins must be protected in battle, because if you are wounded in the loins you cannot continue to fight.

2. The protection is truth. This refers to truthfulness, honesty. God is a God of truth, and His people must be truthful people. In contrast, the Cretians were liars (Titus 1:12-13). That was their reputation! But this should never be true for the child of God.

3. Lying is of the devil (John 8:44) and it is of the old sinful nature (Eph. 4:22-

25). Lying is of darkness; it is of this world; we must put it off and put on the new man, which is Christ.

4. There are many reasons why people lie.

a. Lying is often caused by fear. It was fear that motivated Abraham to lie about his wife when he was in Egypt (Gen. 12:11-13). Peter denied Jesus out of fear of man (Lk. 22:55-60). The Bible says the fear of man brings a snare (Prov. 29:25),

b. Lying is often caused by hatred (Prov. 26:28). People tell lies about others to hurt them. This is why the devil told lies to Eve. This is the motive behind spreading false rumors. In the 1980s the head of the Bible Society in Nepal sent out a letter to the churches claiming that I had burned Bibles, but it was a complete lie. He did that because he wanted to force me to stop preaching and to leave the country. Hindus tell lies about Christians to hurt the cause of Christ. For example, some Hindus in Nepal say that Christians must be baptized naked in cow's blood!

c. Lying is caused by covetousness (Prov. 20:14; 21:6). People lie when they want to buy or sell. They also lie to gain position and power, such as in politics.

d. Lying is caused by selfishness and pride. It's often inconvenient in this world to speak the truth. This is why Ananias and Sapphira lied in Acts 5. They had pretended to be more spiritual than they were, and they lied in an attempt to hide their selfishness.

5. Lies destroy the believer's spiritual armor and allow the devil to have an inroad into his life.

The breastplate of righteousness (Eph. 6:14)

1. The breastplate covers the heart and is a very important part of the soldier's armor.

2. The protection is righteous living. This is described in Ephesians 4-6: putting away anger (4:26), not stealing (4:28), working and giving to help others (4:28), pure speech (4:29-31; 5:4), being kind and forgiving (4:32), putting away fornication and uncleanness (5:3), putting away covetousness (5:3), having no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (5:11), redeeming the time (5:16), being a submissive wife (5:22), being a loving husband (5:25), being an obedient child (6:1), being an engaged, compassionate, and wise father (6:4), being a diligent servant (6:5-8), being a just master (6:9).

Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (Eph. 6:15)

1. The believer is to be moving forward into the enemy's territory. We are not to be on the defense, hiding behind the castle walls.

2. We move into the devil's territory by proclaiming the gospel. This is the great light that moves back the darkness. This is what Jesus commanded (Mark 16:15). Five times the commandment to preach the gospel throughout the world is repeated in the New Testament (Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20; Acts 1).

3. Preaching the gospel requires preparation. The believer must learn how to preach the gospel to different types of people. He must learn how to deal with sinners' arguments. This reminds us that each church is to be a training center to prepare soldiers for the warfare.

4. Those who are not busy getting out the gospel do not have protection from the devil, because they are living in disobedience.

The shield of faith (Eph. 6:17)

1. It is a shield of faith.

The devil attacks our faith with darts of unbelief. The darts are fiery, meaning they are cruel, hurtful, strong, persistent. *The devil attacks the believer's faith in God. He attacks God's character,* as he did with Eve. He wants to convince the believer that God doesn't love him, that God will cast him away, that God won't forgive him, that God won't answer his prayers, that God isn't faithful, that God's promises aren't true, that it is not possible to please God and live the Christian life, that God is unreasonable, that He is a bully, that God just wants to give us trouble. In his autobiography, John Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, described his terrible battle with the devil's darts of unbelief when he was a young Christian. *The devil also attacks God's Word,* just as he did with Eve in the Garden of Eden.

The devil attacks with fiery darts of temptation (1 Chron. 21:1; Acts 5:3).

The devil attacks with fiery darts of suspicion. He uses suspicion and slander to get us to think badly toward other people, even toward our own loving relatives and closest friends and most esteemed church leaders. We must remember that Satan is the "accuser of the brethren" (Rev. 12:10). The way of victory is to test suspicion with the truth. Don't believe something without evidence that it is true, whether that thing is your own thought or something you hear or read. We also get victory over the devil's fiery darts of suspicion by keeping our hearts tender and merciful toward others (2 Cor. 2:10-11).

Faith only comes by God's Word (Rom. 10:17). This is why the believer must have an intimate relationship with the Bible, reading, studying, hearing, memorizing, meditating. The better you know the Bible, the better you can fight the devil's darts of unbelief. This is how Jesus overcame the devil (Luke 4:1-12).

2. It is a powerful shield. The shield of faith can quench *all* of the devil's fiery darts. It is powerful because it stands on God's infallible Word (Rom. 10:17).

3. The shield must be used. It must be "taken." We are not supposed to be standing still and hiding; we are to move out into the devil's territory and do hand-to-hand combat with his minions and win victories for Christ.

The helmet of salvation (Eph. 6:17)

1. The helmet is most important because it protects the head or the mind. Professional snipers are trained to shoot for the head, because it is the most effective point of attack.

2. The helmet is the believer's know-so salvation, and the devil's fiercest attack is aimed at that point. He wants to make us doubt our salvation. "God does not love you; you are not secure in Christ; you are worthless; God might cast you away if you are not careful; God is tired of your sinning." The teaching that the born again believer can lose his salvation weakens the helmet. To put on his helmet properly, the believer must understand his salvation. He must understand the great price that was paid to assure that his salvation is full and free. He must understand that his salvation is a gift, that it is by God's grace. He must understand what it means to be born again and must be sure that he is. The better the believer understands grace, faith, gift, justification, propitiation, redemption, reconciliation, hope, the stronger is his helmet. This is why we have dealt with these things in this course.

The sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17)

The sword of the Spirit is God's Word, the Bible.

1. The Sword is an offensive weapon. This again reminds us that we are to move forward against the enemy rather than merely standing still and remaining in a

defensive posture.

2. The Sword must be sharp. The Spirit of God gave a perfectly sharp sword in the Masoretic Hebrew Old Testament and Received Greek New Testament. We must have the sharpest possible translations in our various tongues. A weak translation of the Bible is a sword but it is dull and not as powerful and effective as it should be. In the English language the sharpest Sword is the King James Bible, which is translated from the right Hebrew and Greek texts and which is translated literally and carefully and beautifully.

3. The Sword must be skillfully used. Can you imagine trying to go out against a trained sword fighter if you don't know how to use a sword? You would be cut to pieces. We must learn how to use the Word of God skillfully (2 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 5:12-14). We must remember that the Sword belongs to the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit Who enables us to interpret the Scripture aright. If we study the Bible in our own ability we will not interpret it correctly. We must study the Bible in fellowship with the Spirit and trust Him to lead us.

Praying (Eph. 6:18-20)

Prayer is an important part of our spiritual armor; it is the covering protection.

1. We must pray *always*. This means to pray throughout the day.

2. We must pray *in the Spirit*. This means to be under the Spirit's control, to follow His guidance, to not grieve Him.

3. We must pray *with watching and intercession for others*. This is an important part of spiritual protection for ourselves and for others.

4. We must pray *perseveringly*, without growing faint and quitting. This is one

of the most important principles of effective prayer.

5. We must pray *with plain requests* (Eph. 6:19). Intercessory prayer asks for specific things.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE ARMOR OF GOD

1. Why is the armor called "the armor of God"?
2. What protects the believer's loins?
3. What people are called liars in the Bible?
4. Who is the father of lies?
5. What are four reasons why people lie?
6. What verse says the fear of man brings a snare?
7. What verse says a lying tongue hates those who are afflicted by it?
8. What did God do to Ananias and Sapphira for lying?
9. What protects the believer's heart?
10. What are some of the ways of righteous living described in the epistle of Ephesians?
11. What are the believer's spiritual shoes?
12. How many times is the commandment to preach the gospel to all the world

repeated in the New Testament?

13. What is the believer's shield against the devil's fiery darts?

14. What are the devil's fiery darts?

15. Where does faith come from?

16. What were the two types of shields that the Roman soldiers used?

17. What is the believer's helmet?

18. How does the believer put on this helmet?

19. What is the Sword of the Spirit?

20. What verses instructs the believer to study to show himself approved to God, rightly dividing the Word of truth?

21. How can we rightly interpret the Bible?

22. What are the five lessons about prayer in Ephesians 6:18-20?

The Church

MEMORY VERSES: Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:40-42; 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 10:25

The Importance of the Church

1. Jesus established the church; it is His institution for this present age to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 16:18; 28:18-20).

2. The church is the house of God, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). The truth is what this dark world needs, and Jesus created the church to be the foundation of the truth and to lift it up so the world can see it. It is the church's job to guard the truth, to train God's people in it, and to proclaim it throughout the earth.

3. From Acts to Revelation, the church is a central theme. It is mentioned 110 times. In the book of Acts we see the establishment of the first churches. Most of the New Testament is addressed to specific churches, such as the church at Rome and the church at Corinth. The book of Revelation is addressed to seven specific churches (Rev. 1:4). And even those epistles that are not addressed to a specific church, have the church in view. For example, the book of Hebrews is addressed to Jewish believers in general, but it contains some of the most powerful exhortations about church life (Heb. 10:25; 13:7, 17). The same is true for James (e.g. James 5:14), Peter (1 Pet 5:1-4), and for John's epistles (3 John 9-11).

The example in Scripture is for Christians to be committed to the church and to be faithful to its services and functions. This is God's will. Every believer needs the church, and the church needs every believer.

The Autonomy of the Church: The Church and the Churches

The Bible does not use the term *church*, singular, when addressing a group of churches in a region. In such cases, it always uses the term *churches*, plural--the churches of Galatia (1 Cor. 16:1), the churches of Macedonia (2 Cor. 8:1), the churches of Judea (Gal. 1:22), the churches of Asia (Rev. 1:4). It is not Scriptural to speak of the church in Nepal or the church in America. This use of the term “church” was devised by the Roman Catholic Church and was kept by the Protestants when they left Rome.

The apostles established the church as an autonomous institution with its one Head, Christ. Each church has its own leaders and its own business. This pattern began on Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 14:23).

The church that is called the house of God in 1 Timothy 3:15 is the church that has elders and deacons (1 Timothy 3:1-14).

We see this in Revelation 1:4, where each church was addressed individually. In Revelation 1:12-13 Jesus is standing in the midst of the churches, which are signified by the golden candlesticks. In the Old Testament there was one candlestick in the Tabernacle, but in the New Testament dispensation there are many candlesticks, as each church is a light. Each church is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).

Membership in the Church

The doctrine of church membership is found in the book of Acts, beginning with the first church. In Acts 1:15 we see that the names of the members were kept. In Acts 2:41, those that were saved on the day of Pentecost were “added unto them.” This means that they were added to those already mentioned in verse 15. Those who were saved and baptized were added to the church. That is church membership.

Membership is taught in the examples of Phebe of the church of Cenchrea (Romans 16:1) and Onesimus and Epaphras of the church of Colosse (Col. 4:9, 12). Even when these brethren were on missions to other places, they retained their identity with their home churches.

Four reasons why we need church membership

Church membership is a matter of practicality, like many other things in the assembly. If a church does not have membership, how can it know who is in the church and who is out?

1. We need church membership because each church is a body and family.

Though there is the larger family of God, each church is also a family and has its own business. In the New Testament each separate church is also a spiritual body with its own members. Paul said to the church at Corinth, “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Cor. 12:26-27). In this present world, the “body of Christ” has its greatest practicality in the local church.

2. We need church membership to keep unity in truth.

The Bible requires that believers have one mind in doctrine and practice (1 Corinthians 1:10). For this reason our church has a lengthy statement of faith and we require that every member agree with it, whether he is joining by baptism or by letter from another church. Without membership, we have no way to keep out false teachers and maintain our unity in truth as God requires.

3. We need church membership for discipline (1 Corinthians 5:11-13).

1 Corinthians 5 deals with church discipline, and in verse 12 we see that there are those who are in the church and those who are without. How can a congregation know who is in and who is out, who is under discipline and who is not, unless it has some form of membership? As we have stated, it is a matter of practicality. Parents can't discipline other people's children, and the church can't discipline those who are not a part of its own family. Also verse 11 says those under discipline cannot eat, which refers both to personal fellowship and to the Lord's Supper. The church has the obligation before God to exercise discipline over its members and those who are under discipline cannot partake of Communion. Thus there must be a way for the church to know who is a part of the family and who is outside.

4. We need church membership for authority.

Three times the New Testament refers to those who "rule over" us in the church (1 Thessalonians 5:12; Hebrews 13:7, 17).

According to these Scriptures, each believer is to be under the authority of church rulers. How can the church leaders know who they are ruling if there is no membership? Do pastors have the rule over anyone who visits the church? Of course not; there must be some sort of membership, which involves a standard by which the church accepts members and a commitment on the part of those seeking membership.

Through the years some believers have disagreed with me about church membership. They are convinced the only membership they need is to be a part of Christ through salvation, and they often have a bad attitude toward pastoral authority. I once asked a church hopper, "Who has the rule over you?" He replied, "Christ." I said, "But Hebrews 13:7 and 17 are not talking about Christ Himself but about church leaders." He had no answer.

There are places where there is no sound New Testament church, and in such situations the believer has to do the best he can under God's guidance, but this is

the exception and not the rule. If I found myself in such a situation, I would do everything possible either to start a good church or to move to a place where I could be a faithful member of such a church. I also know many believers who commute one hour and more to attend a good church. I even know one couple who commute three hours (six hours round trip) because they have not been able to find a good church closer to their home and they are not presently in a position to relocate.

Faithfulness to the Church

The following are some of the reasons why faithfulness to the church is important for every believer:

1. The believer needs the *teaching and preaching* (Acts 2:42; Colossians 1:28). The church is the divinely-ordained Bible Institute for training and discipling the believers. God gives ministry-gifted men to the churches to build up the flock and protect it from error (Ephesians 4:12-15).

2. The believer needs the *fellowship* with other Christians (Acts 2:42). Fellowship with likeminded brethren who love the Lord is a necessary part of Christian growth and protection from error.

3. The believer needs the *Lord's Supper* (Acts 2:42). The "breaking of bread" refers to the Lord's Supper as well as to fellowship over meals. The Lord's Supper is a church ordinance. In the New Testament it is always a church function (1 Cor. 11:20-34). Some "radio pastors" such as J. Vernon McGee conduct the Lord's Supper for their radio congregations, but this is not Scriptural. A radio program is not a church, and a preacher I listen to on radio or television or via the Internet is not my pastor.

4. The believer needs the *prayers* (Acts 2:42). Prayer is one of the four essential spiritual activities mentioned in connection with the first church. This refers to

corporate prayer.

5. The believer needs *the ministry of exhortation from the other brethren* (Hebrews 10:24-25). The church services are not something to attend to merely sit and watch, like a spectator sport. Every believer should attend church prayerfully, asking God how he can be a help and a blessing to the brethren. We are to provoke one another to good works and exhort one another in the Lord.

6. The believer needs *spiritual protection* (“*and so much the more as you see the day approaching,*” Hebrews 10:25). The church is like a family; it is a place of nurture and protection for the children of God. The Bible warns that there are many powerful spiritual enemies, and these will grow stronger as the time of Christ’s return grows nearer. Those who are careless about church attendance and who are not as committed as they should be, are in danger of being devoured by the world, the flesh, and the devil (1 Peter 5:8).

7. The believer needs *the ministry of discipline* (1 Cor. 5). We have already mentioned church discipline, but each believer needs to be accountable to church authority. The child doesn’t like discipline, but he needs it, and the same is true for the Christian.

8. The believer needs *to contribute his spiritual gifts and ministry* (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; 1 Peter 4:10). The church is a body made up of many members who have different gifts and ministries that God gives them. If a believer neglects the church and refuses to get involved as he should, the church is weakened and God’s work in this needy world is not fully accomplished. Every believer needs to ask, “What ministry can I get involved in? How can I serve the Lord in the church? What is my part?” He should seek to grow stronger and gain more wisdom from God’s Word so that he can find his place and ministry and calling.

9. The believer needs *to contribute his tithes and offerings* (Mal. 3:10). In the Mosaic dispensation the tithes and offerings were brought into the Temple, but tithing was a practice that began in ancient times before Moses. Abraham gave

tithes to Melchizedek, God's priest in that day (Gen. 14:18-20). We believe tithing is a good starting point for New Testament believers. If God's people faithfully tithe, the needs of the church will be met. Tithing is a wise, equitable plan; those who have more give more. But we should not think that the tithe is all that we should give to God. In fact, under the Law of Moses, the tithe was at least 20% of one's income. The Israelites were required to give 10% of all of their increase (Num. 18:24-28; Neh. 10:38), plus they were required to bring offerings to the annual feasts (called the second or festival tithe). They were also to give to the poor. The pattern in the first church was for the believers to bring their offerings to the church and place them before the leaders (Acts 4:34-37). This particular example did not involve the tithe, but it does show that the believers gave in and through the church and that the offerings were under the oversight of their leaders.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE CHURCH

1. What are three ways that we know the church is important?
2. What verse says the church is the pillar and ground of the truth?
3. What does this mean?
4. How many times is the church mentioned in the New Testament?
5. To whom is the book of Revelation addressed?
6. Why is it not right to speak of the church in America or the church of Nepal?
7. What church was Phebe a member of?
8. What are four reasons why we need church membership?
9. What verse says the church is to have one mind?

9. What verse says the church is to have one mind.

10. What book and chapter describes church discipline?

11. How does a church know who is under its discipline?

12. What three passages speak of those who "rule over" us in the church?

13. What are nine reasons why faithfulness to the church is important for every believer?

14. What verse says the believer must not forsake the assembly?

The Bible Part 1

MEMORY VERSES: Psalm 119:105; Luke 24:27; Romans 15:4

What is the Bible?

The Bible is the book that God has given to reveal Himself to mankind. It answers all of life's important questions, such as who is God? Where did man come from? What is the purpose of life? Why is the world filled with suffering? Why does man die? What happens after death? How can man get into right relationship with God? Who is Jesus? Why did he die? What will happen in the future?

The Bible was written by about 40 different prophets that God chose, and they wrote the words that God gave them (2 Peter 1:21). It was written over a period of about 1,600 years, from about 1500 B.C. to 90 A.D.

The word "bible" is from the Greek word *biblios*, which means a book. The Bible is one Book that speaks with one voice, but it is divided into two major sections--the Old Testament and the New Testament. Further, there are 66 individual books in the Bible: 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New. The books are divided into chapters and each chapter is divided into verses for ease in locating passages. For example, John 3:16 refers to the book of John, chapter 3, verse 16.

"Testament" means covenant or agreement.

THE OLD TESTAMENT is God's covenant with man through the Law of Moses. The Law was given to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus by revealing God's holiness and man's sinfulness (Romans 3:19-20).

The Old Testament was written primarily in the Hebrew language.

The Old Testament is divided into the following major sections: The Law -- *Genesis to Deuteronomy*. This section is also called *the Pentateuch* (meaning “five books”). It describes the creation of heaven and earth and man, the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, the worldwide flood of Noah’s day, the Tower of Babel and the multiplication of the languages, the call of Abraham and the beginning of the Jewish nation through Abraham’s sons, Israel’s Egyptian bondage and exodus, and the giving of God’s Law (including the 10 Commandments).

The History -- *Joshua to Esther*. This section contains the history of Israel, the Jewish nation, from the time of the conquering of the Promised Land to the Babylonian Captivity.

The Poetic Books -- *Job to the Song of Solomon*. This section deals with the worship of God and profound questions of life, such as the purpose of suffering and the seeming vanity of earthly existence.

The Prophets -- *Isaiah to Malachi*. This section contains prophecies concerning Israel, mankind as a whole, and Jesus Christ.

The NEW TESTAMENT is God’s covenant with man through the salvation purchased by Christ. The New Testament contains the account of Christ’s miraculous birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension to heaven, the teachings of Christ’s apostles, and prophecies of the future.

The New Testament was written in the Greek language.

The New Testament is divided into the following major sections: The Gospels -- *Matthew, Mark, Luke, John*. The four Gospels give the birth, life, death,

resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. They also contain prophecies of His second coming.

The Acts of the Apostles. The book of Acts contains the history of the establishment and spread of the first churches.

Paul's Epistles -- *Romans to Philemon.* These are letters written by the apostle Paul to instruct various churches and individuals in Christian doctrine.

The General Epistles -- *Hebrews to Jude.* These are called the "general epistles" because they were not written to churches but were written for Christians in general. They were written by Paul, James, Peter, Jude, and John.

Prophecy -- *Revelation.* This book contains prophecies about the end of the age.

The relationship between the Old Testament and the New can be seen in the following comparison: O.T. - New Testament

Promise - Fulfillment

Preparation - Presentation

The Foundation - The Building REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLE PART

1

1. What is the Bible?
2. What types of questions does the Bible answer?
3. The Bible was written by about how many prophets?
4. The Bible was written over a period of about how many years?
5. The word "Bible" means what?

6. The Bible is divided into what two major sections?
7. The Bible has how many individual books?
8. What is a chapter?
9. What is a verse?
10. What does the word "testament" mean?
11. What was the purpose of the Old Testament?
12. In what language was the Old Testament written?
13. What are the four major sections of the Old Testament?
14. What is the content of the New Testament?
15. In what language was the New Testament written?
16. What are the five major sections of the New Testament?

The Bible Part 2

MEMORY VERSES: 1 Corinthians 10:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

The Divine Inspiration of the Bible

The Bible was written by prophets that were chosen of God. They wrote the words that God gave them. This is called “divine inspiration.” Consider two major passages that teach this:

2 Timothy 3:13-17

This is the key passage on the inspiration of the Scriptures, and it teaches many important truths.

a. The Bible is set apart from all other books (2 Tim. 3:15). Here the Scriptures are called “holy.” This means “set apart, different.” The Bible alone is God’s divine Word to mankind.

b. The Bible is from God (“given by inspiration of God,” 2 Tim. 3:16). This verse literally says the Scriptures are God-breathed. Though written by men, the Bible was breathed out by God. This is the Bible’s claim for itself. If it contains mistakes and myths, it would be proven to be a lie. When discussing its own inspiration the Scripture does not focus on the mechanics of inspiration but on the product. God spoke in many diverse ways (by dreams, visions, angels, directly as on Mt. Sinai, etc.) but the result in all cases was that the writings were divinely inspired.

c. The Bible is from God in its entirety (“all scripture,” 2 Tim. 3:16). All Scripture is said to have come from God. The word for Scripture here, *graphe*, means “writing” or “book.” This refers to “plenary inspiration,” which means full, complete, entire.

d. The Bible is from God in its smallest detail (2 Tim. 3:15). The word for Scripture here is *gramma*, referring to a letter. Thus, even the smallest details of the Bible are from God. This is called “verbal inspiration.”

e. The Bible is one book with an all-encompassing theme, which is salvation in Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 3:15). The Bible is not just a group of disconnected religious writings. It is a unified Book planned by God to reveal Himself, the way of salvation, and His plan for the ages. Each part of the Bible has an important place in the whole.

f. The Bible can protect believers from error (2 Tim. 3:13-15). If the Bible contains myths, mistakes, and untrue claims concerning authorship, miracles, and prophecies, it would not be absolutely authoritative and would not provide protection from false teachings!

g. The Bible is sufficient to make the Christian complete and mature (2 Tim. 3:17). An imperfect, incomplete book could not produce perfection, and since the Bible is able to make the man of God perfect it is obvious that nothing else is needed. The Scripture is thus the sole authority for faith and practice in the individual believer’s life and in the church.

2 Peter 1:19-21

This is another major passage on the inspiration of the Bible.

a. The Scripture is a light shining in a dark place (2 Pet. 1:19). The dark place is the world. Though containing some truth mixed with error, the world is

pictured as dark because man is not able to know spiritual truth without revelation from God. The Bible is that revelation which is shining in the midst of the darkness.

b. The Bible is not a product of man's will (2 Pet. 1:21). Other books are products of the will of the human author, but not the Bible. God chose certain men and moved in them to deliver His message. As the Holy Spirit moved, the chosen men spoke and wrote the words of God.

c. This passage explains the method whereby the Bible was given. God used men, but He used them in such a way that what they wrote was God's Word. When the Bible touches on inspiration and revelation, it focuses on God. We are told very little about the actual mechanism. The method of inspiration is an unrevealed mystery. It was accomplished mysteriously by the Holy Spirit. We are not supposed to worry about the method of inspiration; we are supposed to believe God's testimony that it happened and to exercise faith in the finished product, the Bible. Modern scholars typically do just the opposite of this. They focus on man's part rather than upon God's. This is because most modern scholars do not operate by the principle of faith. They are operating by their own intellect and human scholarship. No man can know the perfect Word of God in this manner, for "without faith it is impossible to please him" (Hebrews 11:6).

d. The phrase "private interpretation" refers to the writers of the Bible (2 Pet. 1:20). In the context, this refers to the giving of revelation rather than to the understanding of it. The Bible writers did not interpret God's revelation to mankind through their own thinking; they were given God's revelation by the Holy Spirit. They did not always even understand what they were writing (1 Peter 1:10-12).

The Canonization of the Bible

The canon of the Bible refers to the authoritative list of the 66 books that

comprise the Old and New Testaments. The word *canon* means “a reed,” referring to a measuring stick. It describes the process of testing something by a set rule or standard. The canonization of Scripture is something that must be accepted by faith, because the historical record of exactly how it was accomplished does not exist. The God who gave the Scripture led His people in determining which books to include.

The Old Testament was collected by the Jews. It was to the Jews that God assigned the task of preserving the Hebrew Scripture (Romans 3:1-2). Even though they did not always obey the Scripture, the Jews held it in reverence and believed that each jot and tittle was the inspired Word of God. The Dead Sea Scrolls, which date to at least 100 years before Christ, contained the same books of the Old Testament that we have in our Bibles today. Every one of the 39 books were found in the Qumran caves except Esther, but we know that Esther was already included in the Jewish Canon.

The New Testament was collected by the early churches. This process was led by the Spirit of God. Jesus promised that the Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth (John 16:13; 1 John 2:20). The early churches received the inspired writings as the Word of God. See 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

Canonization was not the haphazard process that is described in most contemporary books on the history of the Bible. Though its exact history is hidden behind the mists of time, we know by faith that the Spirit of God guided the believers precisely in this matter. By the second century we have evidence that the entire New Testament was commonly recognized as Scripture by the believers. Even some modernistic textual critics have concluded that the New Testament in its current 27-book canon existed in Greek no later than the middle of the 2nd century. (See David Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament*, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.) From the second century we have evidence that it was customary for each church to have its own copy of the writings of the apostles that they might read and preach from them. Justin Martyr, a preacher who lived then, wrote, “And on the day called Sunday there is a meeting in one place of those who live in cities or the country, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time

permits. When the reader has finished, the president in a discourse urges and invites us to the imitation of these noble things” (Justin Martyr, *Apology*).

(For more on inspiration and canonization see *Faith vs. the Modern Bible Versions*, which is available from Way of Life Literature.)

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLE PART 2

1. What does "divine inspiration" mean?
2. What verse teaches that all Scripture was given by inspiration from God?
3. What does "given by inspiration of God" mean?
4. What are four ways that God spoke His Word to men?
5. What is the meaning of "plenary inspiration"?
6. What is the meaning of "verbal inspiration"?
7. What is the major theme of the Bible?
8. The Scripture is able to make the man of God _____, _____ furnished unto _____ good works.
9. The Scripture is the _____ authority for faith and practice.
10. The Scripture is a _____ shining in a _____ place.
11. 2 Peter 1:20 says the Scripture is not "of any private interpretation." What does this mean?

12. What does 2 Peter 1:21 mean when it says that the prophecy came not by the will of man?

13. What does the word "canon" refer to?

14. What passage says that God committed the Old Testament to the Jews?

15. In what verse did Jesus promise that the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth?

16. What verse says the church at Thessalonica received the epistle of Paul as the "word of God"?

The Bible's Proof Part 1

MEMORY VERSES: Acts 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:6; Hebrews 11:6

In the final analysis, a man must accept that the Bible is the Word of God by faith. See Hebrews 11:6.

At the same time, Bible faith is not a blind leap into the dark. It is confidence in the Record that God has given (Romans 10:17). The writers of the Bible explain to us that they were not delivering cunningly devised fables but an authoritative eyewitness record based on “many infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3; 2 Peter 1:16).

Following are a few of the objective, time-proven reasons why we can have complete confidence in the Bible:

1. Christ's resurrection proves that the Bible is the Word of God.

Christ's resurrection was witnessed by hundreds of people (1 Corinthians 15:5-7). Paul wrote this only 20-30 years after the resurrection, and many eyewitnesses were still alive. Were they all lying? On numerous occasions, the resurrected Christ was seen by many people at once, and on one occasion He was seen by more than 500 people. Those who saw Him talked with him, touched him, walked with him, and ate with him (Luke 24:36-43).

Before the resurrection, the apostles were hiding from the authorities (John 20:19). After they saw the resurrected Christ with their own eyes, they became bold and fearless and were willing to lay down their lives for the gospel.

Before Paul saw the resurrected Christ, he hated and persecuted Christians, but

afterwards he loved them and willingly suffered the loss of money and prestige and life for Jesus' sake.

It took a powerful event to cause such changes.

2. The Bible's unique construction proves that it is the Word of God.

The Bible was written by 40 different authors representing some 19 different occupations (shepherd, soldier, farmer, fisherman, tax collector, medical doctor, king, etc.) who lived during a period of some 1,600 years. That is approximately 50 generations. The first 39 books of the Bible were written in the Hebrew language over a period of about 1,000 years. There was then a 400-year gap when no Scriptures were written. After that, the last 27 books of the Bible were written in the Greek language during a period covering roughly 50 years. The writers could not have collaborated, because they did not live at the same time. Yet the product is one book that fits together perfectly and contains no contradictions or errors. There is nothing else like this in all of man's history. Some have claimed to have found mistakes in the Bible, but I have studied it for 37 years and each time I have considered a supposed error or contradiction, I have found that the Bible is true and the critic is wrong. (See our book *Things Hard to Be Understood: A Handbook of Biblical Difficulties*.)

3. The confidence and sincerity of the Bible's authors prove that it is the Word of God.

The Bible testifies that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21), and an examination of the lives of the Bible's writers proves this testimony. These were holy, serious men. They came from all walks of life. They were men of good reputation and sound mind. They were not enriched by the prophecies they gave. Far from it; some were impoverished and many were viciously persecuted and killed for the testimony they held. Moses, the author of the first five books of the Bible, chose to live a life of terrific hardship in the service of God as opposed to the millionaire's life he could have

lived as the adopted son of Pharaoh. Many Bible writers made similar choices. Their motivation certainly was not covetousness and worldly advantage. These were not perfect men, but they were holy men. They all claimed that God had put His hand upon them to speak His Word. The lives they lived, and the testimonies they held, and the deaths they died gave mighty evidence that they were telling the truth.

4. Fulfilled prophecy proves the Bible is the Word of God.

The Bible contains a vast amount of prophecy, much of which has been fulfilled. *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecies* by J. Barton Payne lists 1817 specific prophecies, 1239 in the Old Testament and 578 in the New. The predictions are precise and detailed, and the fulfillment is exact.

The Bible prophets use prophecy to prove that their message is from the true God (Isaiah 42:8-9; 46:9-10).

Prophecies Pertaining to Jesus Christ

Jesus' entire life was written down in the Old Testament part of the Bible before He was born. There are 191 Messianic prophecies. These described His birthplace (Micah 5:2), virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14), sinless life (Isaiah 53:9), miracles (Isa. 35:5), wonderful speech (Isaiah 50:4), rejection by the Jewish nation (Isaiah 53:2), crucifixion (Psalm 22:16), burial in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9), resurrection (Psalm 16), and many other things.

We know that these prophecies were written before Christ was born, because copies of the Old Testament books were found in the Dead Sea caves dating to 100 and more years B.C.

Prophecies about Israel

The continued existence of Israel is one of history's most amazing stories, and it was prophesied in Scripture in great detail.

Israel's history was prophesied by Moses and recorded in the book of Deuteronomy about 4,000 years ago. God warned that if Israel broke His law she would be "plucked from off the land" and scattered "among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other" (Deuteronomy 28:63-64). There the Jews would "find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life" (Deuteronomy 28:65-66).

This is an accurate description of Israel's history from the first century until now. Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. by the Roman armies under the General Titus and in 135 A.D. Jerusalem was plowed under on the order of Emperor Hadrian in response to the Jewish rebellion led by Bar Kochbar. The Jewish people were scattered to the ends of the earth and found no rest. They were hated by the Muslims and persecuted by the Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches for a thousand years. Hitler's regime tried to destroy them. Giving preference to the Arabs, England tried to keep them from returning to their land after World War II. They are the object of hatred until this very day. Most of the world is opposed to Israel and the reporting in secular publications about the Middle East crisis is typically slanted against her.

All of this was foretold in Bible prophecy, but the prophecy also said that Israel would be brought back into her land and that she would remain a nation even after all of this, and that is exactly what happened in 1948. Never before in the history of the world has a nation of people been scattered throughout the world and persecuted for 2,000 years and then come back together as a nation with their ancient language intact. This is a divine miracle.

Bible prophecy describes the restoration of Israel in two parts. First, she would return to the land in a position of unbelief. Then she would be converted. The

amazing prophecy in Ezekiel 37 describes Israel's restoration in these two stages. She is described as dry bones that are resurrected in verses 4-6. Verses 11-14 say that this vision pertains to the restoration of Israel to her land and to her repentance toward God. First the bones are given sinews and flesh, but there is no life, and next God breathes upon the dead bones and they live (Ezek. 37:4-6).

The first part of the prophecy has been fulfilled. Israel has been back in her land as a nation since 1948, but she is there in unbelief and spiritual death. She continues to reject her Messiah. She has no temple and sacrifice and no true Scriptural worship. But she is back in the land just as the Bible prophesied. In 1800 there were only six thousand Jews in Palestine, but by 2000 there were over five million (John Ecob, *Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting*, p. 44-45).

During the Great Tribulation, God will grant repentance unto Israel and will breathe spiritual life into her and she will live.

The continued existence of Israel is a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. It is a very great miracle and an irrefutable evidence of the divine inspiration of the Bible.

For more on this see our illustrated book *Israel: Past, Present, and Future*, which is available in print and e-book editions from Way of Life Literature.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLE'S PROOF

1. What verse says that without faith it is impossible to please God?
2. What verse says that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God?
3. What verse says that the Bible is based on many infallible proofs?

4. In what verse did Peter say that the Bible does not contain cunningly devised fables?
5. What evidence do we have that Christ rose from the dead?
6. How do we know that Christ did not rise from the dead as a spirit?
7. How does the Bible's unique construction prove that it is the Word of God?
8. In what book of the Bible is the entire history of Israel given by prophecy?
9. In what year was the second Jewish temple destroyed by the Roman armies?
10. In what year did Israel become a nation again in modern times?
11. What prophecy describes the return of Israel in two parts?

The Bible's Proof Part 2

MEMORY VERSES: Hebrews 11:1; 2 Peter 1:16

In the previous lesson we looked at four evidences of the Bible's divine inspiration. In this lesson we will consider three more.

5. The Bible's factualness proves that it is the Word of God.

Everything the Bible says is true and factual.

For example, the Bible says man is a sinner, and that is not difficult to confirm. Just look at the world! When asked for his opinion on original sin, Samuel Johnson, the famous British lexicographer, replied, "With respect to original sin, the inquiry is not necessary, for whatever is the cause of human corruption, men are evidently and confessedly so corrupt, that all the laws of heaven and earth are insufficient to restrain them from crimes." David Berlinski, a Princeton-educated "secular Jew," says, "One need hardly be a Christian to appreciate the wisdom in these remarks" (*The Devil's Delusion*, p. 33).

The Bible is true not only in its statements about man, but also in its statements about everything. Though the Bible is not a scientific manual, it is scientifically accurate, even from its earliest pages, which were written nearly 4,000 years ago.

Following are some examples of the Bible's scientific accuracy, beginning with statements from the pages of Job, probably the oldest book in the Bible. The late Henry Morris, who had a Ph.D. in hydraulic engineering, said: "These references are modern in perspective, with never a hint of the mythical exaggerations and errors characteristic of other ancient writings ... perhaps of even greater

significance is the fact that in a 4000-year-old book filled with numerous references to natural phenomena, there are *no* scientific mistakes or fallacies” (*The Remarkable Record of Job*).

Job said the earth is hung upon nothing (Job 26:7). This is obvious to our modern generation, as we have seen the actual pictures of the earth hanging in space, but to previous generations it was not obvious and there were many commonly-held myths about the earth sitting on the back of Atlas or a turtle or an elephant, *etc.*

Job said the air has weight (“*the weight for the winds,*” Job 28:25). It was not until the 17th century that Galileo discovered that atmosphere has weight, and the modern science of aerodynamics is based on this scientific fact. Further, the weight of air is important in the function of the earth’s weather. “The ‘weight of the winds’ controls the worldwide air mass movements that transport the waters evaporated from the oceans inland over the continents” (Morris, *The Remarkable Record of Job*).

Job described the springs of the sea (Job 38:16). Man had no way to know about the fresh-water springs on the ocean floor by firsthand observation until recent times. Modern science has discovered that there are thousands of underwater springs that add millions of metric tons of water into the oceans each year.

Job understood that light has a way and that darkness has a place (Job 38:19). “That is, light is not to be located in a certain place or situation. Neither does it simply appear, or disappear, instantaneously. Light is traveling! It dwells in a ‘way,’ always on the way to someplace else. Though usually traveling in waves, sometimes it seems to move as a stream of particles, but it is always moving. When light stops, there is darkness. Thus, darkness is static, staying in place; but light is dynamic, dwelling in a way” (Morris).

The Bible says that the light creates wind (Job 38:24), but it is only in recent times that modern weather science has discovered that wind is created as the sun

heats up the surface of the earth, causing the hot air to rise and cooler air to fall, creating weather systems.

Job describes the amazing hydrological cycle (evaporation, atmospheric circulation, condensation, precipitation, run-off) (Job 36:27-28; Ecc. 1:7; Jer. 51:16). The process of evaporation and condensation was not discovered until the 17th century and not well understood until the 20th.

The Bible says plants and animals reproduce after their kind (Genesis 1:11, 12, 21, 24, 25). This is in perfect harmony with everything that can be observed and tested by modern science. There is great variety within kinds, different types of roses and dogs, but there is no reproduction between kinds, between roses and dandelions or dogs and penguins. Breeding experiments have demonstrated that there are genetic barriers that restrict change. The fruit fly has been used in genetic experiments since the early 1900s. Tens of millions of fruit flies have been artificially bred, bombarded with x-rays, doctored, and poisoned. The result has been a variety of mutant fruit flies but no evidence that the fruit fly could evolve into some other type of insect or animal. This is proof of the Bible's 3500-year-old statement that all creatures reproduce according to kind.

The Bible says the heavens cannot be measured and the stars are without number (Genesis 22:17; Jeremiah 31:37). Before the invention of the telescope, man could see only a few hundred stars with the naked eye. Yet today we know that the stars are innumerable, just as the Bible says. There are 300 billion stars in our Milky Way galaxy alone. In 1999, observations by NASA astronomers, using the Hubble Space Telescope, suggested that there are 125 billion galaxies in the universe. The most up-to-date star count was announced in July 2003 as 70 sextillion observable stars (70,000,000,000,000,000,000). This was the conclusion of the world's largest galaxy study, the Two-Degree Field Galaxy Redshift Survey, which is considered 10 times more accurate than previous ones. The team of scientists did not physically count the stars. Instead they used some of the world's most powerful telescopes to count all of the galaxies in one region of the universe and then to estimate how many stars each galaxy contained by measuring its brightness. They then extrapolated these figures out to the whole universe visible through telescopes. This massive figure, of course, probably

covers only a tiny percentage of the actual stars.

The Bible says there are paths in the sea (Isaiah 43:16; Psalm 8:8). Since the 19th century the ocean currents or paths have been charted and ships travel these paths just as trucks travel on roads. Writing in the mid-1800s, Matthew Fontaine Maury, Superintendent of the U.S. Navy's Depot of Charts and Instruments in Washington, D.C., observed, "There is a river in the ocean: in the severest droughts it never fails, and in the mightiest floods it never overflows; its banks and its bottom are of cold water, while its current is of warm; the Gulf of Mexico is its fountain, and its mouth is in the Arctic Seas. It is the Gulf Stream" (Maury, *The Physical Geography of the Sea*, 6th ed., 1856, p. 25). Since then, other sea paths have been discovered.

The Bible says the life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11). This was written about 3,500 years ago, but it was not understood scientifically until recent times. For centuries doctors used "blood letting" as a healing method. George Washington, America's first president, probably died because of this bogus practice. Modern medicine has learned what the Bible has taught all along, that the life of the flesh is in the blood. The amazing system of blood vessels and capillaries carries the life-giving oxygen and other necessary elements to every part of the body. The blood also forms a major part of the infection fighting and clotting systems, which are necessary for the "life of the flesh."

The Bible is not a book of science, but wherever the Bible touches on science it is accurate. This proves its divine origin, because all other ancient books are filled with scientific errors. Even science books just 100 years old are filled with errors.

6. The Bible's candor proves that it is the Word of God.

When men write biographies of their heroes, they commonly omit or whitewash their faults; but the Bible exhibits its divine quality by showing man as he is. Even the best of men in the Bible are described with all their faults. We read of

Adam's rebellion, Noah's drunkenness, David's adultery, Solomon's apostasy, Jonah's pity party, Peter's disavowal of his Master, Paul and Barnabas' petty strife, and the disciples' unbelief in the face of Christ's resurrection. The Bible was written by Jews, yet it candidly describes the faults of the Jewish people: their stubbornness and unbelief that caused them to have to wander in the wilderness for 40 years; their idolatry during the period of the judges; their rebellion that caused them to be rejected from the land and scattered throughout the earth for two millennia; their rejection of the Messiah.

7. The Bible's indestructibility proves that it is the Word of God.

Above all other books combined, the Bible has been hated, vilified, ridiculed, criticized, restricted, banned, and destroyed, but it has been to no avail. As one rightly said, "We might as well put our shoulder to the burning wheel of the sun, and try to stop it on its flaming course, as attempt to stop the circulation of the Bible" (Sidney Collett, *All about the Bible*, p. 63).

In A.D. 303, the Roman Emperor Diocletian issued an edict to stop Christians from worshipping Jesus Christ and to destroy their Scriptures. Every official in the empire was ordered to raze the churches to the ground and burn every Bible found in their districts (Stanley Greenslade, *Cambridge History of the Bible*). Twenty-five years later his successor, Constantine, issued another edict ordering fifty Bibles to be published at government expense (Eusebius).

In 1778 the French infidel Voltaire boasted that in 100 years Christianity would cease to exist, but within 50 years the Geneva Bible Society used his press and house to publish Bibles (Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, 1986, pp. 123, 124).

Robert Ingersoll once boasted, "Within 15 years I'll have the Bible lodged in a morgue." But Ingersoll is dead, and the Bible is alive and well.

The communist regimes in Russia and China tried to destroy the Bible and its

influence, but they have been completely unsuccessful. There are more churches in Russia today than ever before in its history, and printers cannot print enough Bibles to satisfy the insatiable demand in China.

In fact, many who set out to disprove the Bible have been converted, instead. The following are a few examples: Gilbert West, an English poet who was included in Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*, while a student at Oxford set out to debunk the Bible's account of Christ's resurrection. Instead he proved to himself that Christ did rise from the dead and published *Observations on the History and Evidences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*.

George Lyttelton, an English Statesman, author, and poet who was educated at Oxford, determined to prove that Paul was not converted as the Bible states. Instead, Lyttelton wrote a book providing evidence that Paul's conversion was real and that it is evidence that Jesus actually rose from the dead. The book was titled *Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul*.

Frank Morison, a lawyer, journalist, and novelist, set out to write a book to disprove the resurrection of Christ. Instead he was converted and wrote a book in defense of the resurrection entitled *Who Moved the Stone?*

Simon Greenleaf, Royal Professor of Law at Harvard University and one of the most celebrated legal minds of America, determined to expose the "myth" of the resurrection of Christ once and for all, but his thorough examination forced him to conclude that Jesus did rise from the dead. In 1846 he published *An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in the Courts of Justice*.

William Ramsay, a renowned archaeologist and New Testament scholar, began his historical research in Asia Minor with the assumption that he would find evidence to disprove the Bible's historicity. He concluded, though, that the book of Acts was written during the lifetime of the apostles and that it is historically accurate. His discoveries led to his conversion to Christianity.

Josh McDowell was a skeptic when he entered university to pursue a law degree, but he accepted a challenge by some Christians to examine the claim that Jesus Christ is God's Son. He says, "I decided to write a book that would make an intellectual joke of Christianity." He traveled throughout the U.S. and Europe to gather evidence to prove his case, but instead he was converted to Christ and wrote the book defending the Bible entitled *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. McDowell concluded: "After trying to shatter the historicity and validity of the Scripture, I came to the conclusion that it is historically trustworthy. If one discards the Bible as being unreliable, then one must discard almost all literature of antiquity. ... I believe we can hold the Scriptures in our hands and say, 'The Bible is trustworthy and historically reliable'" (*The New Evidence*, p. 68).

Dr. Richard Lumsden, professor of parasitology and cell biology, was dean of the graduate school at Tulane University and trained 30 Ph.D.s. When he was challenged by a student about the evidence for evolution, he sought to refute the student by demonstrating evolution's scientific evidence. Instead, he became convinced that the evidence is lacking. This led to an examination of the Bible, which led to his conversion to Jesus Christ.

Lee Strobel, who has a law degree from Yale, was an atheist when he worked as a journalist for the *Chicago Tribune*. After his wife's conversion to Christ, he determined to use his investigative skills to prove that the Bible is not true. He says, "I plunged into the case with more vigor than with any story I had ever pursued. I applied the training I had received at Yale Law School as well as my experience as legal affairs editor of the *Chicago Tribune*." Strobel became convinced that the Bible is true and that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. He has written many books defending the Christian faith, including *The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus* and *The Case for the Resurrection*.

"Down through the years, the Bible has been a mighty anvil that has worn out the puny hammers of the scoffers" (*Christian Home Bible Course*).

8. The Bible's universal appeal proves that it is the Word of God.

In spite of the aforementioned attacks, the Bible is the most popular book in the world, by far. Some books have been translated into a few dozen languages, but the Bible in whole or in part has been translated into every major language of the world, plus most minor ones--more than 2,450 so far. Translation work is progressing in another 2,000 languages. Compare this with other religious books. The Hindu scriptures have been translated into 46 languages, and the Muslim Quran into about 40.

9. The Bible's doctrine of salvation proves it is the Word of God.

The Bible is the only religious Scripture that teaches the doctrine of salvation by grace. Every other one teaches salvation by works. Hinduism says salvation is through practicing dharma and working out one's karma. Islam says salvation is by surrender to Allah and obedience to his commands. Buddhism says salvation is by reaching nirvana through life works and meditation and asceticism. If you visit the Buddhist monastery at Boudha in Kathmandu any time of the day you will find Buddhists walking clockwise, fingering their prayer beads and twirling their prayer wheels. They do this because they are trying to work out their salvation.

The Bible, on the other hand, says that salvation is God's free gift to sinners. This gift was very costly for the Giver. It was purchased with a great price, which was the atoning sacrifice of God's Son on the cross. But for the sinner it is free.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The Bible says there is nothing that the sinner can offer God in order to atone for his sins. What could we offer? Righteous works? The Bible says our

righteousness is as filthy rags before God's great holiness (Isaiah 64:6). Money? What would the God of creation do with our pathetic currency? A pure heart? The Bible says the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). How, then, could we purchase our own salvation?

“But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isaiah 64:6).

No, salvation is the free unmerited gift of a loving and deeply compassionate God. As the Christian hymn says, “We owed a debt we could not pay; He paid a debt He did not owe.”

“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” (John 3:16).

What a Book is the Bible!

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLE'S PROOF

1. What are some of the scientifically-accurate statements in the Bible?
2. What does the statement "the life of the flesh is in the blood" mean?
3. In what way does the Bible's candor prove that it is the Word of God?
4. In what way does the Bible's doctrine of salvation prove that it is the Word of God?

Daily Bible Study

MEMORY VERSES: *Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-3; 119:9, 105; John 8:31-32; Acts 20:32; Hebrews 4:12*

It is important to develop godly habits in the Christian life. Jesus had “the custom” of attending the synagogue services (Luke 4:16). It was His habit. Likewise the believer must have habits of church attendance and daily Bible study.

The Word of God has the power to sanctify the believer and build him up in Christ. It imparts conviction, enlightenment, spiritual strength, faith, wisdom, repentance.

Consider the following Scriptures: Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-3; 119:9, 105; John 8:31-32; Acts 20:32; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 1:19.

To grow in Christ and find His perfect will, the believer must be transformed by the renewing of the mind (Romans 12:1-2), and this is accomplished by the Word of God through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Following are ten tips for daily Bible reading.

1. Establish a time.

If you do not develop a habit of daily Bible reading at a certain time each day, you will probably only read it hit and miss. Decide what time would be best for your situation. At different periods in my life I have had different times for my

devotions, depending on the situation. Usually first thing in the morning is best, before your mind becomes filled with the business of the day. But other times of the day might work better for you. It is something to pray about. The important thing is to establish a habit of daily Bible reading. If you carve out some time every day during which you meet with the Lord and read and study His Word, you can grow in your knowledge of the Bible and make progress in your Christian life, but you must establish this habit. I cannot emphasize too strongly how essential this is.

2. Establish a place

A quiet, private place is necessary, if at all possible. I have seen Christians trying to study the Bible in a room where other people are talking and a radio is playing, *etc.* That might be necessary on some occasions, but as an ongoing practice it is not wise and it is not honoring to the Lord who deserves our undivided attention. The Bible is the very Word of God. Would it be proper to invite God over for a visit and then have many other things going on at the same time as He was talking to us?

3. Have some basic study tools.

We recommend the following:

A Study Bible

At the very least, it is extremely helpful to have a study Bible with cross-references and a concordance. Three helpful study Bibles are the Old Scofield Reference Bible, the Thompson Chain Reference Bible, and the King James Study Bible. (For more information on this see “Reference Bibles” at the Way of Life web site.)

A Concordance

In my estimation, the *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* is one of the most important Bible study tools ever published. Not only is it exhaustive in its treatment of the words of the English Bible, but it also links the English words to a helpful dictionary of the Hebrew and Greek terms underlying the English.

Treasury of Scripture Knowledge

The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge was first published circa 1836. The original *Treasury* had roughly 4,000 cross-references; the newer editions have about 570,000. The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself, and herein is the value of the *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*. It enables the Bible student to compare Scripture with Scripture.

The Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible & Christianity

More than three decades of research have gone into this one-of-a-kind reference tool. It is the only Bible dictionary/encyclopedia that is written by a fundamental Baptist and based strictly upon the King James Bible. Containing over 6,000 entries and 7,000 cross-references, it is a complete dictionary of biblical terminology and also features many other areas of research not typically covered in Bible reference books. The subjects include Bible versions, Denominations, Cults, Christian Movements, Typology, the Church, Social Issues, Practical Christian Living, Bible Prophecy, and Old English Terminology. *The Way of Life Encyclopedia* is exceedingly practical, and the Christian will be helped and fortified in his faith. Many preachers have told us that it is their favorite Bible study tool. Missionary author Jack Moorman says: "The encyclopedia is excellent; the entries show a 'distilled spirituality.'"

In the course "Fundamentals of How to Study the Bible," available from Way of Life Literature, we explain how to use these and other tools effectively.

4. Have a notebook and pen.

It is important to write things down that the Lord teaches you. In the first year that I was saved, I filled up several notebooks. For example, I designed one notebook for studying the topics of the Bible by dividing it into several categories, such as salvation, sin, comfort, Christ's deity, Satan, hell, angels, and various other subjects that interested me at the time. As I found verses dealing with those subjects I entered them under the proper category. I was reading the Bible through a couple of times a year so I was able to gather together everything the Bible said on various topics and do my own doctrinal studies.

5. Have a pencil for marking your Bible.

I recommend a pencil because you can erase it if you make a mistake and the pencil doesn't bleed through to the other side of the page. A mechanical pencil is ideal, because it doesn't have to be sharpened.

Use the margins of your Bible to add cross-references, word definitions, outlines, and brief commentaries. By adding such things you are making your own study Bible. This is why a wide margin Bible is useful.

Following are some suggestions for marking your Bible:

- a. **Underline judiciously.** It is your Bible and you can do as you please, but let me recommend that you not just underline anything and everything indiscriminately. If you do that, your Bible will soon be a bewildering and almost indecipherable hodgepodge of underlines and marks. It is better to use some careful thought in underlining. Let me make some suggestions from Genesis 1:

Underline things that will help you see at a glance the divisions of a passage. In Genesis 1, I have underlined "the evening and the morning"

because this phrase marks the days of creation. (In Revelation 2-3 I have marked the names of the seven churches, thus I can see at a glance the division of that section.)

Underline the most important things. In Genesis 1, I underlined verse 27.

Underline repeated thoughts. In Genesis 1, I marked things such as “God said” and “after his kind.” (In Ecclesiastes I underlined every mention of “under the sun,” and in Ezekiel I underlined “they shall know that I am the Lord.”)

b. Write notes in your Bible with caution. As with underlining, if you write down anything and everything in your Bible, you will soon find that the notes are almost useless. When writing things down that a preacher or teacher states, consider the source. Is that person a diligent student whose sayings are probably going to be accurate? If not, be very cautious about writing it in your Bible. I have heard preachers and teachers say many things that were not correct. Save the margins of your Bible for things that are special and that are doubtless true and accurate. Other things can be written down in a notebook.

Things to Write in the Margin of Your Bible

Definitions of Words and Names. As you learn the definitions of difficult words and doctrinal terms and the names of people and places, jot them down in the margin of your Bible so you won't forget them. I have written hundreds of definitions in my Bible. The following are some examples:

- Romans 2:23 -- sacrilege = profane
- Romans 3:20 -- justified = declared righteous
- Romans 3:24 -- redeem = bought with a price
- Romans 3:25 -- propitiation = satisfaction of a debt

Cross References. No single cross-reference system is exhaustive. Not even the *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* has every possible cross-reference. You will find many new cross-references to add to your Bible if you are diligent in study. For example, Matthew 6:23 should be cross-referenced to Proverbs 28:22, but it is not in any cross-reference system I have seen. And Ephesians 1:3 “spiritual blessings in heavenly places” should be cross-referenced with Colossians 3:1-3 and 1 Peter 1:4, but none of these are in the *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*.

Doctrinal and Teaching Outlines. I can preach many sermons right from the margins of my Bible. I can also refute false teachings with the notes and outlines I have jotted there. I recall an occasion when I was a young Christian and I unknowingly visited the home of a Jehovah’s Witness woman who was zealous for her religion. After being invited into the house, I found myself in the midst of a group of people who were there for a JW Bible study. She took control of the situation and asked me if I believed Christians go to heaven when they die, and I replied in the affirmative. She then asked me to show her and her friends where the Bible specifically says that the believer goes to heaven or that he has a home in heaven. I searched for a few minutes and couldn’t find a passage that said exactly that and was thus put to shame before this false teacher. After that, I redoubled my effort to be ready at all times to give an answer to the many heretics that are out there. One way I have done this is to write relevant things in the margin of my Bible so that I can find them quickly when the occasion presents itself.

In Exodus 20, I have noted the reasons why we know that the sabbath is not binding on New Testament Christians.

In Proverbs 23, I have an outline on the danger of alcoholic beverages.

At Matthew 16:18, I have noted why the rock refers to Christ and not Peter.

At Mark 1:23, I have jotted down some of the key errors in the modern

versions.

At Mark 9, I wrote the various Bible descriptions of hell and the passages in which Christ preached on hell.

At John 3:5, I have written the reasons why “born of water” does not refer to baptism.

At John 13, I have noted why I believe footwashing is not a church ordinance.

At Acts 2:38, I have annotated the reasons why we know this does not refer to baptismal regeneration.

These are a few examples. I used to teach the Bible in a county jail, and I used these notes almost every week when the prisoners would ask questions. If they asked a question to which I did not know the answer, I would get it and put it in my Bible, so I would have it the next time it came up.

Annotations such as weights and Measures. For example, in Exodus 25-27 I have noted the modern dimensions and weights of the various articles in the tabernacle.

Brief Commentary on the Text. When you learn something that is helpful about a passage, note it briefly in the margin. Every time you read that passage, the note will be there as a reminder. For example, in Luke 16:8, I have jotted down a couple of thoughts about how the children of this generation are wiser than the children of light. “How wiser? 1. In preparing for the future. 2. In the use of money. Christ is using the temporal to illustrate the eternal.” In Romans 3:31, I wrote, “Paul established the law for the purpose for which it was given. Compare vv. 19-22.”

Divisions of a Passage. Some study Bibles do this for you, but I have enjoyed doing it myself. For example, in Exodus 7-11, I have marked the 10 judgments on Egypt. In Exodus 20, I marked each of the 10 commandments. In Leviticus 1-7 I marked the various offerings.

Leading Thoughts and Important Repetitions. For example, in Paul's Epistles I have bracketed all of his prayers, beginning at Romans 1:8-10, and I have annotated the prayer that precedes and follows. In the margin of Romans 1:8-10, I put Romans 15:5-6, for that is Paul's next prayer. In the margin of Romans 15:5-6, I put Romans 1:8-10, for that is the preceding prayer, and Romans 15:3, for that is the next prayer. In Genesis I bracketed every occasion in which God repeated his covenant to Abraham, beginning in Genesis 12. I also added an asterisk so I can find each reference more easily.

c. **Use color markings.** Colored pencils, pens, or highlighters are an excellent way to mark your Bible. Some try to use one marking system throughout their Bibles; but I have found that it is easier and more effective to use different color markings for different parts of the Bible. Following are some of the systems I have used in my own Bible:

In the Psalms I have used *red* to mark verses that mention everlasting and eternal, *dark blue* for the second coming, *orange* for trusting God, *green* for blessings, *purple* for trouble, *yellow* for praise, *pink* for prayer, and *brown* for the Word of God. I have circled the verse numbers of the Messianic prophecies with *blue*. I have also bracketed unfulfilled prophecy or future events in *red*.

In the prophetic portions of the Old Testament, I have used brown for verses pertaining to the Day of the Lord, *light blue* for the Messianic passages, *green* for passages referring to the remnant, *orange* for the New Covenant, *dark blue* for the regathering of Israel, *yellow* for passages

describing the millennial kingdom, and *red* for the second coming. I have also bracketed unfulfilled prophecy or future events in red.

In Proverbs, I have used *red* to mark verses dealing with counsel and learning, *yellow* for references to the tongue and speaking, *green* for correction, *purple* for anger and strife, *orange* for immorality, *brown* for friendship, *blue* for child training. I have used a blue circle around the verse number for verses about the home or family, a penciled circle for those about the sluggard, a green circle for those about the government, a brown circle for those dealing with the poor and poverty, and a purple circle for pride.

In the book of Acts, I have used *red* for the verses that teach salvation by faith, *blue* for the verses about baptism, *green* for the verses about repentance, *yellow* for the names of the places visited by Paul, and *orange* for the verses that speak of Christ's resurrection. In addition, I have marked the travels of Paul with brackets at the beginning and end of each journey.

In Revelation, I have marked the names of the seven churches in *blue*, the seals in *purple*, the trumpets in *orange*, the mentions of God's wrath in *red*, and the vials in *brown*.

6. Have a reading plan.

It is important both to *read* the Bible (Deut. 17:18-19; Rev. 1:3) and to *study* the Bible (2 Tim. 2:15). Reading and studying are two different things. It is important, first, simply to READ the Bible. There is probably no other one thing that can help a believer better understand the Bible than simply reading it and reading it and reading it. My mother started reading the Bible through twice a year when she was about 77 years old, and every time I have seen her since then she has told me how that she has grown in her understanding. It is necessary, also, to STUDY the Bible. This involves slowing down the pace, doing word studies, analyzing individual passages, doing topical studies, outlining books,

using commentaries, *etc.* This is the point where we begin to use Bible study tools.

SOME TIPS ON READING THE BIBLE:

a. Read it systematically. That means read it all of the way through. Why should the Bible be read systematically? The Bible is not merely a series of writings; it is one Book; and to be understood it needs to be read and studied as one Book. Each individual book of the Bible complements the other books, and as the Bible is read systematically the pieces gradually fit together.

I supposed I knew my Bible,
Reading piecemeal, hit or miss,
Now a bit of John or Matthew,
Now a snatch of Genesis,
Certain chapters of Isaiah,
Certain Psalms (the twenty-third)
Twelfth of Romans, First of Proverbs--
Yes, I thought I knew the Word!
But I found that thorough reading
Was a different thing to do,
And the way was unfamiliar
When I read the Bible through.
You who like to play at Bible,
Dip and dabble, here and there.
Just before you kneel aweary,
And yawn through a hurried prayer;
You who treat the Crown of Writings
As you treat no other book--
Just a paragraph disjointed,
Just a crude impatient look--
Try a worthier procedure
Try a broad and steady view;
You will kneel in very rapture
When you read the Bible through!

-- Amos R. Wells

b. I recommend reading from the Old Testament and the New Testament. You can do this by reading from a portion of the Old and New Testaments each day, or by alternating between the Old and the New on a regular basis, such as by reading an entire book or section of books from the Old Testament (such as Genesis or the entire Pentateuch) followed by reading a book or section from the New (such as Matthew or the entire Four Gospels). The following two plans follow this system (reading a portion from the Old and the New Testaments each day) and take the student through the Bible in a year.

<http://cf.blueletterbible.org/reader/daily/more.cfm?planID=6>

<http://www.backtothebible.org/index.php/Bible-Reading-Guides.html>

The 52-Week Bible Reading Plan is also a good one. By this method you will read the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice in a year. It requires reading about 4 chapters per day.

Week - Passage to Read

1 - Genesis 1-26

2 - Genesis 27-50

3 - Matthew

4 - Mark

5 - Exodus 1-21

6 - Exodus 22-40

7 - Luke

8 - John

9 - Leviticus

10 - Acts

11 - Numbers 1-18

12 - Numbers 19-36
13 - Romans, Galatians
14 - 1 and 2 Corinthians
15 - Deuteronomy 1-17
16 - Deuteronomy 17-34
17 - Ephesians to Philemon
18 - Hebrews to 2 Peter
19 - Joshua
20 - 1 John to Revelation
21 - Judges, Ruth
22 - Job 1-31
23 - Job 32-42, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
24 - 1 Samuel
25 - 2 Samuel
26 - Psalms 1-50
27 - 1 Kings
28 - 2 Kings
29 - Psalms 51-100
30 - 1 Chronicles
31 - 2 Chronicles
32 - Psalms 101-150
33 - Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
34 - Proverbs
35 - Matthew
36 - Isaiah 1-35
37 - Isaiah 36-66
38 - Mark
39 - Luke
40 - Jeremiah 1-29
41 - Jeremiah 30-52, Lamentations
42 - John
43 - Acts
44 - Ezekiel 1-24
45 - Ezekiel 25-48
46 - Romans, Galatians
47 - 1 and 2 Corinthians
48 - Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos

- 49 - Ephesians to Philemon
- 50 - Obadiah to Malachi
- 51 - Hebrews to 2 Peter
- 52 - 1 John to Revelation

c. Bible reading can also be divided into two parts, such as morning and evening (Psalm 119:147-148), or morning and mid-day. Following are some suggestions:

(1) Read a portion of the Old Testament in the morning and a portion of the New Testament in the evening.

(2) Read the Scriptures systematically in the morning, three or four chapters a day, and then read more devotionally in the evening, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead to various passages.

(3) Read systematically in the morning and then read in the Psalms and Proverbs at evening.

d. You can also divide Bible devotional time into two parts: the first part for reading and the next part for studying. It doesn't take very long to read the three or four chapters a day required to read the Bible through in a year. This can be followed by a time of study. We have listed many suggested studies in the Sunday School course "Fundamentals of How to Study the Bible." Following are some suggestions of how to divide your time in this way:

(1) You can do your reading and studying at one sitting, dedicating an hour or so to this important endeavor.

(2) You can divide reading and studying into two separate times during the day, reading during one session and studying during the other.

(3) You can focus on reading during the first part of the year, while focusing on study the rest of the year. For example, during the first part of the year you could read six chapters a day and read the Bible through in six and a half months (the Bible contains 1,189 chapters). That would leave about half of the year for the study of the Bible.

e. If you are starting out your Bible reading career (whether as a new Christian or as an older one), I suggest that you set out to read the Bible through in one year and that you read it in conjunction with a simple Bible survey. One I recommend for this purpose is “Genesis to Revelation Bible Course” by William Groom. (This was put together in 1921 and is out of print, but you can download it in e-book format at the Way of Life web site.) This volume has a brief study of each book of the Bible, and by reading it in conjunction with the Bible the student can begin to gain a basic idea of the major teachings of each book and of how the individual books fit into message of the whole Bible. As the student progresses in his learning, I suggest that he use more thorough Bible surveys. We describe several of these in the commentary section of the Sunday School course “Fundamentals of How to Study the Bible.”

7. Start with prayer.

Ask God to open the eyes of your understanding. Don't be presumptuous, assuming that you can understand the Bible on your own. We must follow the example of the Psalmist who cried, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Psalms 119:18). Proverbs says that we will find wisdom only when we cry out for understanding (Proverbs 2:1-5).

8. Keep your mind on your reading.

If you can't concentrate on the Bible, your study time will not be very profitable. It is so easy for the mind to wander, and we must do whatever is necessary to keep our thoughts on the Scriptures, to hold the words of God in our hearts so

that they bring forth good fruit. Not only do we live in a weak, fleshly body (called the “*body of this death*” in Romans 7:24) that gets tired and sick, and not only do we dwell in a world full of cares and troubles, but we have an aggressive spiritual enemy that seeks to hinder our progress. His name is Satan, meaning *the adversary*, the one who stands before us to resist us. Bible study is spiritual warfare, and we must do everything necessary to win this war.

The Parable of the Sower teaches us that a man must make the effort to understand and apply the Scriptures, or the truth will be stolen from his heart by the Devil (Matthew 13:19). We must capture the truth by meditating on it and finding out its meaning.

Following are some tips for concentrating on Bible reading.

- a. Pray about it. If you find your mind frequently wandering during Bible study, lay the matter before the Lord. Tell Him that you desire to grow in knowledge of Him and His Word, explain your problem to Him, and beseech Him to help you concentrate.

- b. If you are particularly worried about some matter, cast it upon the Lord (1 Pet. 5:7) and trust Him to take care of it for you; then turn your full attention to His Word.

- c. Remove things from your Bible study area that are distracting. I know a pastor who removed all of the bright colored covers from the books in his office, because they distracted him when he was trying to study the Bible.

- d. Be careful about using a computer during Bible reading time. I use my computer to study the Bible, because it is so efficient, but I do not use my computer when I have my daily devotional time in the Scriptures. It is too easy to get distracted with other things.

e. Be careful about extraneous thoughts. When you are studying the Bible, it will often happen that thoughts about other things will rush in and you will be tempted to leave the study of the Bible and to rush off to take care of those things. For this reason, it is a good idea to have pen and paper handy and to jot down such thoughts so that you can take care of them later. This way, you can put them out of your mind for the time being and proceed with your study. If you get in the habit of allowing yourself to rush off and take care of other things, you will be crippled in your ability to study the Bible fruitfully.

f. Go back and read the passage again. When you find that your mind has wandered during the reading of the Scripture, it is important to go back and read that passage again until you understand what you are reading, even if it takes several readings. It is better to read one verse with clear understanding than to read an entire chapter with the mind drifting to other things.

g. Try not to read the Bible when you are tired. Sometimes this cannot be avoided, and it is better to read the Bible when you are tired than not at all. But the wise Bible student will arrange his schedule in such a way that he can study the Scriptures when his mind is fresh.

h. If you find your mind wandering, it might help to put the Bible reading first before you do anything else in the day. I have found that if I start reading and studying other things first, it is much more difficult to concentrate on the Bible later.

i. Sometimes it is helpful to read the Bible aloud if you find your mind wandering. This can help you maintain your concentration.

j. A large print Bible can also help with concentration because it is easier to read and the pages of the Bible are not as cluttered.

k. Be persistent. Don't let the devil defeat you in your Bible reading. If you

find yourself unable to concentrate for a period, don't quit. There are ups and downs in Bible study as there are in other parts of life. The best tip for effective Bible study is to keep on keeping on!

9. Try to get something practical each day from your Bible reading.

Don't just read for head knowledge; read with the purpose of growing in your relationship with Christ and in your daily walk with Him.

It is good to keep a Bible reading diary. Write down the date, list the passage that you read, and then jot down the practical thoughts that you got from that reading. Ask yourself, "What is God saying to me from this passage today?"

10. Maintain a prayer diary.

Many believers combine their daily Bible reading with a time of intercessory prayer. This is when you pray for others. It is described in 1 Timothy 2:1-2. It is helpful to keep a prayer diary, listing the various things and people you pray for on a daily basis. Some suggestions are husbands, wives, children, mothers, fathers, pastors, missionaries, unsaved relatives and acquaintances, the sick, persecuted believers, and the government. Pray for specific things and use the prayer diary to list God's answers to your prayers.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON DAILY BIBLE STUDY

1. In what passage did Jesus promise that those who continue in His Word will know the truth?
2. What passage of the Bible that those who meditate in God's Word day and night will be like a tree planted by the river of waters?

3. What man in the Old Testament was told that if he meditated in God's Word day and night he would have good success?
4. Why is it important to establish a habit of reading the Bible at a certain time every day?
5. What are the four study tools that we recommend?
6. It is important both to _____ the Bible and to _____ the Bible.
7. What are the five tips we give for reading the Bible?
8. What are five things you can do to keep your mind on Bible reading?

Principles of Bible Interpretation

MEMORY VERSES: Deuteronomy 29:29; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:15

A good understanding of the Bible is necessary for godly Christian living, and this requires at least a basic knowledge of the principles of Bible interpretation. In this lesson we will look at four of these.

1. Context is all important in defining words and interpreting passages.

The first and foremost rule of Bible interpretation is to define its meaning according to context. Absolutely nothing is more important than this. It is therefore necessary to know what the immediate passage, chapter, and book is about. The Bible is a self-interpreting Book if we allow the context to rule. False teachers, on the other hand, twist verses out of their context and force their pre-determined meanings upon them. For example, there are Korean false teachers in Nepal who are aggressive in having home Bible studies with people, but they don't let the people write down the verses they use and they don't let them look at the verses before and after the ones they are discussing. That is a certain recipe for spiritual disaster!

Following are some examples of how to interpret the Bible according to context:

a. Consider the phrase “profane and vain babblings” in 2 Timothy 2:16. What does this mean? The very first thing to do is to look at the context. There we learn that “profane and vain babblings” are (1) those things that are contrary to sound doctrine (v. 15, 18), (2) those things that produce confusion and bad fruit (v. 16), and (3) those things that are harmful to the Christian life (v. 17).

b. Consider the phrase “foolish questions” in Titus 3:9. What is this? Again,

the context defines the phrase. Foolish questions are questions (1) that produce only strife and do not edify (v. 9), (2) that are unprofitable (v. 9), and (3) that are used by false teachers (v. 10).

c. Consider the phrase “that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation” in 2 Peter 1:20. This has been interpreted in several ways, but the meaning is clearly given in the next verse. It means that the human authors of the Bible did not produce the words that they wrote, but that they wrote what they were given by the Holy Spirit.

d. Consider the word “perfect” in 2 Timothy 3:17. Does this mean sinlessly perfect? No, the word is defined in the verse itself. It means “*thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*” It refers to being perfect in the sense of fully equipped to do God’s will.

e. Consider the apparent contradiction between James 2:24 and Romans 3:24 and 4:5. This apparent contradiction disappears when we consider the context. Paul, on one hand, was addressing the subject of salvation, of how a lost man can be made right with God, and he tells us that the sinner must trust exclusively in the grace of Jesus Christ for salvation. In this sense, salvation is by grace alone without works. James, on the other hand, is addressing the subject of Christian service, of how a saved man can please God in this life. He tells us that saving faith is evidenced by works. There is no contradiction if one considers the context of each statement. Paul is addressing the unsaved sinner’s perspective. The sinner must trust Jesus Christ exclusively for salvation; he must reject his own filthy works (Isaiah 64:6) and self-righteousness (Romans 9:30-33) and lean totally upon the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting wholly in His perfect and complete redemption. James, on the other hand, is addressing the Christian’s perspective. The Christian claims to have faith in Jesus Christ. He is therefore to diligently serve God and to walk in His commandments. Those who live in rebellion and who ignore the Word of God demonstrate that they do not possess true saving faith; they show by their works that they are deceiving themselves.

2. Scripture must be compared with Scripture.

Another important rule of Bible interpretation is to compare Scripture with Scripture (1 Cor. 2:13). That is why it is good to have a Bible with cross-references and to use the *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*, which has hundreds of thousands of cross-references.

a. Comparing Scripture with Scripture is essential for developing sound doctrine. If Scripture is interpreted in an isolated fashion, the result will often be a wrong interpretation. False teachers love to isolate verses. Arthur T. Pierson wisely warns: “No investigation of Scripture, in its various parts and separate texts, however important, must impair the sense of the supreme value of its united witness. There is not a form of evil doctrine or practice that may not claim apparent sanction and support from isolated passages; but nothing erroneous or vicious can ever find countenance from the Word of God when the whole united testimony of Scripture is weighed against it. Partial examination will result in partial views of truth which are necessarily imperfect; only careful comparison will show the complete mind of God.”

For example, in 1 Corinthians 9:22 Paul says, “*I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*” If this is isolated from the rest of Scripture one can assume that Paul was willing to do anything to reach the lost, including adopt their lifestyle. This is a doctrine that is popular among the “rock & roll Christian” crowd today. However, when one compares Scripture with Scripture, we find that Paul did not mean this. For example, in Galatians 5:13 Paul said, “*For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*” Thus, Paul’s liberty was not the liberty to serve the flesh in any way. For example, he would never have allowed any of the Christian women ministering with him to dress immodestly in tight unisex styles, as the Christian rock crowd does today. Paul also taught that believers are to “*abstain from all appearance of evil*” (1 Thess. 5:22). That is the strictest form of separation, and Paul would not have done anything contrary to this in his own life and ministry. For instance, he would not have worn long hair, because the Bible says that is a shame and thus would have the appearance of evil (1 Cor. 11:14). By thus comparing Scripture with Scripture under the

guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are able to interpret the Bible accurately and to know sound doctrine.

b. Not only does the meaning of a verse or passage become clear by comparing it with other Scriptures, but Bible difficulties often melt away by this means.

Consider Luke 14:26, “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.” What does it mean to “hate” one’s own loved ones? This is explained in a companion passage in Matthew 10:37, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” It means we must love Christ far more than anyone else and we must obey Him in all things.

3. Clear passages must interpret the less clear.

A third important principle of Bible interpretation is that clear passages must interpret the less clear. False teachers disregard this principle by building their peculiar doctrines from difficult and obscure passages and using such verses to overthrow the teaching of many clear verses.

For example, Seventh-day Adventists build their doctrine of “soul sleep” on a few verses in the Old Testament. They point to Job 27:3, for example, which says that the breath is the spirit. They then say that since the breath is the spirit, man does not have a spirit that can live after he dies. Thus, when man dies, he is simply dead and non-existent until the resurrection. But when we look at the clear teaching of other verses, we see that man is a three-part being (body, soul, and spirit) and the spirit of man lives after he is dead. Compare 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and James 2:26. The Seventh-day Adventists also use Ecclesiastes 9:5, which says the “dead know not any thing.” They claim that this supports their doctrine that the dead merely sleep in the grave until the resurrection, but they ignore the rest of the Bible which teaches that the dead are conscious. For

example, compare Luke 9:28-33; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; and Revelation 6:9-11.

4. The literal sense of Scripture must rule.

Dr. David Cooper said, “When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense, but take every word at its primary literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context clearly indicate otherwise.”

Following are three reasons why we must use the literal method of interpretation:

a. God gave the Scripture to reveal truth to man, not to hide it or confuse it (Deut. 29:29). He therefore used the normal rules of human language.

b. Jesus encouraged the literal method (Lk. 10:25-26). Jesus expected man to interpret the Word of God in a literal fashion.

c. If the literal sense is not followed, no one can be certain of the meaning. By the allegorical method the mind of the interpreter becomes the authority. Consider Revelation 20:1-3. If this passage does not mean that a literal angel binds a literal devil in a literal bottomless pit for a literal thousand years, we have no way of knowing what it does mean. If it does not mean what it says, it could mean anything that any interpreter says it means. Thus, the teaching of the Bible is thrown into complete and permanent confusion by the allegorical method.

c. The Bible’s prophecies have been fulfilled literally. Consider the prophecy of Christ’s first coming in Psalm 22:

- Psa. 22:1 – Jesus’ words on the cross (Mat. 27:46)
- Psa. 22:6-8, 12-13 – The people reviled Jesus (Mat. 27:39-44)

- Psa. 22:11 – There were none to help Him (Mk. 14:50; Heb. 1:3)
- Psa. 22:14-16 – They crucified Him (Mat. 27:35)
- Psa. 22:17a – They did not break his bones (Jn. 19:33)
- Psa. 22:17b – They stared at Him (Mat. 27:36)
- Psa. 22:18 – They gambled for his garments (Mat. 27:35; Jn. 19:24)

In contrast to the literal approach to Bible interpretation is the ALLEGORICAL METHOD. By this method the mind of the interpreter becomes the authority and one can never be certain what the Bible means. The allegorical method of interpretation is particularly applied to the prophetic portions of Scripture.

a. For example, the Geneva Bible note at Revelation 9:11 identifies “the angel of the bottomless pit” as “Antichrist the Pope, king of hypocrites and Satan’s ambassador.” There is no reason, though, to see the angel of the bottomless pit as anything other than a literal fallen angel in a literal bottomless pit.

b. Harold Camping, founder of Family Christian Radio, came up with the following allegorical interpretation of Revelation 11:7. He says the two witnesses represent the church. The church has been in the great tribulation but has now been killed. Therefore, the church is dead; God is through with churches and pastors and they have no more Scriptural authority.

c. New Agers also interpret the Bible allegorically or “spiritually.” Levi Dowling, in *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*, says that the man bearing a pitcher of water in Luke 22:10 signifies the coming of Age of Aquarius.

Of course, the Bible contains types and figures of speech, but even these must be interpreted by the normal rules of language.

We deal with how to do this and many other such things in the Advanced Bible Studies Series course “How to Study the Bible,” which is available from Way of

Life Literature.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PRINCIPLES OF BIBLE INTERPRETATION

1. What are the four key principles of Bible interpretation?
2. How does the Bible become a self-interpreting book?
3. What is the method that false teachers use?
4. What Bible study tool has thousands of cross-references?
5. When the _____ of Scripture makes common sense, seek _____.
6. What are the five reasons why we know that the Bible must be interpreted literally?
7. What verse says that the things God has revealed are for us but the secret things belong to the Lord?
8. What is the allegorical method of Bible interpretation?

Foundation Bible Words Part 1

As we have seen in these lessons, understanding the Bible is necessary for spiritual growth, but in order to understand the Bible we must understand its words. The following are some of the powerful doctrinal words that relate to salvation and Christian living.

GRACE

There are chiefly two ways that the term “grace” is used in the New Testament.

1. *Saving Grace*. This is the free, unmerited favor of God in Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9). See also Romans 3:24-25; 4:4-8; Titus 3:4-7.

Salvation is free for the sinner because of the great price that was paid by Jesus Christ.

Salvation by grace means salvation is *not* by works. Salvation is by grace *alone* without works. The common error made by those who preach a false gospel is to redefine grace by mixing it with works and sacraments. Romans 11:6 says this is impossible. This is the error that is addressed in the epistle of Galatians. The apostle Paul warned that by mixing faith and works, law and grace, the Galatian legalizers had placed themselves under a divine curse (Galatians 1:6-9).

2. *Serving Grace*. This is the *ability* to serve God after we are saved (1 Cor. 3:10; Heb. 12:28).

God provides serving grace for every aspect of the Christian life: • grace for exercising spiritual gifts and ministries (Rom. 12:6)

- grace for establishing churches (1 Cor. 3:10)
- grace to live a holy life (2 Cor. 1:12)
- grace to give (2 Cor. 8:1-2)
- grace to endure trials (2 Cor. 12:9)
- grace to minister the Word of God (Eph. 3:7-8)
- grace in time of need (Heb. 4:16) The true Christian life is not a religion that the believer lives in his own strength; it is an intimate personal relationship with the living God who works out His will in and through me. It is Christ living in me (Galatians 2:20).

SIN

1. What is sin?

a. Sin is to break God's Law (1 John 3:4; James 2:9-10). Any infraction of God's Law is sin.

b. Sin is to come short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). This means to fail to live up to God's perfect holiness. God created man in His own image, and His purpose was for man to be holy and righteous in every way. Anything short of this is sin.

c. Sin is to follow one's own way (Isaiah 53:6). This is the heart and essence of sin. It is doing my will rather than God's. It is going the way of the first lie, which was that we shall be our own gods (Gen. 3:5).

2. What is the origin of sin?

a. Sin originated with Satan's pride (Isa. 14:12-14).

b. Sin entered the human race through Adam's disobedience (Rom. 5:12).

Though Eve sinned first, Adam was responsible before God as the head of the race. Every man inherits the sinful nature from Adam.

3. What are some other Bible words for sin?

- Evil (Gen. 2:9)
- Wickedness (Gen. 6:5)
- Iniquity (2 Pet. 2:16)
- Rebellion (Prov. 17:11)
- Unrighteous (1 Cor. 6:9)
- Unholy (Lev. 10:10)
- Ungodly (Rom. 5:6)
- Works of darkness (Eph. 5:11)
- Transgression (Rom. 4:15)
- Trespass (Mat. 18:15)
- Offence (Rom. 4:25) 4. How many men have sinned?

- All (Romans 3:23)

5. How does the Bible describe mankind's sinful condition?

- “only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5)
- “shapen in iniquity” (Psa. 51:5)
- “estranged from the womb” (Psa. 58:3)
- “foolishness is bound in the heart” (Prov. 22:15)
- “desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9)
- “righteousness is as filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6)
- “there is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10) 6. What is the wages of sin?

- Death (Romans 6:23)

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON FOUNDATIONAL BIBLE WORDS PART 1

1. What are the two ways that "grace" is used in the New Testament?
2. What are four major passages in the New Testament that teach salvation by grace alone?
3. What is the common error made by those who preach a false gospel?
4. What error is addressed in the epistle of Galatians?
5. What is serving grace?
6. What seven things does God give grace to do?
7. What is the first definition of sin?
8. What does it mean to "come short of the glory of God"?
9. What verse says that men have turned to their own way?
10. Where did sin originate?
11. How did sin enter the human race?
12. What are five other words for sin?
13. What verse says all have sinned?
14. What is the wages of sin?

Foundation Bible Words Part 2

THE FLESH

“The flesh” is used in four ways in the New Testament 1. The bodies of men and animals (Lk. 24:39; 1 Cor. 15:39).

2. A general reference to mankind (Mat. 24:22; 1 Cor. 1:29).

3. The weakness of human nature (Mat. 26:41).

4. The fallen, sinful nature (Rom. 7:18; 8:12-13; Gal. 5:16-24; Col. 2:11). The flesh is also called the old man (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9).

Lessons about the flesh in the Christian life (Galatians 5:16-24) 1. The flesh is still present after salvation. The Christian has two “natures”: the flesh and the Spirit (Gal. 5:16).

2. The flesh is an enemy within (Gal. 5:17). God leaves the flesh within the Christian to teach us to walk by faith not by sight.

3. The flesh is not eradicated in this life. There is no sinless perfection. Compare 1 John 1:8, 10. In the New Testament epistles, an experience of “Spirit baptism” or “entire sanctification” is never offered as the solution to the problem of sin. Consider 1 Peter 2:1-2. Peter is addressing the problem of sin, but he does not say there is a possibility of sinless perfection of any type. Rather, he instructs the believer to lay aside sin and to take in the Word of God as a process of growth.

4. The Christian can choose to walk either in the flesh or the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). It

is a daily choice.

5. There are two aspects of the flesh: position (Gal. 5:24) and practice (Gal. 5:25). We deal with this in the lesson on position and practice.

How Is the flesh overcome?

1. The flesh is subdued by yielding to the indwelling Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16).

2. The flesh is subdued by minding the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5).

3. The flesh is subdued by not making provision for it (Rom. 13:14). Avoid places and types of temptation.

4. The flesh is subdued by not sowing to it but by sowing to the Spirit (Gal. 6:8).

JUSTIFICATION

Justification means “to declare righteous” (Romans 3:24). Justification is God’s declaration that those who trust Jesus Christ are perfectly righteous before Him.

Justification is a legal concept, as when a judge gives a verdict. God is the great Judge. It is His Law we have broken. Before I am saved, God declares that I am a condemned sinner. After I come to Christ, God declares that I am righteous because of what Christ did for me on Calvary.

Justification is to be brought into a new spiritual position before God (Romans 5:1-2). The believer is no longer a part of the cursed household of Adam, but has entered the blessed household of Christ.

According to Romans 3:24, justification is God's free gift of grace through the great price paid by Christ on Calvary.

REDEMPTION

Redemption means *to be bought and released*. It describes the act of buying a slave from the market in order to give him freedom. There are three Greek words translated "redemption" which together give a wonderful picture of our salvation in Christ: *AGORAZO* means to purchase in a market. This word is used in a general sense in Matthew 13:44, 46 and elsewhere. In reference to salvation, *agorazo* is used in 1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23; Revelation 5:9, among other places. *Agorazo* pictures the Lord Jesus Christ paying the awful price required by our vile sin. Jesus Christ came into the slave market of this fallen world and paid the full price to redeem men by His blood and death.

EXAGORAZO means to buy out of the market. This is the word *agorazo* compounded with the preposition *ex*, meaning *out from*. Jesus not only paid the purchase price, He completely removed the believing sinner from the position of condemnation and from Satan's dominion.

LUTROO means to loose, to set free. The emphasis of this word is that God gives to the believer day-to-day victory over sin, Satan, and the world. We are purchased, brought out, and released to a new life of spiritual freedom and victory in Christ. *Lutroo* is used in Titus 2:14 and elsewhere.

ATONEMENT

Atonement means *to cover over*. The Hebrew word for atonement, *kaphar*, is first used in the Bible in Genesis 6:14, where Noah was instructed to cover the ark with pitch within and without. This is the same Hebrew word translated "atone" in other passages. It is frequently used in Exodus and Leviticus, referring to the animal sacrifices (e.g., Exodus 30:10). These did not actually take away sins, but

they symbolically pointed to Jesus who removed sin by His shed blood (Hebrews 10:11-14). *Kapar* is also translated “mercy seat” (Exodus 40:20). The mercy seat perfectly covered the ark containing the Ten Commandments, signifying that God’s grace covers or satisfies the requirements of His Law.

The word “atonement” is used only once in the New Testament (Romans 5:11). It refers to the work of Christ on the cross to satisfy our sin debt.

PROPTIATION

Propitiation means *satisfaction or payment of a debt, the fulfillment of an obligation*. It refers to the price that was paid by Christ to satisfy the debt that the sinner owes for breaking God’s holy law (Romans 3:24-25; 1 John 2:2). The sinner owes God a great debt because of the broken law, a debt that he cannot possibly repay. Jesus Christ, in his death on the cross, paid the debt in full for the believer. He propitiated the debt. The Greek word translated “propitiation” (Romans 3:25) is also translated “mercy seat” (Hebrews 9:5). As the mercy seat perfectly covered the law contained in the ark (Ex. 25:17, 21), Christ’s covered and satisfied the demands of God’s law. The blood that was sprinkled on the mercy seat by the high priest signified the blood of Christ, which is the price of propitiation (Leviticus 16:11-17).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON FOUNDATIONAL BIBLE WORDS PART 2

1. What are four ways that "the flesh" is used in the New Testament?
2. What is another word for "the flesh"?
3. What two "natures" does the believer have?
4. What verse says that if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves?

5. In what passage of the Bible is "sinless perfection" or "entire sanctification" described?
6. What are four ways to overcome the flesh?
7. What is the meaning of "justification"?
8. Justification is a _____ concept, as when a _____ gives a verdict.
9. Justification is to be brought into a new _____ before God.
10. What verse says justification is a free gift of God's grace?
11. What is the meaning of "redemption"?
12. What is the meaning of "atonement"?
13. The Hebrew word "kaphar," which is translated atone, is also translated what?
14. How does the mercy seat show the meaning of Christ's atonement?

Foundation Bible Words Part 3

RECONCILIATION

To change from enmity to friendship; to restore a relationship (Matthew 5:24; 1 Corinthians 7:11). Through Christ's sacrifice, believing sinners are reconciled with the holy God they have offended by their disobedience (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). Before we believe, we are God's enemies; after we believe we are reconciled.

IMPUTE

To put on someone's account; to reckon; to lay to one's charge. Imputation is like putting money into one's bank account. This is what God does for those who trust Jesus Christ. Christ's righteousness is imputed to the Christian (Romans 4:6-9, 22-25).

ADOPTION

This New Testament word means *placed into a family as a son*. It refers to a rich man choosing an orphan and making him a legal son and heir with the full privileges of such. This word is used to describe salvation in Christ (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5).

Though believers are adopted sons of God already, we do not yet enjoy all the blessings of being sons (1 John 3:1-2). Not until the resurrection will we enjoy our new bodies and the full riches of the Father's eternal kingdom. In this sense we look forward to the adoption as our hope (Romans 8:23).

REGENERATION

Regeneration means to be spiritually renewed. The term is used only two times in the New Testament.

1. Sinners are regenerated when they trust Jesus Christ (Tit. 3:5). This refers to the new birth.
2. The nation Israel will be regenerated when Christ returns (Mat. 19:28).

HOLY, SANCTIFY

What is the meaning of “holy”?

The basic meaning of holy is to be set apart for God’s purposes (Lev. 20:26).

The terms “holy,” “sanctify,” “consecrate,” and “saint” are translated from the same Hebrew and Greek words in the Bible.

Things other than people are said to be holy: The ground (Ex. 3:5), the sabbath (Ex. 16:23), Aaron’s garments (Ex. 28:2), the altar of the Tabernacle (Ex. 29:37). Therefore, to make holy does not necessarily mean to purify or to make righteous. Aaron’s garments were not purified in themselves or made sinless. They were simply set apart for God’s service. The holy ground upon which Moses stood was not purified in the sense of removing sin when God’s presence abode in the bush and Moses removed his shoes. The ground was set apart by God’s presence and for His purposes.

Thus, the essence of the meaning of being holy is to be set apart for God. A holy person is a person who has become God’s possession.

Holiness is also intimately connected with righteousness and moral purity (Jer. 31:23; Lk. 1:75; Rom. 6:19; Eph. 4:24). Holiness is contrasted with uncleanness (Isa. 35:8; 1 Th. 4:7) and is associated with cleansing from sin (2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Th. 4:3) What are the two aspects of Christian holiness?

There are two aspects of holiness in the Christian's life—positional and practical. There is eternal holiness and temporal; perfect and gradual; absolute and progressive. The Christian is holy because of his eternal position in Christ, and he is also becoming holy in a practical sense day-by-day.

POSITIONAL HOLINESS is the believer being eternally set apart into God's family. To be in Christ is to be holy in this sense (Eph. 1:4; Heb. 3:1). In position before God, every true believer is holy from the very day he is born again. This is because the born again person is placed into Christ, and God no longer sees that person as a condemned sinner. God looks at the believer through the blood of His Son. The Christian is not holy in this positional sense because he is good in himself, but because God has declared him righteous on the basis of Christ's atonement. Every child of God is holy; every child of God is a saint, in this positional sense.

PRACTICAL HOLINESS is to be holy in daily living. Every believer is holy in Christ positionally, and it is God's will for him to be holy in practice also (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

The two aspects of holiness are seen in one verse in Colossians 3:12. This verse teaches that since believers are holy and beloved in Christ positionally, they should live up to this position by being holy in daily life. Since we *are* saints, we should live like saints. Every true Christian, because of his trust in Christ's blood, is perfect and holy before God—as holy as Jesus is—but every Christian does not live a holy life on a daily basis. The Christian is to perfect holiness (2 Cor. 7:1). This describes a process of Christian growth.

It is impossible to be holy in one's daily life without first being made holy in Jesus Christ positionally. Only after a person is born again will God accept his efforts of daily holiness. Outside of Christ there is no true holiness. Only by His blood can a person be cleansed of sin and made fit to serve God in righteousness and truth (Gal. 2:20; 6:14-16).

What is the association between holiness and the blood?

The Bible intimately associates holiness with the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:12, 20-25). The typology of the Tabernacle emphasized this. It was by blood that the articles of the Tabernacle were made holy before God (Ex. 30:10). It was by blood that the priests were consecrated (Lev. 14:14). It was by blood that the worshippers were purified (Lev. 4:15-18, 30, 34). It was by blood that the high priest could enter into the presence of God in the Holy Place and make atonement for the people (Lev. 16:14-20). The word "blood" is used 66 times in the book of Leviticus, the book which set's forth Israel's worship of God and sacrificial cleansing. The book of Hebrews uses the word "blood" 20 times, showing that it is the blood of Christ that was foreshadowed by the Old Testament types.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON FOUNDATIONAL BIBLE WORDS PART 3

1. What does "reconciliation" mean?
2. How are sinners reconciled to God?
3. Before we believe, we are what?
4. What does "impute" mean?
5. What does God impute to the Christian for Jesus' sake?

6. What does "adoption" mean?
7. Why does the Bible say that the believer looks forward to adoption as a hope?
8. What is "regeneration"?
9. Regeneration in the Christian life refers to what?
10. What is the basic meaning of "holy"?
11. What are three other terms that mean the same thing as "holy" and are translated from the same Hebrew and Greek words?
12. What are three things other than people that are said to be holy in the O.T.?
13. What are the two aspects of Christian holiness?

Foundation Bible Words Part 4

HOPE

In reference to the Christian life, the word “hope” means *certain, sure, confident salvation in Christ*. Hope is called an “anchor both sure and stedfast” (Heb. 6:19), a “strong consolation” (Heb. 6:18), an “everlasting consolation” (2 Thess. 2:16).

This, of course, is the very opposite of the way the word “hope” is used in everyday conversation. Normally we use the word to express something that is uncertain. If someone says, “I hope to go on vacation to the mountains next summer,” he is saying that he is not sure. Salvation in Jesus Christ is exactly the opposite; the believer can be absolutely certain that he has eternal life.

If the believer’s salvation is not uncertain, why is it called hope? Our salvation in Christ is called a hope, not because it is uncertain, but because we do not yet enjoy the fulness of it (Romans 8:24-25).

GLORY

Glory is used in six ways in the Bible:

1. It refers to boasting (1 Cor. 1:29, 31; 3:21; 4:7; 5:6; 2 Cor. 5:12; Gal. 6:13).

2. It refers to praise (Lk. 2:14; 17:18; Acts 12:23; Eph. 1:6).

3. It refers to God’s character: to His holiness, exalted magnificence, and divine perfection (Jn. 1:14; Rom. 1:23).

4. It refers to the splendor and wealth of a king and his kingdom (Mat. 6:29; 19:28; 25:31; Jn. 12:41; 17:5, 22, 24; Rom. 9:23; Col. 3:4).

5. It refers to the brilliant light that surrounds the presence of God. See Ex. 16:10; 40:34, 35; Lev. 9:6, 23; Num. 14:10; 1 Ki. 8:11; 2 Ch. 7:1-3; Eze. 10:4; Mk. 9:2-3 (this event is called “glory” in 2 Pet. 1:17); 13:26; Lk. 2:9; Rev. 1:16; 21:11, 23.

6. It refers to beauty (Isa. 28:1; 63:1).

When the Bible says believers will be with Christ in glory, it refers to all of the above--the praise, splendor, wealth, holiness, light, and beauty which are in Christ’s presence and kingdom.

MYSTERY

1. The term *mystery* in common usage refers to *something secret; something difficult to understand; something mystical and out of the ordinary*. The Bible does use the term this way in certain instances (Eph. 5:32; Rev. 17:5).

2. *Most references to mystery in the New Testament, though, refer to truths which God hid from men in Old Testament times, but which He has revealed in the New. It speaks of New Testament revelation.* It particularly refers to church truth regarding Gentiles and Jews being brought into a new spiritual body through Christ (Mat. 13:11; 1 Cor. 2:7-12; Rom. 11:25; 16:25-26; Eph. 1:9; 3:1-12; 6:19; Col. 1:25-27; 2:2; 4:3). The temple illustrates the meaning of “mystery.” In the Old Testament, the thick curtain covered the presence of God, but now it is torn apart and the formerly hidden things are revealed.

ELECTION

The term “elect” refers to at least four things in the Bible

1. Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:6).
2. Angels that did not fall with Satan (1 Tim. 5:21).
3. God’s election of the nation Israel (Rom. 9:9-13). Calling Abraham out of the world, then choosing Isaac instead of Ishmael, and Jacob instead of Esau.
4. Those who receive salvation in Jesus Christ (Mat. 24:22, 24, 31; Lk. 18:7; Rom. 8:33; Col. 3:12; 1 Th. 1:4; 2 Tim. 2:10; Tit. 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:13; 2 Pet. 1:10). Election is also called predestination and foreordained (Eph. 1:5, 11).

Some lessons about election for salvation

1. *Election is based on God’s foreknowledge* (1 Pet. 1:2). God has offered the gospel of salvation to all men in this present age, and He knows who will believe and who will reject.
2. *Election means that God planned man’s salvation before the creation* (Eph. 1:5, 11). It means God, by his foreknowledge, has predestinated the believer to a glorious future (1 Pet. 1:2-4; Rom. 8:29-30). It refers not so much to *who* is predestinated, but to *what* we are predestinated to.
3. *Election does not mean God “sovereignly” chooses who will be saved and who will not be.* He has revealed that He wants all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:9). The “sovereign” will of God is for all men to be saved! Those who are elect or saved are those who believe the gospel (John 3:16).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON FOUNDATIONAL BIBLE WORDS PART 4

1. What does "hope" mean in reference to the Christian life?
2. What verse likens the believer's hope to an anchor?
3. What verse says the believer's hope is "sure and stedfast"?
4. What verse says the believer's hope is an "everlasting consolation"?
5. If the believer's hope is not uncertain, why is it called hope?
6. What are six ways that the word "glory" is used in the Bible?
7. The term "mystery" in the New Testament usually means what?
8. What are four things that the term "elect" refers to?
9. What are three lessons about election for salvation?

Knowing God's Will

MEMORY VERSES: Romans 12:1-2

We see in Romans 12 that God has a great work in this world and He has called on His people to participate. There is a perfect will of God for each believer. If you are saved, you are called to service.

We see that the will of God must be proven. Salvation is a gift, but God's will is a prize to be sought.

Following salvation, there are five steps that are emphasized in Romans 12 for those who want to know God's will.

1. Knowing God's will requires surrender and dedication (Romans 12:1).

Presenting one's body as a living sacrifice means to use my body and my life to serve Christ.

This is a free-will decision. God does not force us to be saved, and He does not force us to devote our lives wholly to Him after salvation. He wants us to do this from a willing heart. Thus, there are hard choices that must be made for those who want to know God's will. I must choose to dedicate myself to Christ rather than to the pursuit of selfish desires. I must deny the flesh and pursue the Spirit. Most people devote their lives to money, pleasure, ease, comfort, security, prestige, and such things. The child of God has the privilege of pursuing a higher calling.

This is a decision that is motivated by God's love. We love God because He first

loved us. We do not pursue the will of God *in order to be saved*; we pursue it *because we are saved* and we want to please the One who has saved us by His grace through the great price that was paid on Calvary.

This is *a reasonable decision*. It is reasonable because knowing and serving God is the purpose of life (Ecclesiastes 12:13). It is reasonable because life apart from God's will is vanity. That is the theme of the book of Ecclesiastes. If I use my life for anything other than God's service, I am throwing it away. It is also reasonable to dedicate my life to Christ because God's will brings great reward (Hebrews 11:24-27). A missionary who was later martyred once said, "A man is not unwise to give up that which he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

This is *a personal decision*. Young people are often deeply concerned about what other young people are thinking and doing. There is "peer pressure," but if I want to know God's will I must move beyond that and focus my attention on pleasing God alone.

This is also *a daily decision*. Dedicating myself to the Lord's will is not something that can be done once; it must be done repeatedly. Many times a person will get fired up at a church meeting or a summer camp or a Bible conference, and he or she will surrender to the Lord's will, but due to the pressures of life and spiritual warfare this decision can fade away if it is not renewed daily.

2. Knowing God's will requires separation (Romans 12:2).

At the very heart of knowing God's will is the issue of separation from the evil things of the world. It is not optional, because God is a holy God and this wicked world is in rebellion to Him.

The word "conformed" implies that we are weak and can be molded. The world

is evangelistic. It is not content to mind its own business. It seeks to conform the believer to its philosophy and lifestyle. Rocker Courtney Love said that she has “a need to impose my worldview on the culture” (*Spin* magazine, Oct. 1988, p. 100).

Separation is thus absolutely necessary to know God’s will. Consider the following important verses: Ephesians 5:11; Titus 2:12; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17.

The world has poured into Christian homes and churches through the rock & roll pop culture, but the believer that wants to know God’s perfect will must reject it and pursue holiness and righteousness.

3. Knowing God’s will requires transformation (Romans 12:2).

Knowing God’s will requires not only dedication and separation; it also requires spiritual transformation. This refers to Christian growth and it is the way of victory over the world. By transformation the image of Christ can become fashioned in the believer so firmly that the world cannot mold him into its own foolish and corrupt image. As we grow in Christ, the inner spiritual strength and wisdom is more powerful than the beckoning call of the world.

Spiritual transformation comes by the renewing of the mind through God’s Word. We must learn to think God’s thoughts and that is what transforms the life, and this comes through reading and studying and meditating on God’s Word. We know God’s will by knowing His Word. God’s Word contains the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16), and it is through His Word that He leads (Psa. 1:1-3; 73:24; 119:9; John 8:31-32). It has been said that a dusty Bible indicates a dirty heart, and the Bible will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from Bible. God never leads contrary to the Bible. For example, God doesn’t lead a wife to leave her husband for another man or a husband to leave his wife for another woman (Mat. 19:9-10; 1 Cor. 7:10-11). God doesn’t lead a woman to be a preacher (1 Tim. 2:12). God doesn’t lead people to get involved in false doctrine

and practice (Rom. 16:17). God doesn't lead a man to pastor if he is not gifted and qualified for that (1 Tim. 3:1-7). He doesn't lead a believer to marry an unbeliever or to go into a business partnership with an unbeliever (2 Cor. 6:14-18). He doesn't lead a mother to take job so that she neglects her household (Titus 2). He doesn't lead a believer to take a job that keeps him of church (Heb. 10:25).

Spiritual transformation comes by the power of the Holy Spirit. We must yield to Him, put Him in the driver's seat. This is what it means to "be filled with the Spirit." See Galatians 5:16-17; Ephesians 4:30; 5:18.

Further, *spiritual transformation is a process*. It doesn't happen overnight. It takes time and persistence and dedication. It requires building godly habits like Bible reading and private prayer and church attendance, and then continuing in them.

4. Knowing God's will requires service, ministry, activity (Romans 12:3-6).

To know God's perfect will it is not enough to surrender to Christ and to separate from the world and to read the Bible; we must also get busy serving the Lord. This refers to discipleship.

It is not a matter of waiting around for something to happen; it is a matter of getting busy doing what I know that I should do at any given time, and as I do this, God leads me in His perfect will step-by-step, day-by-day, week-by-week, year-by-year. As we read the Bible we must obey the Bible, and as we do this we are walking in God's will.

In Romans 12 we are reminded that there are two aspects to the ministry. There is a *general ministry* (Romans 12:9-21) and a *specific ministry* (Romans 12:6-8). Every believer has a particular gift and ministry, and we find that particular calling by getting busy in God's general calling, which involves walking in

obedience and holiness. As the believer does the things that he knows God wants him to do, such as obeying one's parents and loving one's wife and honoring one's husband and being faithful to church and sharing the gospel and separating from evil things and tithing and praying, God leads him along and reveals His particular calling more and more clearly.

We see in Romans 12 that knowing God's will requires sober thinking (Romans 12:3). This means I must understand my exact calling and not think too highly of myself. It involves humility. I must not think that God has given me more than He has. For example, there is a two-foot-tall man in Nepal. He is the world's shortest man. The Bible says that God made him, and if he were to put his faith in Christ and seek God's will, he would find that he has a specific calling, but he would have to accept his place. If he were to aspire to be a professional basketball player, he would doubtless be sorely frustrated and disappointed! There are people who can't sing well that want to be singers, and people who aren't good with children who want to work in children's ministries, and men who can't preach who want to be preachers, and men who aren't qualified to be pastors who want to be pastors. I have seen many men who have not been content to be what God called them to be; they want to be something else, and as a result they cause frustration in their own lives and confusion in the church. To think soberly also means *the believer should not think too lowly of himself.* Every believer has a special calling and an important place in the Lord's work in this present world. In the human body there are many members, and each member is important to the overall function of the body. The same is true in the church.

We are also reminded in Romans 12 that the church is essential for knowing God's will. Paul mentions "the body" in verse 4. That is a reference to the church. It is the pillar and ground of the truth and the house of God (1 Timothy 3:15). It is the God-ordained institution of training and discipling. It is the place of spiritual protection. It is the headquarters for world evangelism. The first foreign missionaries were sent out from a church (Acts 13:1-4).

5. Knowing God's will requires doing the will of God today (Romans 12:1-2).

The Bible speaks of the will of God as something that we do today, not something we hope to do tomorrow. If the believer frets about the present or is lazy in the present and is only looking to the future and hoping for a different circumstance, thinking that he will serve God when things change, he will never do the will of God. We must leave the future in God's hands and use the opportunities of the present, no matter how difficult.

God is in control of the circumstances of our lives (Romans 8:28; 1 Cor. 7:17-24). To fret against the circumstance is to fret against the will of God. This is the great sin that the Israelites committed repeatedly in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:10).

This is true for new Christians. The will of God starts right where you are by accepting the circumstance in which you find yourself and doing everything that you know to do to grow spiritually and to serve Christ. The first year after my conversion, I didn't know what the Lord wanted me to do as far as a particular ministry. I only knew that I needed to learn the Bible and be faithful to church and start doing everything that the Bible taught me to do, so that is what I did. I operated a printing press to make a living, but that was not my life. My life was seeking and serving Christ and preparing myself for His will. In this way I was able to get the full benefit from that opportunity and to build a good foundation for the time to come.

This is true for the unmarried. I had a friend at Bible College who spent a lot of time worrying about finding a wife, so much so that he was hindered in his ability to concentrate on his studies. If I am not married, I need to recognize that this is an advantage for the present, that I have more time to devote to the Lord in this present circumstance, and I need to use that time and trust the Lord about the future (1 Cor. 7:32-34). God is the Author of marriage, and He knows how to bring the right partners together at the right time.

This is true for the married. Regardless of whether your mate is saved or unsaved, it is God's will for you to remain married if at all possible and to serve

Him in that circumstance (1 Cor. 7:12-17). The same is true about whether or not you have children. God is in control of conception (Gen. 20:18; 29:31; 30:22). If you have children, don't look on them as a distraction. Dedicate yourself to raising them for the glory of God. If you don't have children, don't fret about it. Use the opportunity to serve the Lord while you wait on Him to provide children in His time and according to His will.

This is true for young people. Youth is both an advantage and a disadvantage. The young person must dedicate himself to knowing and serving the Lord in his youth rather than waiting until some later time. Too many young people waste their youth, throwing it away on vanity, foolishly thinking that they will get serious about life when they get older. They thus throw away the wonderful opportunity to use their youth to prepare themselves for the future.

Knowing God's will is not complicated. It simply involves surrendering to God and starting where you are and obeying God *step by step*. See Psalms 37:23.

I have never met a person who regretted finding God's perfect will, but I have met many that have regretted missing God's perfect will. Don't be foolish and throw away the wonderful opportunity that you have to surrender your life to God and to pursue His perfect will. Don't follow the crowd; follow Christ!

To make major decisions, such as about marriage and job and education, apart from God's perfect will is dangerous in the extreme.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON KNOWING GOD'S WILL

1. What are the five things that are required to know God's will?
2. What verse says that all things work together for good to those who love God?
3. What sin did the Israelites commit repeatedly in the wilderness?

4. If a Christian is married to an unbeliever, should he or she leave the marriage?
5. Many young people do what with their youth?
6. What does it mean to present your body a living sacrifice?
7. Why is it reasonable to serve Christ?
8. What book and chapter describes Moses' decision to serve God?
9. In what way is the world evangelistic?
10. Other than Romans 12:2, what are four major passages that teach separation from the world?
11. In what way is separation a heart matter?
12. In what way is separation a matter of replacement?
13. How does spiritual transformation come?
14. What verse says that the young man cleanses his way by taking heed to God's Word?
15. What are the two aspects to the ministry?
16. How does the believer think soberly about his calling?
17. What institution sent out the first foreign missionaries?
18. How many people have you met that regretted surrendering to God's will?

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Making Wise Decisions Part 1

MEMORY VERSES: Proverbs 3:5-6; 28:26; Hebrews 11:6; 1 Peter 2:11

Many people have spoiled their Christian lives because of bad decisions made apart from God's will (e.g., wrong job, wrong friends, wrong marriage partner, mistakes in the pursuit of education, mistakes made in moving to another place). And it is not only young people who make unwise decisions; many older and even elderly people have committed this grave mistake.

Following are some foundational Bible principles for making wise decisions in God's will:

1. Don't trust your own understanding; trust in the Lord.

See Proverbs 3:5; 28:26; Jeremiah 17:9.

The individual that trusts his own understanding will make wrong decisions, because of the fallen nature. We must seek God and trust Him explicitly. Even though the believer has a new nature called the "new man," the "old man" is still there and can still lead us astray.

We acknowledge God in all our ways through prayer. Instead of trusting in our own understanding, we beseech the Lord for wisdom and guidance in every major decision. He has promised to lead His people, but we must seek His guidance and not presume upon it. We must "acknowledge him" in all of our ways. It is tempting to think, "Well, the Lord already knows that I need His wisdom and help; surely He will automatically give it." In fact, God has taught us in His Word to pray specifically and earnestly about all matters. To fail to do so is a recipe for making unwise decisions.

We acknowledge God in all our ways through consulting the Bible. If we want to make wise decisions, we must be diligent Bible students, because it is through the Bible that we know God's mind (1 Corinthians 2:16), learn God's will (Psalm 119:105), and obtain faith (Romans 10:17). We must learn how to have an effective daily Bible study. We must be faithful to the preaching and teaching ministry of a strong Bible-believing church. We must take every opportunity to grow in our knowledge of God's holy Word, so we can know His will and make wise decisions.

2. Walk in the light (1 John 1:5-10).

To walk in sin is to walk in darkness, and it hinders spiritual living and thinking (1 Peter 2:11). The Bible warns that the backslider will be filled with his own ways rather than with the ways of the Lord (Prov. 14:14).

If a believer is disobedient or sassy to his parents, stubborn or critical or bitter toward authority, not loving his wife, not showing honor to her husband, gossiping, lying, stealing, loving the evil things of the world, his prayers are hindered and he will not have wisdom to make good decisions.

To make important decisions in a backslidden spiritual state is a recipe for disaster. Many believers who were far from the Lord in their hearts contracted a marriage or a job or pursued a field of education or chosen a Bible College or developed a friendship that they later came to regret deeply. Beware!

3. Delight in the Lord (Psalm 37:4).

The way to know God's will is to put Him at the center of one's affections. The will of God is not found by those who approach the Christian life as a mere list of do's and don'ts. It is found by those who know Christ personally and delight in Him. When I do this, He puts the right desires in my heart and then fulfills

those desires. The worldly or nominal Christian, on the other hand, is filled with desires that are contrary to God's will and lives in frustration because they are not fulfilled.

4. Do not make any decision that would cause you to disobey the Bible (John 8:31-32).

We have touched on this under every point, but by way of emphasis we will deal with it more carefully in its own section.

Making wise decisions, very simply, is making decisions according to the Bible. Jesus described it as to "continue in my Word." Any decision that causes you to disobey the Bible is contrary to God's will. There are no exceptions.

This is what it means to live by faith. Living by faith is simply to believe God and obey His Word. See Romans 10:17. It means to learn to make decisions based on the Bible rather than on one's feelings and human thinking and circumstances, and then to trust God to open the right doors and provide the needs. It is that simple.

Consider some examples of this and how it relates to making wise decisions in God's will:

The Bible says do not associate with evil or with idolatry (1 Corinthians 15:33; Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Ephesians 5:11), so living by faith means I will not associate with such things. Thus, it is not God's will for His people to attend worldly parties, to attend a pagan school, to get a job at a place that would require participation in wickedness (such as selling liquor or wearing immodest clothing or showing wicked movies or playing wicked music or sensual dancing), to participate in pagan religious rituals, to participate in worldly music or fashions, *etc.* I recall a teenager at one church who got a job working in a movie theater. He was concerned about the unwholesome films and was thinking

about quitting, but he was advised not to quit by the church's worldly youth pastor! The result was severe backsliding. I recall another man who had a job at a restaurant-bar and was responsible to supervise worldly parties that included drinking and dancing. He did not grow very much spiritually or learn how to make wise decisions in his life until he quit that job.

The Bible says do not neglect the church (Hebrews 10:25). It is the house of God (1 Timothy 3:15). Thus, it is wrong to make any decision that would cause you to forsake the assembly, such as moving to a place where there is no good church or taking a job that would keep you out of the services. I recall a young man in our church that was saved out of a druggie lifestyle. He showed promise and was growing in the Lord, and then his father asked him to return to his village. In spite of our counsel against it, he went, and from that point he backslid in his Christian life. We have seen this happen many times.

In fact, one of the chief reasons why people quit church is that they disobey God and get a job that keeps them out of the services and they then backslide. Consider the following two warnings:

“We lose about 20% of the young sometime after the seventh grade, and generally we lose them because they get jobs that make them work on Sundays. Once they get those jobs, it becomes easy for them to justify staying out of services and they generally do.”

“We have noticed that many who leave get the idea that if God gives them a job that requires them to work during services, then it is O.K. to miss services. If God gives them a job that requires wearing immodest clothes then it must be O.K. to wear immodest clothes. If God gives them a job that plays rock-n-roll music on the PA then that is O.K. They think they are strong enough to take that and keep coming to church unaffected. Usually though, within six months of getting the job they are missing 50% or more of the services and within a year, they are out of the services completely. As the Singles Director, I have stressed the fact that God has His perfect job for us and Satan has his perfect job for us. However, most of the kids won't

wait upon God to provide that perfect job.”

If a person lives by faith, he will not take a job that causes him to disobey God’s Word by neglecting church.

The Bible says do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14). Therefore, it is never God’s will for a believer to marry an unbeliever or to go into business with an unbeliever, or any such thing. I recall a man who was one of the first converts in a new church. He did well and grew, but eventually he went into business with an unbeliever and because of his partner’s crooked ways he ended up in jail and his testimony was corrupted.

The Bible says do not associate with false doctrine (Romans 16:17; 2 John 10-11). This means that it is not God’s will for a believer to attend a Bible study or a church where false doctrine is taught or to read books by or listen to sermons by false teachers or to develop a close relationship with someone who holds to false doctrine. I recall two young men who were in our church that showed much promise and seemed to be growing in the Lord, but they started attending a Bible study led by a false teacher and ended up leaving our church.

Making wise decisions simply means the child of God will not do anything contrary to God’s Word.

If we disobey the Bible, we cannot expect God’s blessing. What many Christians do is to make their own plans and then ask God to bless them, but that is backwards. We must first make certain that our plans are in accordance with God’s will, then we can reasonably ask for and expect God’s blessing.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON MAKING WISE DECISIONS PART 1

1. What are the five things we discuss in this lesson?

2. What verse says that the person that trusts in his own heart is a fool?
3. Why is it foolish to trust one's own heart?
4. What verse says the heart is deceitful and wicked?
5. What does the Bible mean when it says to acknowledge God in all your ways?
6. What book and chapter describes walking in the light?
7. Why is it necessary to walk in the light in order to make wise decisions?
8. What verse warns that fleshly lusts war against the soul?
9. What verse says that if I delight in the Lord He will give me the desires of my heart?
10. What verse says that faith comes by hearing God's Word?
11. How can we know that it is not God's will for the believer to "attend worldly parties, to attend a pagan school, to get a job at a place that would require participation in wickedness (such as selling liquor or wearing immodest clothing or showing wicked movies or playing wicked music or dancing), to participate in pagan religious rituals, to participate in worldly music or fashions"?
12. What verse instructs believers not to neglect the assembly?
13. What verse says the church is the house of God?
14. What often happens to believers who disobey the Bible and neglect the assembly?

15. What are some examples of how a believer can be unequally yoked with unbelievers?

16. How do we know that it is not God's will for a believer to attend a Bible study or a church or a conference where false doctrine is taught?

Making Wise Decisions Part 2

MEMORY VERSES: *Proverbs 12:15; 24:6; 29:25*

In the previous lesson we looked at four important Bible principles in making wise decisions: 1. Don't trust your own understanding; trust in the Lord and pray much for wisdom. 2. Walk in the light. 3. Delight in the Lord. 4. Do not make any decision that would cause you to disobey the Bible.

In this lesson we will consider another principle on this subject.

5. Seek good counsel (Proverbs 12:15; 19:20).

One of the important parts of making wise decisions in God's will is to seek godly counsel. It is mentioned 13 times in Proverbs, the book of practical wisdom. Before making a major decision--such as marriage, education, a job, or a move--a person should seek godly counsel. But it just as important to know where to get the right counsel and how to weigh it.

The classic case in Scripture of someone who listened to unwise counsel is Solomon's son Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:1-16). Soon after he ascended the throne, he was confronted by his subjects who beseeched him to treat them compassionately. In making his decision, he first consulted the old men that had counseled his father, and they wisely advised him to heed the people's request. He then consulted his own peers, and they advised him to treat the people as he wished and to ignore their feelings. He followed this foolish advice and lost the majority of his kingdom. This doesn't mean that young people always give bad counsel, while older people always give good counsel. A younger person that walks with the Lord and knows God's Word will give better counsel than an older person who lacks these things. In 1 Kings 13 we have the sad case of a man of God who got out of God's will by listening to a backslidden, lying older

prophet.

Seek counsel from wise people (“by wise counsel,” Prov. 24:6).

Wise counselors know God’s Word. When seeking counsel in a biblical fashion, we don’t need human opinions; we need biblically-informed wisdom. We are not seeking a word from man, but a word from God. Thus, we need to seek counsel from believers who have studied the Bible diligently. Wise counselors are spiritually mature and biblically knowledgeable.

Wise counselors are doctrinally sound and likeminded. Many people in fundamentalist homes have made bad decisions by seeking counsel from New Evangelicals or Charismatics or Calvinists or even liberals and Roman Catholics or others who are not likeminded theologically. We think of the sad case of Norma McCorvey, who was the plaintiff in the Roe v. Wade case that legalized abortion in America. She rejected abortion and was baptized by an “evangelical” minister, but later joined the Roman Catholic Church through close associations with Catholic priests in the Right to Life movement.

Wise counselors have made good decisions in their own lives and have good character and stability (“confidence in an unfaithful man,” Prov. 25:19). People who are lazy, don’t pay their bills, lie, cheat, are unstable, etc., will not give wise counsel. Young people must especially keep this in mind. God tells the young person to honor his parents, but if the parents are not people of good character they are not wise counselors. An “unfaithful man” can also refer to someone that is mentally and spiritually unstable. My father fell into that category, because of the mental damage he sustained fighting in the Pacific Islands during World War II. He was never right after that and had to be institutionalized from time to time. He knew the Lord, but was unable to take any kind of pressure or make important decisions and his thinking wasn’t right. As a result my mom and us children had to learn to go on without his blessing at times. For example, he couldn’t keep a job, so Mom had to go back to work in order to support the family. There was no choice, but he was fiercely opposed to it. He couldn’t work and had no possibility of an income, but he didn’t want her to work. Mom finally

went ahead and the Lord blessed and she was able to get back on at the phone company where she had worked before their marriage, and Dad gradually got used to the idea. Ordinarily this would be rebellion on the part of a wife, but not in that case. After I was saved at age 23, I wanted to go to Bible College and train for the ministry. Dad was opposed to it. The Lord led me to start writing Christian books. Dad was opposed to it. He wanted me to stay there in my home town and just work somewhere. I am so glad that I followed the Lord rather than my confused, wounded Dad. Such decisions to go against parental counsel must never be made lightly, but sometimes they are necessary.

Wise counselors are found in good Bible-believing churches. The first place to find such counsel is my own church, assuming I am in a good Bible-believing church. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). God has given pastors and teachers for the purpose of training and protecting His people (Eph. 4:11-12), and they should always be at the top of the list when it comes to spiritual counsel.

Wise counselors have wisdom pertaining to your particular situation. If you need advice about automotive repair, don't go to an accountant. Likewise, if you need counsel pertaining to preaching, go to a preacher, or if you need counsel about married life, go to someone who is successfully married, or if you need counsel about a missionary calling, go to an experienced missionary. Charles Spurgeon told how that he was discouraged from preaching by a godly woman. The fact is that a woman does not understand such things, no matter how godly she is. He said, "I remember well how earnestly I was dissuaded from preaching by as godly a Christian matron as ever breathed; the value of her opinion I endeavoured to estimate with candour and patience--but it was outweighed by the judgment of persons of wider experience" (C.H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*).

Wise counselors are willing to speak the truth (Prov. 27:6). If we only seek counsel from those who will tell us what we want to hear, or who will only speak non-offensive things and pamper us and tiptoe around difficult issues, we are wasting our time. We need to seek out counselors who will speak the truth no matter what it entails. When a child of God only seeks counsel from those who

tell him what he wants to hear, he proves that he is not serious about God's will. What we need are counselors like the prophet Micaiah who spoke the truth even when it resulted in suffering (1 Kings 22:27). For this reason, the wicked king Ahab complained said, "I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil" (1 Kings 22:8). Micaiah was exactly the counselor that Ahab needed, but he was too foolish to discern this.

Seek counsel from more than one person ("multitude of counselors," Prov. 11:14; 24:6).

This is repeated twice in the Proverbs by way of emphasis. One way that God confirms His will is by the agreement of godly counselors. If a young person is seeking wisdom about marriage, for example, and he or she approaches his parents and his pastor and teachers and other mature spiritual authority figures, there should be agreement.

Again, the best place to find the "multitude of counsellors" is a God-fearing, Bible-believing church. What Charles Spurgeon said of a Bible College is even truer of a godly church: "Meeting as you do in class, in prayer-meeting, in conversation, and in various religious engagements, you gauge each other; and a wise man will be slow to set aside the verdict of the house" (C.H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*).

This does not mean that I should never decide against something unless the authority figures in my life are agreed, because men can be wrong; but it does mean that I should only make such a decision if I have a clear Bible support for it and absolute confidence that it is God's will.

To obtain counsel from a variety of people protects the believer from becoming a slave to the will of one person. This is the mistake that was made in the 1970s by the Pentecostal Shepherding Movement. They taught that each believer should submit to a "shepherd" who was someone appointed by the church. No decision was to be made without consulting this "shepherd." The result was

widespread abuse. Pastors and teachers and disciplers are important *helpers*, but the believer is to have only one Master, which is Christ.

I must warn that “a multitude of counselors” can result in confusion if those counselors are not godly, biblically wise, and doctrinally likeminded!

Seek counsel from near people (Prov. 27:10).

Many times people seek counsel from those who are far off rather than those who are near, and though this is not always wrong, it is often done for the wrong reason. A lot of strangers have written to me through the years to ask my opinion about situations in their family or church, and I have always thought this to be strange, since I know nothing about them and have no way of knowing the full picture. People sometimes want to seek counsel from those afar off for the very reason that they don't know them and their situation, but it is for this very reason that we should usually seek counsel from those who are near.

For a young person, the first line of counsel should be his or her own parents, particularly if they are believers (Eph. 6:1-3). *The next line of counsel would be one's church leaders.* God gives leaders to the churches to watch over His people and to help them, like a shepherd with sheep. Godly church leaders “watch for your souls” (Hebrews 13:17). They think about the church members and pray for them and desire the best for each of them, and God gives them particular wisdom.

In our church we urge the young people who are thinking about marriage to talk with their parents and then to discuss the matter with their church leaders. If a boy is interested in a certain girl, we urge him not to pursue the matter until he has talked it over with the leaders. They know things that the young people don't know, and they can give good advice about whether it is wise to pursue a certain relationship. Invariably, those who have ignored this procedure have made a mess of things!

Seek counsel from caring people.

It is wise to seek counsel from those who not only know you but who care about you and are interested in your spiritual welfare. A young person, for example, will get better counsel from a spiritual leader who is praying for him rather than from someone else who is not interested in his spiritual well-being and who is uninvolved in his life in this way.

Seek counsel earnestly (Proverbs 20:5).

One pastor observed: “Not every counselor will be quick to give counsel. The person seeking the counsel has the responsibility of sincerely and purposefully drawing out the counsel from the wise person. Most people who are considered wise will not hastily pass out counsel.”

Seek counsel in fellowship with God and in the light of His Word.

It is idolatry to put one’s trust in man rather than God (Jer. 17:5-8) or to submit to a man blindly as if he were God. God gives human authorities and teachers to help us, and they are very important. But ultimately our confidence must be in God and we must get wisdom directly from Him. The Bill Gothard “chain of authority” approach is to obey the authority no matter what, but the Bible doesn’t support that. Jesus said that if we love even mother or father more than Him we are not worthy to be His disciples (Mat. 10:37). Obviously, then, there is a time when we must go against what our authority figures demand. And when is that? It is when they are leading us contrary to God’s will as supported by His Word. The apostles taught that we must obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29). One of the first converts in our church in Nepal was a teenage girl. Her Hindu parents and her older sisters forbade her to attend church, but she put Christ first and obeyed God’s Word and attended every chance she got. As a result, her entire family has been saved. We must honor early authorities, but Christ must be our first and only Master. As we noted earlier, the bottom line is that we must be Bereans and test everything by God’s Word (Acts 17:11).

Let us hasten to emphasize that we must *not* test counsel by our personal opinions, by the thinking of society, by our peers, by the pop culture, by human psychology, or by any other thing other than God's Word.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON MAKING WISE DECISIONS PART 2

1. What is a verse in Proverbs that teaches us to seek wise counsel?
2. When seeking counsel, we don't need _____.
3. What book and chapter says God has given pastors and teachers to the churches to build up and protect the flock?
4. What is the first place to find wise counsel?
5. What mistake did Solomon's son make?
6. What is an example in the Old Testament of an old man who gave bad counsel?
7. Why was it wise for Charles Spurgeon not to follow the counsel of the woman who told him not to preach?
8. One way that God confirms His will is by the _____ of godly counselors?
9. Where is the best place to find "a multitude of counselors"?
10. Why should we seek counsel from those who are near rather those who are far away?

11. Where should a young person turn first for wise counsel?
12. What book and chapter warns that it is wrong to put one's trust in man?
13. What verse says we ought to obey God rather than man?

Making Wise Decisions Part 3

MEMORY VERSES: *Psalm 27:14; Proverbs 29:25; Luke 9:59-60; Acts 5:29; 1 Corinthians 14:33*

In the previous lessons we looked at five important Bible principles in making wise decisions: 1. Don't trust your own understanding; trust in the Lord and pray much for wisdom. 2. Walk in the light. 3. Delight in the Lord. 4. Do not make any decision that would cause you to disobey the Bible. 5. Seek good counsel.

In this lesson we will consider four final principles on this subject:

6. Do not fear man (Proverbs 29:25).

Jesus warned that we must love Him even more than our dearest relatives. *See Luke 14:26*. What did Jesus mean when He demanded that we "hate" our nearest and dearest loved ones? We understand this by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Consider a companion passage in Matthew 10:37. When Jesus said we must hate our father, mother, wife, children, brethren, and sisters, he was saying that we must love Him far more than we love others. The Lord requires that we put Him absolutely first in our affections and that we live to please Him above all else. Family relationships are important and God's Word instructs us to care for our loved ones (1 Timothy 5:8; Colossians 3:18-21). At the same time, the call and work of God takes precedence over any human relationship.

If a person wants to make wise decisions in God's will he must fear and serve God more than man. If it comes to a choice of obeying and pleasing his friends or relatives and obeying and pleasing God, he must choose God. It is a great sin to fear relatives and friends more than God.

Many unbelievers commit this sin and end up in hell because of it (“the fearful,” Revelation 21:8). Many who are in hell would say they are there because they were afraid of what other people thought.

Many believers have committed this sin, as well. Down through the centuries many have made unwise decisions because of family ties. There are powerful forces at work here. Some have married unbelievers or attended a liberal Bible College or Seminary or pursued a certain career because of their families. Some have said no to the call of God because of resistance by family members. I am reminded of the man who led me to Christ. When God called him to preach, his wife gave him an ultimatum that she would leave him if he did not stop preaching. He pleaded with her to stay, but he refused to stop preaching. Eventually she did leave him and took their young son with her. The man was brokenhearted, but he refused to stop obeying God’s command to preach the Word of God. Many, faced with such a choice, have turned their backs on God’s call.

Young people often commit the sin of fearing man. They know that God is calling them to a life of holiness and service, but they don’t want to stand out in the crowd so they draw back from doing God’s will. I had to face this as a new Christian, when I knew that God wanted me to cut my long hair but I was hesitant to do so, knowing that I would no longer look “cool.” Many Christian girls refuse to dress in a modest and feminine manner because they fear man more than God. This is very foolish. Jesus warned that if we are ashamed of Him in this present world, He will be ashamed of us in the next (Mark 8:38).

7. Honor authorities

Another important principle in making wise decisions is to honor God-given authority. The Bible makes much of this. See Romans 13:1; 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:22; 6:1-3; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 3:1; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 2:13-15, 18.

I have seen many believers make unwise decisions that took them out of God's will when they failed to honor and obey the authorities that God put over them.

Many young people have committed this error by not honoring their parents, and by this means they have entered unwise marriages, developed unwise friendships, attended the wrong schools, joined the wrong church, moved to the wrong place, and made many other unwise decisions that could have been avoided had they simply honored their parents.

The same error has been committed by wives who have disobeyed and dishonored their husbands. Our mother Eve is the classic example of this!

The same error has been committed by church members who have disobeyed and dishonored their leaders. If you get angry and bitter at your leaders, you will not make good decisions. It is not wrong to question them, but it is wrong to have a bad attitude toward them. I have seen many people leave good churches and backslide because they got bitter at the church leaders and refused to repent. We must remember that church leaders are just men, and they are far from perfect. That is not an excuse; it is a fact! Church leaders are not above God's Word, and if they sin they should be disciplined after a biblical fashion (1 Timothy 5:19-20), but the leaders should always be given the benefit of the doubt. There is a time to leave a church, when it is not committed to God's Word, but we must be careful to leave in the right way, with the right attitude, and we should always move to a stronger church, not a weaker one.

Authorities must be tested by God's Word. We don't give blind obedience to authority figures, because we live in a fallen world, and the highest authority is God. Every authority must therefore be tested by God's Word. Compare Acts 5:29; 17:11. Moses rejected Pharaoh's authority to follow a higher authority, which was God!

Authorities should be given the benefit of the doubt. Most of the time when people disagree with authority figures, they don't do so on the basis of clear

Scripture but on the basis of their own feelings and opinions. If I don't think an authority figure is right, I must ask myself this question: Do I have clear Scripture showing me that this leader is wrong and that my thinking in this matter is right? In light of the many commandments in Scripture to obey those who have the rule over us, it is dangerous to reject authority figures on the basis of anything other than Scripture rightly divided.

8. Look to the future (Hebrews 11:24-27).

Moses made a major decision sometime in his youth "when he was come to years." He was the adopted son of Pharaoh, who was the wealthiest and most powerful king of his day. Moses could have chosen to cast his lot with the wealthy and powerful, with the pleasure seekers, but instead he cast his lot with the despised, enslaved Jews. He made this wise decision by looking at the future through God's Word. He looked ahead to the next life and saw that if he followed Christ he would have trouble in this world and riches in Christ's eternal kingdom, but if he followed Pharaoh he would have "the pleasures of sin for a season" and then an eternity of regret.

Every Christian young person needs to follow Moses' wise example. He needs to ask himself, "If I make this decision what will happen down the road? What are its eternal consequences? If I marry this person; if I take that job; if I pursue that particular education; if I go to that country; if I go to that party; if I develop that friendship; if I buy that television; if I listen to that music; if I am careless about what I see on the Internet; if I let my heart become captured with the love of the world?"

Unbelievers can't see the future because they walk in darkness and do not believe the Bible. They base their decisions entirely upon what they see with their eyes. They only take into account such things as money, pleasure, and prestige.

The believer has a light the unbeliever does not have, and he can make wise

decisions based on the eternal Word of God.

The believer particularly needs to look at the judgment seat of Christ and make his decisions based on what he will hear on that solemn occasion (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

9. Don't make decisions when tired or discouraged (Job 3:1-2; 17:11).

When we are tired and discouraged and going through a heavy trial, this is not a good time to make major decisions or to change decisions that have already been made. Consider Job. He did not curse God during his trial, but he did doubt God and sometimes lost his faith in future comfort and blessing. He temporarily lost his way spiritually and emotionally. It has been said, "Do not doubt in the dark that which God has shown you in the light," and I have often found this to be wise counsel. Many people have made foolish decisions, even changing their doctrine, during times of discouragement. James Robinson, who was once a bold Baptist preacher, adopted heretical doctrine in such a condition when he allowed a Charismatic to lay hands on him and "cast out devils." It is best to wait until the light is shining again and one's thinking is clear.

10. Wait on God (Psalm 27:14).

When endeavoring to make a wise decision in God's will, it is very important to avoid haste. When we are hasty, it is easy to make the wrong decision. We must wait until we are certain that we know the mind of the Lord, and then He will take care of us.

Joshua and Israel were hasty when they agreed to an alliance with the men of Gibeon; they trusted their eyes and did not seek God's face in the matter (Joshua 9:14-15).

There are two biblical principles that we need to heed when waiting for the Lord:

the principle of abiding peace and the principle of no confusion. We find these two principles in 1 Corinthians 14:33. When there is a lack of peace and when there is confusion, we must be cautious and not rush forward in that particular decision.

The wisdom that is from God is always peaceable (James 3:17). God gives peace always by all means (2 Thessalonians 3:16).

When I am seeking God's will, I look for this peace. If I have a certain inclination to do something, I want to see if there is growing peace or growing doubt. If something is of God, the peace will grow and the faith will increase, but if it is not His will there will be confusion and doubt and a lack of peace.

God's will is worth waiting for! Many decisions have consequences that last throughout one's lifetime, and if an individual gets those decisions wrong, he will not only live to regret it but he will have to bear the consequences until he dies. Marriage is one of these decisions, of course, but there are many others.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON MAKING WISE DECISIONS PART 3

1. What are the four things we discuss in this lesson?
2. What verse says the fear of man brings a snare?
3. In what passage did Jesus say that we are not worthy of Him if we do not hate father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters?
4. What does this mean?
5. What verse says "the fearful" will be in the lake of fire?
6. In what verse did Jesus warn if we are ashamed of Him and His Words in this

6. In what verse did Jesus warn if we are ashamed of Him and His words in this present world He will be ashamed of us in the next?

7. What does baptism picture?

8. What verse says that every soul should be subject to the higher powers?

9. What verse says to give the church leaders double honor?

10. In what verse did Peter say that we must obey God rather than man?

11. What verse commends the Bereans for searching the Scriptures and testing everything by the Scriptures?

12. Leaders should always be given the _____.

13. How did Moses "see him who is invisible"?

14. What verse says to wait on the Lord and He will strengthen your heart?

15. Why is it important to avoid haste when making a decision?

16. What mistake did Joshua and Israel make in regard to the men of Gibeon?

17. What verse says God is not the author of confusion but of peace?

18. If there is lack of peace about a decision, what should the believer do?

19. If there is confusion about a decision, what should the believer do?

20. What verse says the wisdom from God is always peaceable?

21. What verse says God gives peace always by all means?

Christ's Great Commission

MEMORY VERSES: Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8

The Great Commission is a name for the work of world evangelism that Christ preached after He rose from the dead. It is called Great because it is repeated five times in the New Testament (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:44-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8). Repetition in the Bible has two very important purposes. First, *repetition is for emphasis*. By repeating this command so many times, God is saying it is important. Second, *repetition is for instruction*. Each mention of the Great Commission adds more instruction. We will examine four of the passages:

MATTHEW 28:18-20

1. We see the authority for the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18). Jesus has all authority, and when we preach the gospel we do so in His authority. Thus, we have the authority to go to *any* nation and to speak to *any* person in His name. Many people have the idea that “religion” is a private matter, but Jesus has made it our business to proclaim the gospel. The Bible says that every born again person is an ambassador for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-20). We go in His name and authority.

2. We also see the work that is involved in doing the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

First, we are to preach the gospel. The teaching that is mentioned here refers to preaching the gospel, as we will see in Mark 16. Every church should send out gospel-preaching missionaries and should also support missionaries.

Second, we are to baptize those who believe. Baptism is not an option but a command. It is the first step of obedience for those who trust Christ as Saviour.

Third, we are to make disciples of those who believe. The work is not finished when someone is saved and baptized. In fact, that is only the beginning. We are to teach them to observe ALL things that Christ has commanded. We find these commandments in the New Testament Scriptures. This grounds believers in the faith and protects them from false teaching. This passage refutes the popular error that says that only some doctrines are “essential” while the rest are “non-essential” and should not be emphasized lest they cause unnecessary division. Jesus said we are to teach God’s people to observe and respect every part of His Word!

This work requires a church. In the book of Acts we see that it is the churches that fulfill the Great Commission. Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the church at Antioch and they, in turn, started many churches across Europe (Acts 13-14). To fulfill the Great Commission, every church must be a serious Bible training institution. The Great Commission is a BIG work.

3. We also see the promise associated with the Great Commission (Matthew 28:20). We do the work, but the power is Christ’s. He is with us. This is a special promise for a missionary-minded Christian and a missionary church.

MARK 16:15-16

1. The gospel is to be preached to every person, not only to every nation. This is a big job and it is the main task of every church. It means that every believer is needed to get the job done.

This tells us that God loves every soul and wants to save every soul, which is in contrast to the Calvinistic doctrine of “sovereign election.”

This also reminds us that there is no other way of salvation except through faith in Christ. If there were another way of salvation, God would not require us to preach the gospel to every person at such a high cost.

2. Baptism is for believers, not for infants. The requirement for baptism is faith, which means that infants are not proper candidates. Infant baptism was a heresy that was devised after the completion of the New Testament and the death of the apostles.

3. Baptism follows salvation as the testimony and evidence thereof. It is not lack of baptism that condemns the soul to hell, but lack of faith. It is “he that believeth not” that is condemned. Paul taught that it is the gospel that saves (Romans 1:16), but baptism is not the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:17; 15:1-4).

LUKE 24:44-48

1. It was necessary for Jesus to suffer, because there is no other way for sinners to be saved (Luke 24:46). Christianity is not what I do for God but what God has done for me in Christ.

2. Repentance is part of the Great Commission (Luke 24:47). There is no remission of sins without repentance, which means to turn from false gods and to surrender to God’s authority.

3. Each believer is responsible to participate in this work (Luke 24:48).

ACTS 1:8

1. This work is the church’s chief business. This is what we see in the book of Acts. The first churches didn’t adopt grand schemes to try to solve the socio-political problems of the Roman Empire. They preached the gospel and disciplined

believers and established new churches.

2. We can do nothing without the Holy Spirit. We must walk in fellowship with Him and seek His power. This is what prayer is about. It is acknowledging our need of Him and seeking His help. The Holy Spirit came upon the early believers at Pentecost, and since then He seals each believer as soon as he trusts Christ (Eph. 1:12-14).

3. Our job is to lift up Jesus Christ. We are to be witnesses of Him. When we talk to people about the things of God, we should talk about Christ rather than the church or “Christianity.”

4. The Great Commission starts at home and extends throughout the world at the same time. This can be accomplished through the churches, as they seek to win their own communities to Christ and as they support missionaries in other places.

How can the individual believer fulfill the Great Commission?

1. *By surrender.* This is where the Great Commission begins: “Here am I, Lord, send me. What do you want me to do, Lord?” See Isaiah 6:8; Romans 12:1.

2. *By fellowship with Christ.* If we don’t walk with the Lord, we will have no wisdom and power and guidance. We will have no interest in doing His will.

3. *By learning.* We can’t be well used by God if we are ignorant of His Word. We must learn the Bible so that we can answer people’s questions. We must learn how to witness effectively, how to pray, *etc.*

4. *By faithfulness.* The heart of missions is churches, and strong churches require dedicated, faithful members.

5. *By prayer.* This is the source of wisdom and power for the Great Commission. God's people must be prayer warriors, praying for their own church, for other churches, for missionaries, for unsaved relatives, for unsaved friends, for those who are hearing the gospel through tracts and personal witness. Prayer changes things. How many things are being changed by my prayers?

6. *By giving.* The Lord's Great Commission is a large, expensive work. Am I giving to Christ's work in such a manner that proves my love for Him and that is furthering the gospel to the ends of the earth?

7. *By going.* Every born again child of God is an ambassador for Christ and should be busy talking to people about the Lord, giving out tracts, and being faithful to church visitation programs.

8. *By child training* (Prov. 22:6). Children are arrows in the quivers of wise Christian parents to be trained for the service of Christ (Psa. 127:4-5). Christian parents need to raise their children so that they know that the most important thing in this life is Christ and His business. What example do the children see in the parents? Parents can't call their children to be missionaries, because that is a special call of God, but they can train them to be missionary-minded.

9. *By separation from the world.* Worldliness destroys spiritual vision and power (1 Peter 2:11).

It is a great privilege to bear the name of the eternal Son of God in this present wicked world. Time is short and we must use the opportunity that God has given us while the opportunity remains.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON CHRIST'S GREAT COMMISSION

1 What is the Great Commission?

1. What is the Great Commission?

2. What are the five passages that describe the Great Commission? (books and chapters only)

3. Why do Christians have the right to preach the gospel throughout the world?

4. What passage says every believer is an ambassador for Christ?

5. What are the three things involved in doing the Great Commission?

6. What is Jesus' promise to those who fulfill the Great Commission?

7. The gospel is to be preached to every _____, not only to every _____.

8. How does Mark 16:15-16 teach that baptism is not for infants?

9. Why was it necessary for Jesus to suffer?

10. In what verse did Jesus command His people to preach repentance and remission of sins?

11. What passage says that the believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit when he trusts in Christ?

12. What are nine ways that the believer can fulfill the Great Commission?

13. How many of these things are you doing personally?

The Judgment Seat of Christ

MEMORY VERSES: 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

1 Corinthians 3:1-15 contains the most extensive teaching on the believer's judgment in the entire Bible, and since every believer will stand at this judgment we should be keenly interested in this passage.

Who will appear before the judgment seat of Christ?

1. It is not for the unsaved but for believers (1 Cor. 3:11-12). It is for those that have built their lives upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The judgment of the unsaved is described in Revelation 20:11-15. This is the Great White Throne judgment, which is for those whose names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life. These will be judged by their own works without the benefit of a Saviour and will therefore be condemned to eternal suffering in the lake of fire.

What is the fire that will be displayed at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:13)?

1. We believe that this fire refers to the Scriptures.

First of all, Scripture is likened to fire (Jeremiah 23:29). And Scripture is said to be the judge (Psalm 96:13; John 12:48). Scripture contains the mind of Christ by which we will be judged (1 Corinthians 2:16). Further, Scripture is complete; therefore the believer needs nothing else and could not be judged by anything else (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The Bible will judge what we do in this world (1 Corinthians 3:13 “*every man’s work*”). It will judge what we say (Matthew 12:36 “*every word*”). It will judge how we spend our time (Matthew 12:36 “*every idle*”). It will judge what we believe (2 Timothy 2:15).

Therefore, in order to prepare for the judgment seat of Christ we need to read the Bible in this present life and obey it; we need to study it, memorize it, hear it preached, and sit regularly and faithfully under its teaching.

2. We believe, further, that the fire refers to Christ Himself. See Revelation 2:18-19. Jesus’ eyes are described as a flame of fire, because He knows everything about us. It is not my pastor who will judge me or my church or my denomination or my parents or my spouse or my friends; it is Christ Himself who will judge the believer. This shows where our priorities should be. We must not live to please ourselves or other people, but Christ. We must not put our confidence in anything other than Christ.

What is the purpose of the judgment seat of Christ?

1. The judgment seat of Christ does not pertain to salvation but to service (1 Cor. 3:8, 10, 13, 15). Salvation is a gift, not a reward (Ephesians 2:8-9). Fourteen times it is called a gift, and a gift is the very opposite of a reward. A gift is something that is purchased by someone else and is given to me freely. If I pay anything whatsoever for it or work to earn it even in the slightest sense, it is no longer a gift. Christ purchased the believer’s eternal salvation by himself (Hebrews 1:3) by the great price of His own blood. There is nothing the believer can add to this. After I am saved by God’s grace, I am to serve the Lord who saved me (Ephesians 2:8-10), and the judgment seat of Christ will examine this service. It is like a son who works for his father in his father’s farm or business. If the son is a slacker, he is still a son and is still loved by his father, but he will not be rewarded as he would have been had he been diligent and faithful and sincere in the father’s service. 1 Corinthians 3:15 is one of the clearest verses in the New Testament on the subject of eternal security. If the carnal believer who

loses all at the judgment seat of Christ “*shall be saved*,” how could it be possible to lose one’s salvation?

2. The judgment seat of Christ is not for punishment but for rewards or loss of rewards. The believer’s punishment fell upon Christ! The judgment seat of Christ is like an athlete competing for the Olympics. If he loses the race, he loses the crown that he could have earned.

What will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:12)?

This verse describes two kinds of Christian lives, and each will receive its own reward:

1. One kind of Christian life is likened to “*gold, silver, and precious stones*.”

This refers to that which is eternal, to that which has eternal value. For example, that eternal city, the New Jerusalem, is made of pure gold (Rev. 21:18). It also refers to that which is associated with God. For example, the ark and the mercy seat in the Tabernacle, which signified Deity, were made of gold (Ex. 25:10-11).

“Gold, silver, and precious stones” Christian living refers to things such as walking in fellowship with Christ day-by-day, walking in the Spirit and not the flesh, maintaining a fruitful prayer life, delighting in Christ’s Word, loving Christ’s church, being zealous in Christ’s work, separating from the wicked things of the world and refusing to conform my life to its standards, separating from false teaching, being a godly husband or wife, raising children to serve the Lord, and winning souls to Christ. All of these things are gold, silver, and precious stones before the Lord and will be richly rewarded.

2. Another kind of Christian life is likened to “*wood, hay, and stubble*.”

This refers to that which is associated with man and this world, things that do not last and have no value before God. Note that structures made of wood or even hay can be very large and impressive in this world, but when they are tested by fire they go up in flames and nothing is left. Many Christian ministries are made of wood and hay and are large and appear very impressive to men but when those ministries are tested at the judgment seat of Christ by the absolute standard of God's holy Word there will be great sorrow and loss.

“Wood, hay, and stubble” Christian living refers to things such as walking in carnality and indulging in sinful pleasures instead of walking in the Spirit, wasting time on vanities and forgetting that life is short and that only that which is done for Christ will last, talking about nothing, wasting an inordinate amount of time on such things as professional sports and video games and romance novels, spending money foolishly and not according to God's will, loving the world and patterning one's life after it, remaining infantile in one's Bible knowledge instead of growing strong in the Scripture and learning to rightly divide it, hoarding one's spiritual gifts instead of using them, neglecting the house of God, teaching things that are contrary to the Word of God, and neglecting one's responsibilities as a husband or wife or father or mother.

What is the reward at the judgment seat of Christ?

Compare Matthew 25:21-23.

A CROWN. This is a position of authority and service under Christ (Revelation 2:26-27).

TREASURES. See Matthew 6:19-21; 1 Timothy 6:19. We don't know exactly what these treasures will consist of, but the Lord Jesus has promised that treasures await those who serve Him in this world, and we can be sure that His eternal treasures will make even the most priceless objects and most desirable pleasures of this present world to appear as the cheapest junk!

A WORD OF COMMENDATION. See Matthew 25:21. Surely, the greatest reward for the believer is to receive the Lord's commendation. The loss of this will be like that which Peter experienced the night Jesus was taken to trial. After Peter had denied Jesus he had to endure the look of disappointment and grief on the face of his Saviour and it was this that broke his heart (Luke 22:61-62).

Why does the Bible teach about the judgment seat of Christ?

1. It motivates the believer to be spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Paul's teaching on the judgment seat of Christ was given in the context of warning the church at Corinth about its carnality and challenging it to be godly.

2. It also motivates the believer to be busy and faithful (1 Cor. 3:9-10). When we recall that we must stand at the judgment seat of Christ and give an account for our lives, we are motivated to use our time wisely and fruitfully in His service.

What about grace at the judgment seat of Christ?

See 1 Corinthians 4:5.

After the conclusion of the judgment described in 1 Corinthians 3, after the fire has been applied to the earthly lives and ministries of the believers, after some will have lost everything and will have been saved though as by fire, after every man doubtless will have lost much by way of the rewards he could have earned - every man will still have praise of God! How can this be?

1. There will be praise because of the security of salvation (1 Peter 1:4; 3:9; Psalm 34:22b). Though a disobedient saint will suffer loss, the fact remains that he will be saved and will enjoy the eternal sonship and inheritance that was purchased by Christ. It is only because of God's grace in Christ that the believer will stand before his Saviour rather than before the Great White Throne of Revelation 20.

2. There will be praise because of the greatness of God's mercy (Psalm 103:8-14; Jude 24). The Bible says that where sin abounded grace did much more abound (Romans 5:20). God delights in mercy and blessing. Jesus said that even a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple will be rewarded (Matthew 10:42). The believer will receive so much more and lose so much less than he deserves that he will rejoice at God's mercy. David committed the awful crimes of adultery and murder, yet in the New Testament this is not mentioned and he is upheld as a hero of the faith. Abraham lied and doubted God at one point (Genesis 17:17), and Sarah laughed and doubted God's promise (Genesis 18:12-15). Both sinned in the matter of Hagar. But when we come to Hebrews 11 we see none of that. We only see their steadfastness in faith and their spiritual victories. There is no mention of their temporary stumbling.

3. There will also be praise because of the effectiveness of God's discipline in the lives of His children (Hebrews 12:5-10; John 15:1-16). In that day we will see how that God worked in our earthly lives to prune and chastise and shape us, and we will rejoice at what God did.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

1. Who will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ?
2. In what book and chapter is the Great White Throne judgment of unbelievers found?
3. What is the fire mentioned in 1 Corinthians 3:13?
4. How can we prepare for the judgment seat of Christ?
5. In Revelation 2:18-19 why are Jesus' eyes described as a flame of fire?
6. The judgment seat of Christ does not pertain to _____ but to _____

6. The judgment seat of Christ does not pertain to _____ but to _____.

7. How many times is salvation called a gift in the New Testament?

8. How is the judgment seat of Christ like a son who works for his father?

9. How does 1 Corinthians 3:15 teach the doctrine of eternal security?

10. The judgment seat of Christ is not for _____ but for _____ or loss of _____.

11. What is the "gold, silver, and precious stones" mentioned in 1 Corinthians 3:12?

12. What are some examples of "gold, silver, and precious stones" Christian living?

13. What is the "wood, hay, and stubble"?

14. What are some examples of "wood, hay, and stubble" Christian living?

15. What are three kinds of rewards that will be given at the judgment seat of Christ?

16. In what two ways should the judgment seat of Christ motivate the Christian?

17. How is it possible that every believer will have praise of God at the judgment seat of Christ?

Separation from the World - Part 1

MEMORY VERSES: MEMORY VERSES: 1 Thessalonians 5:22; James 1:27

Worldliness is not new. Demas was worldly in the first century (2 Tim. 4:10), but today worldliness has become defensible and even honorable whereas separation has become “legalistic and Pharisaical.” In the past, worldlings were on the defensive, but now they are on the offensive. In the emerging church the Demas Way has become the right way, and it is a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Paul warned of a type of Christianity that lives according to its own lusts (2 Timothy 4:3-4), which is a perfect description of the rock & roll philosophy that is sweeping through churches.

What Is the World? (1 John 2:15-17)

The “world” does not refer to the things that God made (trees, birds, rivers, kindness). And it does not refer to innocent man-made things such as a bedspread or a treehouse or a fishing rod. There are many things that man has made and there are many aspects of human culture that are not contrary to God’s law, and the believer is free to enjoy such things within the bounds of pursuing God’s perfect will.

The “world” that we are not to love refers to the evil things associated with man’s fallen heart (“the lusts of the flesh, and the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life,” 1 Jn. 2:16). These characteristics of the world can be summarized as sinful passions and vanity.

We can apply the two previous points to all areas of life. Consider dancing, for example. There are forms of folk dancing that are morally innocent, while there are other types of dancing that are devoted to fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and the eyes. Consider music. There is music that is morally uncorrupt and that can

be enjoyed by the child of God even though it was created by unbelievers, such as John Williams' *Celebrate Discovery* or Aaron Copeland's *Fanfare for the Common Man* or the soundtrack to *Gettysburg* or the Canadian Brass's *Salute to John Sousa*, while there is other music that is dedicated to sensuality and hedonism, such as modern pop and country. Consider clothing. There are fashions that are morally innocent, and there are fashions that are immodest and unisex-influenced and intimately associated with a rebellious, pagan philosophy and attitude.

The "world" refers to the world system created by fallen men in rebellion to Almighty God and His law ("if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John 2:15). The world is in open rebellion to God, and each person must make his choice: the world or God (1 John 5:19).

The world system began in the days of Cain, when Cain went out from the presence of God and built the first city (Gen. 4:16-22). It was a glorious civilization full of entertainment and enterprise, but it was a civilization that was bent on living without God and without reference to His law.

The world system was further developed in the days of Nimrod and the building of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 10:8-10; 11:1-9). After the Flood, God had instructed mankind to fill the earth, but instead they congregated in the region of Babel and built a society based on rebellion to God's laws, human pride, and idolatrous religion.

How Should the Believer Relate to the World?

First, consider what separation from the world does not mean.

Biblical separation from the world does not mean isolation. The early churches described in New Testament didn't flee to mountain caves or build communes and live isolated from society. They lived in the villages and cities in the midst

of the unbelieving pagans, going about their lives and letting their lights shine in a dark world both by gospel preaching and holy living (Phil. 2:14-16). Biblical separation is not monasticism or communalism.

Biblical separation is not antiquation. It is not Amishism or Ludditism (those who resist progress in technology). The believer will be different if he lives according to God's Word, and his dress will be different because it is modest. He doesn't need to adopt a uniform and lock himself into a time warp. Biblically modest dress is not to be equated with a "plain" uniform. The Amish confuse the instrument with its use. A car is not worldly in itself, though it can be used for worldly purposes. Electricity, a cell phone, a video camera, a computer, an iPad, the Internet, an MP3 player, a guitar, a drum--none of these are worldly in themselves. They are worldly only when used for sinful purposes as per the definition of 1 John 2:16 ("lusts of the flesh, lusts of the eyes, pride of life").

Biblical separation is not externalism. External "righteousness" without a proper internal relationship with God through Christ is true Pharisaism. In too many churches, if an individual conforms externally--if he cuts his hair and wears a tie and gets the right Bible version and goes out "soul-winning"--he is accepted as a godly Christian regardless of whether he mistreats of wife or flirts with his secretary or watches raunchy movies. He might even be an adulterer, but as long as he has the externals right he is put back into the pastorate. This is hypocrisy and it is very destructive.

Biblical separation is not spiritual arrogance. The believer must never forget that he is not better than other men and that he was not saved because he is special. All men are sinners, and Jesus came because God loves the whole world (John 3:16). The believer has no righteousness except that which he has received as an undeserved, unearned gift of God's grace. We must not "look down our noses" at other men. The apostle Paul knew this, calling himself "the chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). I am so thankful for the way I was treated by some Christians when I was a long-haired rebel hippie in the 1970s. The man that led me to Christ loved me enough to spend four days traveling with me. And after I was saved, the first church I joined loved me enough to ignore my appearance and to patiently disciple me. They didn't jump on me right away about my hair

or my smoking or my music or my movie going. They focused on grounding me in Christ and it wasn't long before the externals began to change. The Bible has principles that apply to hair and smoking and music and entertainment, but to focus on the externals right away and to make them the fundamental thing is to put the cart before the horse.

What separation from the world entails:

Having seen what separation from the world is *not*, let's examine some of the major passages of Scripture to see what proper separation actually consists of.

1. The believer is not to love the world (1 John 2:15-17).

The believer is not to allow the world to capture his heart and affections. The affections are the wellspring of one's life. This is why we are exhorted to place our affection on things above and not on things on earth (Col. 3:1-4). A good test is to ask oneself, what is it that gets me excited? What am I passionate about? If the answer pertains to anything that is characterized by the lust of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life, then I stand condemned by God's Word and I need to repent of loving the things that God hates.

As we have seen, it is not the world that God made that we are not to love; it is the world of "the lusts of the flesh, and the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life" that we are not to love. This is the world system built by evil men. There are many things in this world that are good and innocent, but the world system and its cultures are permeated from top to bottom with sinful lusts, human vanity, and idolatry. The world system is so thoroughly permeated with these things that John could say that "the whole world lieth in wickedness. (1 John 5:19).

This passage (1 John 2:15-17) is not only an exhortation, it is also a test. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (v. 15). It is impossible

to love the world and God, too. The emerging church philosophy of “cultural liberalism,” which turns the church into a champagne dance party (e.g., Mark Driscoll’s Mars Hill Church in Seattle) wherein alleged Christian men drink beer and watch alleged Christian women “bust a move” (this was how the church described it) to sexy dance music, is an illegitimate merging of Christ with the world, and it is a great heresy. If rock dances aren’t characterized by the lusts of the flesh and of the eyes, nothing is.

To live a separated life requires a proper biblical worldview, and we see some of the major elements of this worldview in this passage:

First, this world system and culture is not of God. It was built by men who are in rebellion to God and His holy laws. It was built under the direction of “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4). This worldview teaches me that this world is not my friend and I must walk in great spiritual vigilance, like a soldier in enemy territory.

Second, the true God is holy and hates the lust of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life that characterize this present world system. Thus, if I am going to please the God who saved me, I cannot love the world that is opposed to Him.

Third, this world is passing away. A proper biblical worldview understands that this world is under God’s judgment and it will be smashed with a rod of iron when Christ returns. And His return is imminent, so I am to be ever watchful and ready.

2. The believer is not to be conformed to the world (Romans 12:1-2).

This is one of the most practical Scriptures on separation from the world.

To be conformed means to be pressed into a mold, to be fashioned according to a

likeness. It is the Greek word *suschematizo*, which is elsewhere translated “fashion” (1 Pet 1:14). It is the basis of the English term “schematic,” referring to a drawing or representation of an object. The god of this world designed the schematic for this evil world system (Eph. 2:1-3).

The world is very aggressive and evangelistic and enticing. It wants to shape our lives by its standards, its fashions, its entertainment, its principles, its philosophies, its music.

The child of God must take his stand against the world’s conforming pressure in every area of his life. We must remember that the world does not love us and the world has no wisdom. To follow the ways of the world is foolish and short-sighted. It is God who loves us and it is God who is wisdom, and His ways are right and good and eternal.

This key passage describes the proper motives for a separated Christian life. First, we are motivated by a desire to please the God who has done so much for us (v. 1). Second, we are motivated by the fact that living for God is “reasonable.” Indeed, living for God is the fundamental purpose of human life and it is the way of all blessing. Third, we are motivated by the desire to know God’s will. Separation from the world is necessary to please God and to know His will. It is not an optional part of Christian living. It is not “legalism”; it is obedience. It is not loss but gain. It is not Pharisaical stupidity; it is wisdom!

Not only does Romans 12:1-2 exhort us not to be conformed to the world, it also explains how we can have victory over the world.

First, the way to be victorious over the world is to have a sold-out, self-sacrificing, passionate relationship with Jesus Christ, as we see in verse 1. The reason why so many young Christians are captured by the world is because they either have never been born again or they have never surrendered to Christ and they are not walking with Him day-by-day in intimate fellowship.

Second, the way to be victorious over the world is to have one's life transformed by the renewing of the mind. The internal pressure to resist the world must be greater than the external pressure to be conformed, and this internal pressure to resist the world comes through the Word of God and the Spirit of God. The believer that fills his heart and mind with Scripture, not just as a vain exercise and not just to impress someone or to win a Bible memory contest, but as a passionate way of life, will have the wisdom and power to resist the world.

Third, the way to be victorious over the world is through pursuing the perfect will of God (Rom. 12:2) A moving object is not easily stopped. If the believer is passionately pursuing God's will for his or her life, and is busy serving God with enthusiasm, he will not be easily turned aside by the vanities of the world. There must be forward spiritual progress. A backslider in heart is easily ensnared by the world and devoured by the devil (1 Peter 5:8).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD PART 1

1. When John warns us not to love "the world," what are two things that this does *not* mean?
2. What are some of the innocent things that man has made that the believer can enjoy?
3. What are some of the innocent things in society or culture that the believer can enjoy?
4. What are some things in society that fall into the category of evil lusts and pride?
5. When did the world system begin?
6. What was wrong with Cain's city?

7. What was wrong with Nimrod's society?
8. In what verse is the devil called "the god of this world"?
9. Why do we know that monasticism and communalism are wrong?
10. In what verse did Paul call himself "the chief of sinners"?
11. What does it mean to love the world?
12. What is the "world" that we are not to love?
13. In what way is 1 John 2:15-17 a test?
14. What are three aspects of a proper worldview that is necessary to live a separated life?
15. What does it mean to be conformed to the world?
16. What English word is translated from the Greek word for "conform"?
17. What verse says the devil "now worketh in the children of disobedience"?
18. According to Romans 12:1-2, how can the believer have victory over the world?

Separation from the World - Part 2

MEMORY VERSES: MEMORY VERSES: Psalm 111:10; 1 Peter 1:14-15; 2 Timothy 2:22

In this lesson we continue the study on separation from the world.

3. The believer is not to be a friend of the world (James 4:4).

Again, the Bible refers to our affections. To be a friend is to have positive, friendly feelings toward someone, to appreciate their company.

James uses very powerful words. To befriend the world is to commit spiritual adultery. God is a jealous God.

This verse exposes the error of the emerging church and its “cultural liberalism.” The sermons and writings of emergents are filled with positive references to the evil things of the world, such as R-rated movies and drinking and filthy rock bands. Note the following excerpt from the book *Hipster Christianity*: “Hipsters are ... mavens of cool music. ... They gravitate toward HBO, Showtime, FX, or Comedy Central ... Music is everything to hipsters, so of course they love going to concerts. ... Christian hipsters love breaking the taboos ... piercings, dressing a little goth, getting lots of tattoos, carrying flasks, and smoking cloves. ... Mark Driscoll liberally embraces the sorts of vices--drinking, dancing, R-rated movies, and UFC fights--that old-school Christians ardently avoid.”

If this is not what it means to be a friend of the world, I don't know what the term could mean.

4. The believer is not to fashion himself according to the former lusts (1 Peter 1:13-17).

Three fundamental elements of separation from the world are found in this passage: salvation, obedience, and the fear of God. True separation flows from these spiritual realities. If you are a genuine child of God, if you are truly saved, you have an inner urge to obey the Lord. The Spirit of God urges, and all you have to do is yield. If you are walking as an obedient child before the God who adopted you through Christ and that is your habituated way of life, you have a higher motivation than merely living for your own pleasure. Obedience to God isn't difficult when it is your passion in life to please the glorious, fascinating, amazing God who created all things and who redeemed you. Further, if you are walking in the fear of God, you have spiritual wisdom (Psa. 111:10), so that you can see the vain things of the world for what they truly are. Instead of seeing an enticing Hollywood starlet, you see a foolish woman that the Bible likens to a pig with a jewel in its nose (Prov. 11:22). Instead of a cool, God-mocking rock band, you see a bunch of fools laughing their way to eternal hell. Instead of an enticing lottery jackpot you see soul-damning temptations. Instead of an exciting M-rated video game or a super cool R-rated movie, you see soul-polluting sin. Instead of finding the foul-mouthed comedian funny, you find him pathetic and his eternal destiny frightful. This "good understanding" is a product of the fear of God.

The standard of separation is to walk in the holiness of God in every area of life (v. 15). This has been God's standard for man from the beginning. We were created in His image to walk in His holiness and to reflect His glory.

We are to put off the former lusts (v. 14). Here Peter uses the same Greek word as Paul does in Romans 12:2 (*suschematizo*) in exhorting the believer not to fashion or conform himself to the world. This is the English word "schematic," which refers to a drawing or representation of an object. The believer is not to pattern his life after the evil or vain ways of the world, because the world's schematic was designed by Satan, the prince of the power of the air and the spirit that "now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph 2:1-3).

Peter reminds us that worldly lusts are pursued by those who are ignorant of the true God (“the former lusts in your ignorance,” v. 14). The wisdom of God that we glean from God’s Word should purify us of ignorant lusts. The believer that is knowledgeable of the Bible is wiser than the world and therefore should not walk in its foolish ways.

We are to walk in soberness (v. 13). A separated Christian life is a life of spiritual vigilance. It is not a matter of following a list of do’s and don’ts in a vain religious sense; it is a matter of being watchful in every area of life to apply the principles of God’s Word so as not to be devoured by the devil (1 Peter 5:8).

This is why I separated from rock & roll as a young Christian man recently saved out of a hippie lifestyle. I became convinced that rock & roll is the realm of the devil, and I didn’t want to be enticed back into that world through the power of music. I knew that I had been drunken with that music since my heart and soul was captured by it in about 1962 at about age 13. I had been carried away on a 10-year “magical mystery tour” by the pied pipers of rock, a tour that led as far as Hinduism and the New Age and nearly destroyed me spiritually, morally, and physically. By the grace of God I found salvation, and I intend to walk in soberness instead of carelessness. I intend to gird up the loins of my mind rather than yielding my mind to sensual music as in the former days of my ignorance.

We are to live in the awareness of Christ’s imminent return (v. 13). This is another fundamental element of separation from the world. If we know that the evil fashion of this world is under God’s curse and will be destroyed at Christ’s return, and if we know that He could return at any time, this motivates us to live a separated, pilgrim lifestyle. The wise believer doesn’t think of himself as a citizen of this world, but as a pilgrim passing through on the way to his true country (Heb. 11:13-16).

5. The believer is not to be spotted by the world (James 1:27).

We see that separation from the world is to be very strict. A spot is a small, seemingly inconsequential thing. But God's Word exhorts us not to be spotted by any aspect of the world, whether it be the lusts of the flesh, or the lusts of the eyes, or the pride of life.

Worldliness is a leaven that spreads, and the Bible warns that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6). This is why we must be very careful when it comes to keeping the world out of our lives, families, and churches.

6. The believer is not to fellowship with the works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11).

The unfruitful works of darkness refer to those things that are of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

We are to have *no* fellowship with the works of darkness. Again we see how strict we are to be in our separation from the world. "No fellowship" is the highest possible standard. It is a very far-reaching standard. The believer is to test everything in his life by this standard, whether it be entertainment, literature, the Internet, friends, hobbies, business practices, clothing, whatever.

This is not only a "negative" standard, it is a positive one, as well. Not only are we to avoid the works of darkness, we are also to avoid anything that is unfruitful. It is not God's will for the believer to "walk on the fence" in regard to the world, avoiding merely the grossest forms of worldliness. Even if something is not evil in itself, it might not be fruitful and profitable. For example, playing an "innocent" video game that doesn't feature rock music and immodesty and violence or watching old "innocent" 1950s television shows might not be wrong in itself, but to let myself become infatuated with such activities so that I waste serious amounts of time on them is "unfruitful" and unwise.

Not only are we to avoid the unfruitful works of darkness, we are to reprove them

as well. Ephesians 5:13 says “all things that are reproofed are made manifest by the light.” Biblical reproof is difficult to give and difficult to receive, but it is light and if the light is received it brings repentance. The light of God’s law reveals God’s holiness and man’s sin and is a schoolmaster to lead men to Christ (Rom. 3:19-20; Gal. 3:24). Even if the light is not received, God is glorified by it, because God is light.

7. The believer is to abstain from the appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

Here the standard of separation becomes even stricter. We are to abstain not only from evil, but even from all appearance of evil. The Greek word *eidos*, which is translated *appearance*, is elsewhere translated *fashion* (Lk. 9:29). The Tyndale New Testament read, “abstain from all suspicious things.”

Again, this is a far-reaching standard of separation. It is particularly referring to how things “look.”

This is one of the many reasons that Christian men and women must be very careful about how they relate to the opposite sex. I know a young single man who is in the habit of spending time with a divorced woman, eating meals with her and such, behind closed doors. He says there is nothing inappropriate in the relationship, but such activities not only are morally dangerous in themselves, they also have the “appearance of evil.”

This one standard alone would lead me to reject Christian rock, with its external appearance so blatantly copied from the dark world of secular rock. If you remove the lyrics, everything about a Christian rock concert has the appearance of evil, from the fashion of the musicians to the dark atmosphere to the lascivious body-shaking of the crowd.

Is There a Positive Side to Separation?

Consider 2 Timothy 2:22, which teaches that separation is not just a “negative” issue.

1. *Separation is a matter of spiritual and moral protection.* Timothy was told to “flee also youthful lusts.” That is the image of running from some great danger. God does not want to take pleasurable things away from His people. He is the Author of every good gift (James 1:17). When He made Adam and Eve, He put them in the loveliest garden one could imagine. He designed it to provide every delightful thing. God is not some cruel person who wants to harass people with meaningless laws. God is the most compassionate, giving Person in existence. His ways are the ways of true liberty. His command to separate from the evil things of the world is designed to protect His people from spiritual and moral harm. It is designed to keep us from being captured by the world, the flesh, and the devil.

2. *Separation is an association matter.* Timothy was to pursue holiness “with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” This reminds us that one’s associations have a great influence on one’s life. 1 Corinthians 15:33 warns that “evil communications corrupt good manners.” If you run with the wrong crowd, you will not live a godly life. A good apple will always be corrupted if placed in a barrel of rotten ones.

3. *Separation is a heart matter.* Paul mentioned “a pure heart.” If the heart is right, the believer will respond positively to the Lord’s command to separate from evil. Before I was saved, I grew my hair long as a flag of rebellion and pride. I refused to cut it for any reason, but after I was saved I cut it when I was challenged by an elderly woman that long hair was not befitting a young man who claims to be a follower of Christ. I cut it because my heart was right with God and I wanted to do His will instead of my own, and I did not want to offend people.

4. *Separation is a replacement matter.* Timothy was instructed not only to flee from sinful things but also to “follow” godly things. It is not enough to give up

sensual music and worldly fashions and unwise friends that hinder one's spiritual walk; the child of God must add godly friends and sacred music and edifying literature and wholesome activities and get busy in the service of Christ.

Some Final Points

1. Is separation legalism?

No, Titus 2:11-15 plainly states that the true grace of God leads men to strict, holy, separated Christian living.

2. Is separation selfish?

No, separation is wisdom (1 Peter 5:7). To avoid the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life is the way of protection from the devil and is the way to avoid becoming a slave to sin.

3. Is separation unchristlike?

No, Christ was holy and separated from sin at all times (Heb. 7:26). He was a friend of sinners, but He was never a friend of sin. The emerging church describes Jesus almost as a happy-go-lucky party guy, but He was not. He warned about judgment and preached about hell even in private situations, and that is a sure-fire way to end a party! When the woman was caught in the act of adultery and brought to Him, He forgave her by His marvelous grace but he also instructed her to "sin no more." That is a very strict standard and would put a damper on any worldly party!

4. Why is separation so unpopular?

It is unpopular because we live in the time of apostasy prophesied in 2 Timothy 4:3-4, when professing Christians have created a new type of Christianity that allows them to live according to their own lusts.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD PART 2

1. Why is the believer required not to be a friend of the world?
2. What is “cultural liberalism”?
3. What are three fundamental elements of separation that are found in 1 Peter 1:13-17?
4. What verse says the fear of the Lord brings wisdom and a good understanding?
5. How does belief in the imminent return of Christ purify the Christian life?
6. According to James 1:27, the believer is to keep himself separated from the world to what extent?
7. According to Ephesians 5:11, how much fellowship is the believer to have with the unfruitful works of darkness?
8. What are some examples of the unfruitful works of darkness?
9. Even if something is not evil in itself, it might not be _____ and _____.
10. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:22, the believer is to abstain from what?
11. William Tyndale translated 1 Thessalonians 5:22, “abstain from all

_____ things.”

12. What are the four positive things about separation that are described in 2 Timothy 2:22?

13. What book and chapter says that the grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness?

14. Why is separation wisdom?

15. What prophecy warns that the time will come when men will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts?

Tests of Entertainment

MEMORY VERSES: Psalm 101:3; Romans 6:16; 1 Corinthians 10:21, 31; Philippians 4:8; 1 John 5:21

Parents and teachers need to instruct young people in the biblical principles that apply to entertainment. God made man to enjoy His creation. He “giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17). But the creation is fallen and there are many spiritual dangers (1 Pet. 5:8). Even in activities that are not in themselves contrary to the Bible, some things are not profitable (1 Cor. 6:12). Thus, we need to learn how to test things by God’s Word so that we can walk in wisdom rather than folly.

It is not enough to tell young people what not to do and give them a list of do’s and don’ts. We must carefully and patiently teach them the Word of God in a practical manner so that they learn how to apply its lessons to daily living.

Following are some biblical principles for testing entertainment in the Christian life and family. On each point ask the following question: What are some forms of entertainment that fail this test?

- *Can you do it to the glory of God?* (1 Corinthians 10:31).
- *Is it of the world?* (1 John 2:15-16).
- *Does it involve looking at wicked things?* (Psalms 101:3).
- *Does it further the gospel and the work of Christ?* (1 Corinthians 10:28, 32-33).
- *Does it cause others to stumble?* (Romans 14:13-16, 21).
- *Does it cause you to think on wholesome things?* (Philippians 4:8).
- *Is it idolatrous?* (1 John 5:21).
- *Does it involve fornication?* (1 Corinthians 6:18).
- *Is it of the devil?* (1 Corinthians 10:21).
- *Does it promote the philosophy of the ungodly?* (Colossians 2:8).

- *Does it involve anything that is opposed to the true knowledge of God? (2 Corinthians 10:5).*
- *Can you do this activity by faith without doubting? (Romans 14:23).*
- *Is this activity a wise use of my time? (Ephesians 5:15-16).*
- *Does this activity have the potential to enslave me? (Romans 6:16-18).*

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON TESTS OF ENTERTAINMENT

What are some forms of entertainment that fail the tests of these biblical principles?

Separation - Doctrinal Part 1

MEMORY VERSES: 2 Timothy 2:16-18

Separation is a despised and even hated doctrine today because it goes against the prevailing philosophy of unity.

Separation is what once distinguished Independent Baptists from Southern Baptists, but this is changing rapidly as many Independent Baptists are either rejecting separation outright or are letting it slip away by neglect.

Though widely rejected and hated, separation is a necessary practice, because it is the means of spiritual protection.

In my own Christian life, I learned separation in three stages: First, as a brand new Christian I was taught the importance of testing everything by God's Word and being cautious about false teaching. The man that led me to Christ taught me verses such as 1 Thessalonians 5:21. He took me into a bookstore and warned me that I had to exercise great care when choosing Christian books, because many of them would lead me astray. Second, I learned separation at an Independent Baptist Bible College. There I learned something about the danger of cults and contemporary movements such as Roman Catholicism, Theological Liberalism, Charismaticism, New Evangelicalism, and Christian Rock. Third, I learned the necessity of separation as a young missionary at a practical level in my dealings with the Nepal Christian Fellowship. This was an ecumenical-charismatic fellowship, and I was convinced that I could help them and perhaps even change them by accepting their invitations to preach and teach in various forums. Instead, the result was trouble and confusion through doctrinal conflict. I learned that it is scriptural and wise to separate from heretics and compromisers and to seek to help them from without rather than from within.

2 TIMOTHY 2:15-26

The foundation of separation (2 Tim. 2:15) *First, the foundation of separation is a strong knowledge of the Bible.* Without this, the Christian cannot know truth from error. This means that every believer should be a diligent Bible student. It is important to establish a habit of daily Bible study. This also means that every church should be a Bible school to train God's people in the Scriptures and to prepare them to deal effectively with false teaching.

Second, the foundation of separation is a testing mindset. To rightly divide the Word of God implies that we constantly distinguish between truth and error. See Psalm 119:128; Proverbs 14:15; Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

The Method of Separation (2 Tim. 2:16, 17) Plainly identify those who err (2 Tim. 2:17) **Paul didn't warn in generalities; in 1 and 2 Timothy alone, he named the names of false teachers and compromisers 10 times (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:17; 3:8; 4:10, 14).**

This important practice is often missing in churches today, even in those that still hold the name "fundamentalist." Churches need to distribute information and warning publications like *O Timothy* magazine and *Friday Church News Notes* to keep the people informed and forewarned. Churches should conduct study courses such as *Defense of the Faith*. Churches should also operate their own bookstores to provide sound literature to the people. Churches that are standing firm in the old paths often do all three of these things.

Separate from those who err ("shun," 2 Tim. 2:16) ("avoid" Rom. 16:17, "from such turn away" 2 Tim. 3:5) *Avoid their churches and meetings.* If you know that a church is teaching error, stay away from it. If you know that a preacher teaches error, don't go to his meeting. Many have attended things such as a Promise Keepers conference or a Charismatic Bible Study or a Christian rock concert and have been converted to error because of disobedience to God's command of separation.

Avoid their books, Internet sites, television and radio broadcasts, mp3 sermons. Failure to do this is a major reason why Calvinism and New Evangelicalism are flooding into Independent Baptist churches. A few years ago a pastor in Michigan told me that his weakest, most doctrinally unstable church members are those who listen the most to Christian radio. This is because the programming even on “evangelical” stations is typically filled with heretics and compromisers. So are the shelves of Christian bookstores. The reports “Dangers in Christian Bookstores” and “Dangers on Christian Radio,” which are available at the Way of Life Literature web site, list many authors and syndicated radio personalities that should be avoided. (These include Billy and Franklin Graham, Rick Warren, Chuck Colson, Chuck Swindoll, Jim Cymbala, Philip Yancey, John Maxwell, Max Lucado, Elisabeth Elliot, Jerry Bridges, Jack Hayford, Bill Hybels, James Dobson, Robert Schuller, Ken Blanchard, Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, Robert Webber, John Michael Talbot, C.S. Lewis, Norman Vincent Peale, Bruce Wilkinson, Rob Bell, Brennan Manning, Tony Campolo, Donald Miller, Erwin McManus, and Brian McLaren.) *Avoid their schools.* Another way that such things as New Evangelicalism and Modern Textual Criticism are entering fundamental Baptist churches is through the pursuit of degrees at New Evangelical schools such as Dallas Theological Seminary.

The reason for separation (2 Tim. 2:16b, 17) This is a very important point to understand.

a. We need to practice separation so as not to be corrupted by error (“canker”). A good apple does not raise the level of health when put into a barrel with bad apples! Compare 1 Corinthians 15:33.

Consider the example of *New Evangelicalism*. In the 1950s mainstream evangelical leaders such as Billy Graham rejected separation. Harold Lindsell, who was one of the early leaders of the New Evangelical movement, testified that “WITHIN A DECADE OR SO NEOEVANGELICALISM . . . WAS BEING ASSAULTED FROM WITHIN BY INCREASING SKEPTICISM WITH REGARD TO BIBLICAL INFALLIBILITY OR INERRANCY” (Lindsell, *The Bible in the Balance*, 1979).

Consider the example of Jack van Impe. He was a fundamentalist in the 1970s but changed in early 1980s. In 1984 he published *Heart Disease in Christ's Body*, in which he denounced separatism and promoted the ecumenical philosophy. He said, "God comes into the heart of Catholics, and Lutherans, and Baptists, and Pentecostals, and with God in us, we can fellowship with one another." By the 1990s van Impe was praising the pope. He published a video entitled *Startling Revelations: Pope John Paul II* in which he exalted the pope as a hero of the Christian faith! This is how spiritually blind he had become in a short time.

Consider the example of James Robison. He was a bold Southern Baptist preacher in the 1970s, preaching against liberalism and worldliness. But in 1980 he became a Charismatic and claimed to have been freed of "negativism." By 1987, when he spoke at a large ecumenical charismatic conference in New Orleans, he was praising the pope! I was there with press credentials and heard him say, "I tell you what, one of the finest representatives of morality in this earth right now is the pope. People who know [about] it really believe he is a born again man."

b. We need to practice separation so as not to cause others to stumble (1 Corinthians 8:9-13).

Billy Graham's philosophy is to preach anywhere he is invited, but he has given a bad example by preaching in Roman Catholic and liberal Protestant churches. In Poland he preached in the Catholic churches and even stood outside of the main Mary shrine, the Black Madonna, and greeted pilgrims. I have a copy of *Decision* magazine which published a photo of this event. Graham's actions of preaching in Catholic churches sent the message that he accepts the Roman Catholic Church and that it is acceptable to be a part of it. What a terribly wrong message! Only the Lord knows how many millions of people have been encouraged to stay in heretical churches because of the refusal of Billy Graham, Franklin Graham, Luis Palau, and countless other ecumenical preachers to obey the Bible and separate from false teachers.

c. We need to practice separation so as to obey God!

Christians have many excuses for not separating, but it is never right to do wrong to do right! My wife has been invited to preach in churches and to men in villages on the mission field, but she has always refused, because God forbids her to do so (1 Timothy 2:12). She could easily say, “But the men don’t want to do it and someone needs to preach.” But it is never right to do wrong in order to do right!

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON SEPARATION PART 1

1. What is the foundation for separation?
2. What are four verses that teach the believer to have a testing mindset?
3. What two things constitute the method of separation?
4. How many times did Paul name the names of false teachers and compromisers in his epistles to Timothy?
5. What are three ways that the Bible describes the manner of separation?
6. Why should the believer refuse to attend a church or Bible study or conference where false doctrine is taught?
7. Why must believers be careful about what Christian radio programs they listen to and what books they read?
8. What are three reasons why we should practice separation?
9. What did Jack van Impe denounce in 1984?

10. What message do ecumenical preachers send when they preach in heretical churches?

Separation - Doctrinal Part 2

MEMORY VERSES: Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 15:33; 2 Timothy 3:5

In the previous lesson we examined the foundation for separation, the method of separation, and the reason for separation. In this lesson we will look at the basis of separation, the initiative of separation, the attitude of separation, and the fruitfulness of separation.

The basis of separation (2 Tim. 2:18)

First, I can't answer every question about exactly where to draw the line in separation or exactly when to leave a church or fellowship, etc., when it is going astray. There are some clear guidelines and principles given in Scripture, and beyond that each believer and each preacher must follow the Holy Spirit's guidance (2 Timothy 2:7; 1 John 2:20, 27).

Second, the biblical basis of separation is much narrower than commonly believed and taught.

The standard evangelical philosophy is summarized by the statement, "In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; in all things charity." Promise Keepers has this philosophy. Speakers at their events are required to avoid many "divisive" topics, such as "eternal security, the gifts of the Spirit, baptism, pre-tribulation or post-tribulation prophecy, sacraments or ordinances" (Promise Keepers Ambassador booklet).

Influential evangelical leader Chuck Swindoll holds this philosophy. He wrote, "There was a time in my life when I had a position that life was so rigid I would fight for every jot and tittle. I mean, I couldn't list enough things that I'd die for.

The older I get, the shorter that list gets” (*Grace Awakening*, p. 189).

Observe that Swindoll uses the bait and switch method to confuse the issue of separation. At first he talks about fighting for “every jot and tittle” but then he switches to “things that I’d die for.” I wouldn’t want to die for the truth of 1 Corinthians 11 about hair length on men and women and their relative authority in this present world, but since it is part of God’s infallible Word, I do feel obligated to preach it and even fight for it if it is under attack.

Many Independent Baptists are adopting this philosophy. In *Thinking Outside the Box*, influential IB pastor Charles Keen wrote, “I’m a slow learner, but I finally realized that not all truth is of equal value. ... Let’s decide who the enemies of the cross are and divide from them. Then let’s decide who the friends of grace are and tolerate them” (p. 81).

We reject this popular philosophy on the authority of the following Scriptures:

The examples of separation in Scripture cover doctrines that fall into the category of “non-essential” today. Consider 2 Timothy 2:18. The error that was taught by Hymenaeus and Philetus was “the resurrection is past already.” They didn’t deny the resurrection; they spiritualized it. This is similar to what is taught today in the allegorical approach to prophecy and in replacement theology which claims that the Church has inherited Israel’s promises and covenants. The interpretation of prophecy is widely believed to be a matter of liberty and not something that we should separate over, but Paul presented a different philosophy of separation.

Christ taught us to teach the believers to observe ALL things (Mat. 28:20). This means that the churches should respect everything in the New Testament, not just the “cardinal” or “essential” things.

Paul preached the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27). Paul made this

statement in his final message to the elders at the church at Ephesus. He was giving them an example to follow.

True Christian unity requires oneness of mind (1 Cor. 1:10). This is a very narrow basis of unity. True Christian unity is *not* “unity in diversity.” This passage describes the unity that can be attained in the local church where doctrinal unity is enforced. It is impossible to obey this command while at the same time participating in any sort of ecumenical program, whether it be ecumenical evangelism such as a Franklin Graham or Luis Palau crusade, or evangelical ecumenism such as a Promise Keepers conference, or liberal ecumenism such as the World Council of Churches, or fundamentalist ecumenism such as Independent Baptist Friends International.

Timothy was instructed to keep the apostolic doctrine “without spot” (1 Tim. 6:13-14). A spot is a small thing! The doctrine that Paul taught in this epistle falls largely into the category labeled “secondary” today. These include church polity and the role of women in the church.

There is no hint anywhere in the Bible that it is proper to treat some Scripture as “secondary” for the sake of unity. The popular doctrine has no Bible basis; it is a matter of pragmatism.

Thus, I am convinced that we must draw the line of separation at a much stricter point than is commonly believed. For example, I was invited to preach at a fundamentalist Presbyterian College a few years ago. In spite of the fact that I hold a great many things in common with these brethren, including a defense of the Greek Received Text and the King James Bible and a fundamentalist stance, I had to decline because the two issues on which we disagree -- infant baptism and Sovereign Grace Calvinist theology -- are significant.

As a new Christian in the early 1970s I was helped immensely by the pamphlet “A Limited Message or a Limited Fellowship” by David Nettleton. It was published by the General Association of Regular Baptists back in the day when

they took a good stand for separation, before they capitulated to New Evangelicalism. Nettleton described how that he was invited as a young preacher to participate in interdenominational youth meetings. When he was told by the leaders that there were things he should not preach on, because they would cause division in an interdenominational context, he realized that he had to make a choice. Either he had to limit his message or he had to limit his fellowship. If he chose to preach the whole counsel of God like Paul did (Acts 20:26-27), then his fellowship and opportunity for ministry would be severely limited in this hour of end-time apostasy and compromise.

As for where to draw the line, it is better to err on the side of being too strict in separation than not strict enough. Being loose on separation is a slippery slope of compromise that has resulted in spiritual downfall for many believers.

And we must think about the next generation. If an older preacher loosens up on separation, it might not affect his ministry dramatically in his lifetime, but what about the next generation? Where will his children and grandchildren be and where will they go? It has often been observed that what parents do in moderation, the children do in excess.

The initiative of separation (2 Tim. 2:20, 21)

The initiative of separation is to be taken by the believer. If, for example, I find that a church or association or organization has become committed to error, I should take the initiative to leave rather than wait to be kicked out.

The attitude of separation (2 Tim. 2:24)

We must always guard the spirit while fighting for the faith, and make sure that we don't "get the devil in us while we are getting the devil out of others"! It is always wrong to be proud or hateful. Years ago, Evangelist Mel Rutter gave me this good advice: "Son, be as strong as a rock in your position and as sweet as

honey from the rock in your disposition.”

The fruitfulness of separation (2 Tim. 2:25-26)

We are to reach out to those who need help, but we do it from a separated position. I have seen many people come out of Roman Catholic, New Evangelical, Charismatic, Seventh-day Adventist, and other types of heretical and compromised churches, but I have not done this by preaching in and affiliating with such churches. I have done it through proclaiming the truth by the printed page, by private conversations, and by preaching in sound churches and other forums and inviting outsiders to attend.

Conclusion

1. Separation is a matter of spiritual protection. The rejection of separation is a slippery slope (1 Cor. 15:33). The Bible College from which I graduated in the 1970s, Tennessee Temple, was weak on separation then and grew steadily weaker in the 1980s and 1990s. It is no surprise that by the 21st century they were hosting Christian rock concerts and had joined the Southern Baptist Convention.

2. The rejection of separation begins softly and quietly. It is something that is difficult to put one's finger on, something not easy to identify. And those who are at the outset of rejecting separatism are offended when someone challenges them that this might be happening. The rejection of separation begins with *a mere change in mood* toward a more positive emphasis, a greater tolerance of error. It is a gradual loss of militant zeal in the defense of the faith. The first step in the rejection of separation can be identified not so much by what a preacher or a church or a Bible College does or says as by what it fails to do and neglects to say.

The following questions can help identify whether or not an institution is giving

up on separation: Does it ever host a conference on separation? Does it invite strong separatist preachers to blow the trumpet against compromise in a plain way? Does it publicly and clearly identify itself with separatists? Does it recommend literature on separation to its members? Or is separation something that was once preached, talked about, and practiced but now, for the most part, is left out of the agenda? Is the institution affiliating with those who use Contemporary Christian Music and contemporary Southern Gospel (which is no different in character from CCM) and perhaps moving toward adopting this music itself? If so, this is a loud warning, because CCM is not just music; it is a philosophy of Christianity that is diametrically opposed to separatism and CCM and a separatist stance cannot and will not live in harmony for long.

3. If error is not stopped early, it cannot be stopped at all. This is why I warn Independent Baptists that are getting soft on separation.

4. We must educate ourselves, our churches, and our families. The N.T. epistles deal constantly with error, and this is our pattern for the ministry. Yet, many Bible-believing churches rarely, if ever, warn plainly about false doctrine and compromise, and they do not appreciate or make use of ministries that do warn of these things.

5. We must not fear being in the minority. Truth has always been in the minority. The Lord Jesus warned, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). He likened the church age to leaven hidden in a loaf "until the whole was leavened" (Matt. 13:33). This refers to the spread of apostasy. At the end of the church age, there will be few true churches and many false ones.

6. Separation is important, but it is not an end in itself. I have preached in some separated churches that are dead. The essence of the Christian life is not separation but a lively relationship with the living Christ. And the Lord's Great Commission is not separation; separation is merely the wall of protection that allows us to fulfill the Great Commission effectively. Many separatist churches desperately need spiritual revival.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON SEPARATION PART 2

1. What verse says the believer has an anointing from God to teach him?
2. What are the six reasons why we reject the popular philosophy, "In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; in all things charity"?
3. What was the heresy taught by Hymenaeus and Philetus?
4. In Matthew 28:20, how many things did Jesus command us to observe?
5. In what book and chapter did Paul say that he taught the whole counsel of God?
6. In what passage did Paul instruct Timothy to keep the truth without spot?
7. Why does a preacher have to make a choice between a limited message or a limited fellowship?
8. Does the Bible allow a preacher to limit his message?
9. Who should take the initiative of separation?
10. What kind of attitude should we have in separation?
11. Can we separate and still help people and be fruitful?
12. What verse says evil communications corrupt good manners?
13. How does the rejection of separation begin?
14. If error is not stopped _____, it cannot be stopped _____.

15. Will the truth be in the majority in the last days?

Suffering in the Christian Life Part 1

MEMORY VERSES: *Job 5:7; Romans 8:18-19; Hebrews 12:7-8; James 1:2-8*

The believer should not be puzzled at suffering, because the Bible plainly states that it is a necessary part of the Christian life. The Bible even tells us why we suffer.

Suffering comes in many forms: sickness and physical pain, mental depression and darkness, things breaking and wearing out, lack, loss, dashed hopes and disappointment, slander and other types of mistreatment by people.

God is in control of the believer's life as a potter sitting at a potter's wheel or as a farmer pruning his vine or as a jeweler purifying his precious metals (Romans 8:28). He knows the beginning from the end and He has the wisdom and power to accomplish His purposes in our lives.

The believer suffers because he lives in a cursed world (Job 5:7; Romans 8:18-23)

This important passage reminds us that though we are saved we still live in a world that is under God's curse and we are therefore subject to its troubles. We are sinners in a sinful world. Paul describes this present life as "the bondage of corruption," "groaning," "travailing," and "pain." This harkens back to Genesis 3:16-19, where God cursed the ground because of Adam's sin. As a result, we have to contend with weeds, mud, sand, pests, rust, breakage, deterioration, weary toil, and pain. God also judged the woman with a far-reaching consequence. "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3:16).

Consider something as simple as a toothache. A toothache is often caused by eating too many sweets so that our teeth rot. That is simply the fulfillment of “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7), and the fact that we live in a dying body that is subject to decay. It won’t happen in Glory! Life is filled with such sufferings. We are not wise to complain against God or question God about such things. He shows us far more mercy than we deserve, to say the least.

Murphy’s Law is a humorous expression of the reality of living in a sin-cursed world: “Whatever can go wrong will go wrong.”

We won’t be free of this condition until Christ comes and we receive “the redemption of our body” (verse 23). This refers to the bodily resurrection. It is only then that the condition of “sorrow and sighing” will be replaced with that of “joy and gladness” (Isaiah 35:10).

The believer suffers because of sin and God’s chastisement (Hebrews 12:1-13)

The believer suffers because God chastens His children for their sin (Heb. 12:1). David suffered greatly for his sin; his illegitimate child died and his sons rebelled against him (2 Sam. 12:10-12). God forgives sin when it is confessed, but it still has consequences. I had five teeth knocked out at a pool hall right after I graduated from high school, because I was rebelling against the Lord, and was beginning to suffer the consequences. After I was saved at age 23, I didn’t get my teeth back. In the church at Corinth, some of the believers were sick and some died because of their abuse of the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:29-30). One way God chastens sin is through the authorities He has placed in this world (1 Peter 4:15). When God’s people break the law, they are not immune from punishment. In fact, God usually sees to it that they are the first to be caught!

- a. God’s discipline of sin is an act of His love (Heb. 12:6).

b. God's discipline of sin is for the purpose of edification (Heb. 12:10). God is a good Father and He corrects his children. (Are you a good father?)

c. God's discipline of sin is an evidence of salvation (Heb. 12:7-8). Some say that if eternal security is true then the believer can live as he pleases, but those who live as they please prove that they have not been born again.

d. God's discipline of sin is not pleasant (Heb. 12:11). It can be hindered. There are many ways that we can hinder the Lord's discipline in our lives. We can despise it (Heb. 12:5), faint under it (Heb. 12:5), refuse it (Heb. 12:7), stop serving ("hands that hang down," Heb. 12:12), stop praying ("feeble knees," Heb. 12:12), and turn out of the way (Heb. 12:13).

e. My part is to confess my sin before God (Psa. 38:1-4, 18). This is the opposite of hiding my sin or excusing it or blaming others.

The believer suffers in order to try his faith (James 1:2-8)

a. A major purpose for suffering is to try our faith. God rates faith very highly; without faith it is impossible to please Him (Heb. 11:6). The Christian life is all about faith; it is "from faith to faith" (Romans 1:17). After Adam and Eve sinned against God and rejected His absolute rule over them, God hid himself from mankind and required that we believe His Word.

b. Faith is always tested. Testing comes after someone professes faith in Christ. Jesus spoke of the seed sown among "stony places," which springs up quickly but then dies because of "tribulation" (Mat. 13:20-21). Testing also comes after we make new decisions such as the decision to be faithful to church or to establish a daily Bible reading time or to begin tithing or to join an organized evangelistic outreach. I recall a converted Hindu who determined not to marry a Hindu because he did not want to be unequally yoked. His faith was gravely tested when his father and older brother put

pressure upon him. They pleaded, threatened, begged, and even offered him a large sum of money.

c. There are “divers temptations” (verse 2). Troubles come in a great variety of forms. This is not talking about the devil’s temptations by which he tries to get us to sin. This is referring rather to troubles that are sent by God or allowed by Him to test our faith.

d. We “fall into” troubles (verse 2). They often come when least expected.

e. Our part is to be patient and let God accomplish his will. Patience comes through faith (2 Thess. 1:4). And both come through God’s Word (Romans 10:17; 15:4).

f. There is a danger of being doubleminded (vv. 6-8). This refers to doubting, quitting, becoming spiritually unstable.

g. God doesn’t require perfect faith at every moment; He simply requires that we overcome our doubts and keep on serving Him. Abraham and Sarah are exalted in the New Testament as heroes of faith (Heb. 11:11, 17), but both of them laughed at God’s promise at one point in their lives (Gen. 17:17; 18:12). They overcame their doubt and went on to gain a place in God’s Hall of Faith. The same is true for David when he was chased by Saul and Job when he was tormented by the devil.

The believer suffers in order to produce spiritual growth (Romans 5:1-5)

a. Tribulation is part of the normal Christian life (Rom. 5:3). The Greek word translated “tribulation” (*thlipsis*) means to press in upon. It refers to every type of suffering. It is elsewhere translated “affliction” (Mk. 13:19), “anguish” (Jn. 16:21), “persecution” (Acts 11:19), “trouble” (1 Cor. 7:28), and “burdened” (2 Cor. 8:13).

b. Our part is to keep a right attitude. “Glory” means to have confidence in something (1 Cor. 1:31; 3:21; 4:7). The Greek word “kauchaomai” is also translated “boast” (Rom. 2:17, 23). The believer must keep his confidence in God no matter what trouble comes his way.

c. Tribulation, if rightly endured in faith, gives experience in Christian living that enables the believer to be a blessing to others.

d. Tribulation, if rightly endured in faith, produces increasing confidence in God (Rom. 5:4-5, “hope”).

e. Tribulation, if rightly endured in faith, produces spiritual growth (Rom. 5:3-5). Gold requires fire for refining. This is one reason why the older saint should be honored.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON SUFFERING IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE PART 1

1. What are some forms that suffering takes in the Christian life?
2. What are the four reasons for suffering covered in this lesson?
3. When did the world become cursed?
4. When will the curse be lifted?
5. Why does God discipline His children?
6. How did David suffer because of his sin with Bathsheba?

7. What happened to the members of the church at Corinth who abused the Lord's Supper?
8. How is discipline an evidence of salvation?
9. What are six ways that the believer can hinder the Lord's discipline in his life?
10. What verse says that it is impossible to please God without faith?
11. Faith is always _____.
12. What does it mean to be "doubleminded"?
13. Since Abraham and Sarah laughed at God's promise, why are they listed in Hebrews 11 as heroes of the faith?
14. What does "tribulation" refer to in Romans 5:3?
15. What does Paul mean when he says we must "glory in tribulation"?

Suffering in the Christian Life Part 2

MEMORY VERSES: 2 Corinthians 1:8-9; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; 2 Timothy 3:12;

In the previous lesson we looked at four reasons for Christian suffering: (1) we live in a cursed world, (2) God's chastisement of sin, (3) the trying of faith, and (4) spiritual growth. In this lesson we will look at five more reasons for suffering.

The believer suffers so he can learn to help others (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

Another reason why we suffer is so that we can help others through the lessons we learn from difficult experiences. We can comfort others because we have experienced God's grace and comfort. Every trial I have faced in the 37 years of my Christian life has helped me encourage others.

The believer suffers so he will not trust in himself (2 Corinthians 1:8-9)

Through suffering God empties us of self-confidence and forces us to trust in Him. Every person greatly used of God must go through this process. Joseph had to suffer for 13 years before he was exalted to a position of leadership over Egypt. Moses had to suffer for 40 years on the backside of the desert before he was ready to lead Israel. David had to suffer for six years fleeing from Saul. The suffering and waiting was a process of spiritual purification.

The believer suffers to humble him (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

Pride is an attribute of the old fallen flesh (Mark 7:21-22). Even the most

foolish, ignorant man can be proud, and the more successful a man becomes the more he must battle pride. Charles Spurgeon said that his greatest battle was with pride. God sends suffering to His people with the design to humble us. Only the Lord Himself knows how many things are sent into our lives, how many situations He devises, to keep us from being proud.

Paul teaches us how to respond to suffering. First, we should pray that God remove it if it is His will. Three times Paul asked God to remove the thorn in the flesh. Second, we must submit to God and accept His will. Paul did not make demands of God; He asked for help. This is the biblical way to pray. This is how the Lord Jesus Himself prayed (Lk. 22:42). When God showed Paul that it was not His will to remove the suffering, Paul did not fret and did not continue to beg God to remove the trouble; he simply submitted. He understood the spiritual principle, “when I am weak, then am I strong.”

Some Pentecostals who believe that healing is guaranteed have argued that Paul’s infirmity was not a sickness, but the Greek word translated “infirmity” in 2 Corinthians 12:9 (*astheneia*) is elsewhere translated “sickness” (Mat. 8:17; Jn. 11:4) and “disease” (Acts 28:9).

The believer suffers because of persecution (2 Timothy 3:12)

The believer will suffer persecution because of his faith in Christ. We live in the enemy’s territory, an enemy that hates God and hates those who believe in God. In some ways, we suffer more after we are saved than before! This is because we have new enemies that we didn’t have before: the world, the flesh, and the devil. These were our friends before we were saved. Now they are our enemies. The apostle Paul was bitterly persecuted by his fellow Jews and by the idolaters to whom he preached Christ. When I was converted at age 23, I began to be persecuted by my old friends, by my unbelieving co-workers on the job, and by unbelieving relatives. We should not be surprised at this.

We will especially suffer persecution when we obey Christ and preach the

gospel to the unsaved. When the light shines, those who hate the light will rail against it!

The believer suffers because of the devil's attacks (Job 2:3-6)

Like Job of old, the believer also suffers at the hand of the devil. He is our enemy, and his objective is to discourage and destroy us (1 Pet. 5:8).

We must remember that Satan can only do what he is allowed to do, just as in Job's situation, but we must not get upset at God for allowing the trouble. Satan intends the trouble for our destruction, but God allows it for our benefit and for His glory. Job didn't understand this, and he got angry and confused, but we have greater light and we must not be so foolish as to believe the devil's lies about God's character.

It is also important that the believer not give any place to the devil. We give place to the devil through unconfessed sin (Ephesians 4:22-30). We also give place through association with idolatry (1 Cor. 10:20-21; 2 Cor. 6:14-17). When I was a new Christian I destroyed books and music and other things that were associated with the devil, because I didn't want any connection with the "god of this world."

The believer suffers to accomplish God's purposes (John 9:1-3)

Fanny Crosby was blind from birth, and her life and songs have been a blessing and challenge to countless people. In her youth she wrote:

O what a happy soul am I!
Although I cannot see
I am resolved that in this world
Contented I will be.
How many blessings I enjoy,

That other people don't.
To weep and sigh because I'm blind,
I cannot, and I won't.

Conclusion

1. Suffering is a necessary part of the Christian life, but our suffering is only for a short time. It is “for a season” (1 Pet. 1:6). Our affliction is but “for a moment” in comparison to the “eternal weight of glory” that will follow (2 Cor. 4:17).

2. Many times we will not know the reason for our troubles; we have to trust God. Job is the prime example of this. The word “why” appears 15 times in Psalms (Psa. 10:1; 22:1; 42:9; 43:2; 44:23; 74:1, 11; 88:14).

3. God often has multiple purposes in suffering. A sickness or a certain difficult situation, for example, could be for the purpose of teaching patience and humility, purifying from worldliness, drawing the heart closer to God, increasing faith, and teaching lessons that the sufferer can use to help others.

4. We go through seasons of suffering (1 Peter 5:10). It is like the cycles of plant life. The tea plants, for example, are grown in the mountains where we live in South Asia. Those plants go through amazing cycles. They spread and bear leaves and those leaves are cut off, and from time to time the plants are pruned severely so that you would think that they are dead, but they aren't. They are going through a necessary stage in the production of quality tea. The Christian life is like that. We go through periods when it seems that the spiritual life is almost dead and we wonder what is happening and where God is. But those periods aren't permanent. God, the Great Farmer, is pruning us and preparing us for more fruit (John 15). Our part is to remain faithful through it all, to keep our faith in Him. This process doesn't happen overnight. In fact, it can take years and even decades for God to work various things into our lives.

5. If you don't know Christ, you have trouble in this world and even worse trouble forever.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON SUFFERING IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE PART 2

1. What are the five reasons for suffering listed in this lesson?
2. How many years did Joseph have to suffer as a slave and prisoner?
3. Charles Spurgeon said that his greatest battle was with _____.
4. How does God help His people stay humble?
5. What did Paul do when God sent him the thorn in the flesh?
6. The Greek word translated "infirmity" in 2 Corinthians 12:9 is elsewhere translated what?
7. What verse says that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution?
8. Why did Job suffer?
9. What verse says to be sober and vigilant because of the devil?
10. What are two ways that we can give place to the devil in our lives?
11. What verse says after we suffer awhile, the Lord establishes, strengthens, and settles us?

Fasting

MEMORY VERSES: Matthew 6:16-18; 17:21

Biblical fasting is abstinence from food and perhaps other legitimate pleasures in order to concentrate on a definite spiritual problem or need. It is done in conjunction with confession of sin and prayer.

Warnings about Fasting

1. Biblical fasting is not for show (Matthew 6:16-18). God hates hypocritical religion, which is man's attempt to appear holy before other men without possessing true holiness before God. In this passage, Christ rebukes the kind of fasting that is done for the sake of appearing spiritual before men. He is not making light of the practice of fasting itself when done properly. In fact, He takes for granted that His followers will fast. He did not say "IF thou fastest," but rather, "WHEN thou fastest." And He made a wonderful and definite promise that those who practice biblical fasting will be rewarded openly by God the Father.

2. Biblical fasting is not an empty religious ritual (Luke 18:12). This is the statement of a Pharisee who was practicing religion in an attempt to justify himself before God. He observed a regular period of fasting. Nowhere, though, does the Bible require such a practice. Fasting is not a ritual observed once a week, or once a month, or prior to the Lord's Supper, *etc.* Fasting, rather, is something that is practiced when a special need arises and when the Holy Spirit leads.

3. Biblical fasting is not for physical health. Though various sorts of fastings may or may not promote better health, this is never the purpose given in the Bible for fasting. Many popular Christian books emphasize the importance of

fasting for physical benefit, but this is not biblical fasting. We cannot say that fasting is or is not good for the health, and we cannot say it either is wrong or right to fast for health. We are saying, simply, that the Bible does not speak of fasting in light of health.

4. Biblical fasting is not an empty ascetic practice (Colossians 2:20-23). Some false teachers in Paul's day were practicing fasting because they believed it made them holy. They taught that salvation and sanctification were attained by following a list of rules ("touch not, taste not, handle not"). The Roman Catholic monastic system adopted this error. The monastics locked themselves away from society and beat themselves and starved themselves and refused to bathe or to change their clothes and many such things with the goal of "climbing the ladder" to heaven and drawing nigh to God. But this is a false gospel. Salvation is a free gift of God's grace, and sanctification and spiritual victory is not through asceticism but through obedience to the simple New Testament faith by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Fasting is an important part of the Christian life and ministry, but we must be careful that we do not think that spirituality comes through punishing the body and observing various rituals and dietary laws. True spirituality is being in a right relationship with and fellowship with Jesus Christ.

5. Fasting does not necessarily guarantee that one's prayers will be answered. In 2 Samuel 12 we have the record of how David fasted and prayed for God to preserve the life of the child which had been conceived through his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba. God did not honor David's fast in that particular case. This reminds us that fasting, while an important practice in spiritual warfare, is not a guarantee that we will get what we are desiring from God. Earnest prayer with fasting does often result in the answer one is seeking, but it is no guarantee. God is always sovereign in answering prayer, and we must always submit to His will.

6. Fasting is not a matter of law but of liberty. It is a personal matter. Fasting is important and useful in Christian life and service, but it is not something that can be commanded and it is not something by which we are to judge the spiritual condition of others.

The Importance of Fasting

The importance of fasting is seen in the number of positive references in the Old and New Testaments. There are over 30 positive examples, commands, and instructions in Scripture about fasting: Judges 20:26--Israel fasted for victory in war

1 Sam. 1:6-7--Hannah fasted for a son

1 Sam. 7:6--Israel fasted in repentance

1 Sam. 31:13--Men of Jabeshgilead fasted in mourning for Saul 2 Sam. 1:12--David and his men fasted in mourning for Saul, Jonathan, and the fallen of Israel 2 Sam. 12--David fasted for mercy upon his child

1 Kings 21:27--Ahab fasted for mercy

2 Chron. 20:3--Jehoshaphat and Israel fasted for help and protection Ezra 8:21-23--Ezra and the Jews fasted for help and protection Nehemiah 1:4--Nehemiah fasted in mourning and for help

Nehemiah 9:1-2--Israel fasted in mourning and repentance Esther 4:16--Esther and friends fasted for victory

Esther 9:3--Fasting is mentioned as having had a role in the victory Psalm 35:13-14--Fasting in prayer and mourning

Psalm 69: 10-11--Fasting in prayer and mourning

Isaiah 58:6-8--The fast which pleases God

Jeremiah 36:9--Israel fasted for mercy

Joel 1:14; 2:12, 15--God commanded fasting and repentance Jonah 3:5--The Ninevites fasted in repentance for mercy

Daniel 9:3--Daniel fasted for wisdom

Matthew 4:2--Jesus fasted when tempted in the wilderness Matthew 6:17-18--Jesus promised that the Father would bless fasting Matthew 9:14-15--Jesus said his disciples would fast

Matthew 17:21--Fasting is necessary for overcoming some demonic strongholds Mark 9:29--Fasting is necessary for overcoming demonic powers Luke 2:37--Fasting was part of Anna's service to God

Acts 13:2--Fasting was part of the ministry of the workers at Antioch Acts 13:3--Ordination was accompanied by fasting

Acts 14:23--Ordination was accompanied by fasting

1 Corinthians 7:5--Fasting and prayer is the only proper reason for abstinence from the marital relationship 2 Corinthians 6:5--Fasting was one way Paul approved himself as a minister of Jesus Christ 2 Corinthians 11:27--Paul fasted often

These examples and instructions regarding fasting cannot be taken lightly. We are told that the examples of Scripture are as important as are its commands--1 Corinthians 10:11; Romans 15:4. The Lord Jesus Christ is our Pattern (1 Peter

1:21), and His fasting during the temptation in the wilderness is our example, just as His prayers during the temptations in the garden are our examples. Also we are told that the Apostle Paul is to be imitated (Philippians 3:17; 4:9), and Paul put before us the example of frequent fasting (2 Cor. 11:27).

The Chief Purpose of Fasting

The Lord Jesus said that fasting is an essential part of spiritual warfare, and those who war against satanic strongholds know this to be a fact (Matthew 17:18-21)! There are indeed demonic strongholds that can be conquered by NOTHING but prayer AND fasting.

What Are Some Other Occasions When We Should Fast?

In addition to fasting to overcome demonic strongholds, following are some other occasions that call for fasting.

1. Fast when sorely tempted (Matthew 4:2).
2. Fast when wisdom is earnestly desired (Daniel 9:3).
3. Fast when God's help and protection are needed (Ezra 8:21-23; 2 Chronicles 20:3; Jeremiah 36:9).
4. Fast when victory is desired in seemingly impossible situations (Esther 4:10-17; 9:31; Neh. 1:4).
5. Fast during times of special repentance, confession, and revival (Joel 1:14; 2:12; 2:15; Neh. 9:1-2).

6. Fast when new ministries are launched and when men go forth to proclaim God's Word and battle spiritual enemies (Acts 13:2-3; 14:23).

7. Fast when involved in spiritual ministry (2 Corinthians 6:5; 11:27).

An Encouraging Promise about Fasting (Matthew 6:17-18) The Lord Jesus Christ made a definite promise about fasting. When one fasts in the proper manner for the proper reason -- "the Father which seeth in secret SHALL reward thee openly." This is one of the most wonderful promises in the Bible and cannot be dismissed lightly. God would not make such a promise if He did not consider fasting important. Christ never discouraged proper fasting. He condemned and corrected false practices, but never did He discourage Scriptural fasting. In fact, He took for granted that His followers would fast.

Why Does God Require fasting?

We can't answer this question fully, perhaps, but we do know that fasting demonstrates the earnestness and desire of the heart (Hebrews 11:6).

God sees the hearts of men, but the Bible says He requires open evidence of the heart's desire--Joel 2:12. "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning."

This is seen in Abraham's offering of Isaac. God knew that Abraham would obey and give up the beloved son, but He required Abraham to go through with the act, up to the very point of driving the knife into Isaac's heart. Only then did God say, "For now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me" (Gen. 22:12).

Fasting can be seen as one way of evidencing the earnestness and sincerity of our hearts toward God in matters of prayer. We can say that such things as fasting are not necessary since God knows our hearts, but examples such as the

one about Abraham and his son show that God does require evidence of our faith and earnestness.

How Long Is a Biblical Fast?

The Bible sets no specific time length for fasting. Daniel fasted 21 days. Esther and Mordecai fasted 3 days and nights. The Lord Jesus fasted 40 days in the wilderness. But frequently the Bible simply does not say how long people fasted. We are not told, for example, how long Ezra fasted before making the journey to Jerusalem (Ezra 8:21-23).

Fasting is a matter of individual freedom under the direction of the Holy Spirit. It can be one meal or many meals, according to the need of the hour and the direction of God. Romans 14 speaks of this sort of thing and says, “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind” (Rom. 14:5).

What Is a Biblical Fast?

A biblical fast has the following basic elements:

1. *Abstinence from food and normal physical pleasures* (Matthew 4:1-2; 1 Corinthians 7:5).
2. *Prayer* (Matthew 17:21). Biblical fasting is always associated with an increased attention to prayer and communion with God. Fasting divorced from prayer is not biblical fasting.
3. *Confession of sins* (Daniel 9:3-6; see entire chapter). Biblical examples of fasting are often connected with periods of special repentance and confession of sins.

4. *Separation from the evil things of the world and drawing nigh to God* (James 4:4-10). The context of this passage is resisting the devil. It is talking about spiritual warfare, which is the main purpose of fasting. To defeat the devil, the believer must cleanse himself of evil and draw nigh to God.

There are no rigid guidelines for fasting in the Bible. In Daniel's fast of 21 days, we are told that he ate "no pleasant bread, nor flesh, nor wine" (Dan. 10:3). Apparently, Daniel did eat something, but he abstained from pleasant foods.

Since God has not given specific instructions about fasting, it is to be a private matter between an individual and the Lord. A nursing mother, for example, would be unwise to go entirely without food for any significant length of time, because not only is she dependent upon that food, but her infant is also. People with health problems such as diabetes must be careful about fasting. God has promised, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye" (Psa. 32:8). This promise applies to fasting. God will guide me as to when to fast, and how long, and from what I should abstain.

I would also emphasize that though there are no rigid guidelines for fasting, a biblical fast should have a serious element to it to be effective. Fasting from supper to breakfast is not a serious fast. Skipping one meal is not a serious fast. I recall a young pastor who told me that he went on a milkshake fast and for two days lived on milkshakes. That is *not* a serious biblical fast! It is the exact opposite of Daniel's fast. Whereas he ate no pleasant bread, a milkshake fast, in a sense, is eating *nothing but* pleasant bread! In my estimation, nothing less than a full day of fasting should even begin to be called a biblical fast.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON FASTING

1. What is biblical fasting?
2. What are six warnings that we give about fasting?

3. Why did the Pharisees fast?
4. How much does the Bible say about fasting for health?
5. What was the false gospel of the heretics that Paul warned about in Colossians 2:20-23?
6. Does fasting guarantee that one's prayers will be answered?
7. How many examples and instructions about fasting are in the Bible?
8. How much did Paul fast?
9. What is the chief purpose of fasting?
10. What are seven other occasions when we should fast?
11. In what passage did Jesus give an encouraging promise about fasting?
12. How long is a biblical fast?
13. What are the four elements of a biblical fast?

Miracles

MEMORY VERSES: Matthew 12:39; 24:24; John 20:31-32; Romans 8:22-25; 2 Corinthians 12:12

There is a lot of confusion today about the place of miracles in the Christian life and ministry. Is divine healing for today? Are there apostles and prophets today? We have dealt with these and many other issues extensively in the book *The Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements*, available from Way of Life Literature. We advise each student to read this book carefully.

In this present lesson we will consider some of the foundational teachings of Scripture that can help us understand these issues.

1. The miracles of Christ and the miracles of the apostles had a special, temporary purpose and are not models for the entire church age.

a. The miracles of Jesus were signs to prove that He was the Messiah (John 5:26; 10:25, 37-38; 14:11; 15:24; 20:30-31). These Scriptures leave no doubt as to the purpose of Christ's miracles. Even the apostles could not do all of the amazing things that Jesus did (i.e., quieting storms and feeding the multitudes), and had they done so the sign nature of Christ's miracles would have been rendered ineffective.

What about John 14:12? This cannot mean that believers through the centuries would be able to do greater sign miracles than Jesus. That would be impossible. What could be greater than feeding multitudes, walking on the water, and raising the dead? Jesus did not say that the disciples would do greater miracles; He said they would do greater *works*. Though the word "works" is sometimes used to describe Jesus' miracles, it is not limited to that. Whereas Jesus ministered only in Palestine and saw relatively few souls saved under His direct ministry, His

disciples have ministered throughout the world and have seen multitudes of souls saved. Whereas Jesus wrote no books, the apostles completed the canon of Scripture. God's people have enjoyed the power to live holy lives in the face of a godless generation, to withstand the most searing persecution, and to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth. God's people have continued to experience miracles and have done great works, but they have not done the Messianic sign miracles.

b. The apostles did miracles to prove that they were apostles (Mark 3:14-15; 2 Corinthians 12:12). If we examine the book of Acts carefully, we will see that the miracles were done by the apostles. Examples can be found in Acts 2:43; 4:33; 5:12. The only exceptions were a few men closely associated with the apostles and upon whom the apostles had laid hands. The vast majority of believers in the early churches could not do the sign miracles. When Tabitha was sick, the believers at Joppa could not heal her, and when she died, they could not raise her from the dead. They had to call Peter, the apostle (Acts 9:36-41). If such miracles could be done indiscriminately by Christians in general, the sign of the apostle would be rendered ineffective. If I tell a stranger that is meeting me at the airport that I will be wearing a red hat when I come off of the plane, the red hat is the sign of recognition; but if other people on my flight disembark wearing red hats the sign is destroyed. There was no general miracle-working experience among the first churches. They were special signs for a special time.

2. God does not always heal, but He often does heal in answer to prayer.

a. The New Testament gives the following three examples that conclusively prove that God does not *always* heal the believer's sicknesses.

(1) *The case of Timothy* (1 Timothy 5:23). Timothy was sick frequently and the apostle Paul instructed him to use a little wine for his stomach's sake and his often infirmities. God did not heal Timothy supernaturally from his sickness nor did he instruct Timothy to curse his illnesses or to exercise "the word of faith" over them.

(2) *The case of Trophimus* (2 Timothy 4:20). Paul had to leave Trophimus behind in Miletum sick. He was not supernaturally healed.

(3) *The case of Paul* (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Three times Paul asked God to take away this problem, but the Bible says God refused to do so. Paul was told that this infirmity was something God wanted him to bear for his spiritual well-being. Upon learning this, Paul bowed to God's will and wisely said: "*Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong*" (2 Cor. 12:10). This is a perfect example for Christians today. We should pray for healing and release from trials and difficulties, but when God does not heal, we must bow to His will and accept that sickness or trial as something from the divine hand. This is not lack of faith; it is submission to the sovereignty of Almighty God. Some Pentecostals have argued that Paul's infirmity was not a sickness, but the Greek word translated "infirmity" in 2 Corinthians 12:9 (*astheneia*) is elsewhere translated "sickness" (Mat. 8:17; Jn. 11:4) and "disease" (Acts 28:9).

b. God heals today after the pattern of James 5:13-15. This passage describes a private healing situation rather than a public healing meeting and it says nothing about someone who has "the gift of healing." It refers simply to the elders of the church who anoint the sick person and pray over him.

c. Romans 8:22-25 reminds us that we will not receive our glorified state until Christ returns. Until then we are subject to the trouble, suffering, and death of this sin-cursed world, and that includes sickness.

3. Jesus warned against seeking miracles (Matthew 12:38-39). This passage is a loud rebuke of the modern Pentecostal-Charismatic movements.

4. The Bible warns about false signs and wonders at the end of the church age

(Matthew 24:24). Jesus warned that one of the characteristics of the end of the age would be “great signs and wonders” performed by false prophets. Therefore, it is obvious that just because someone is doing miracles does not mean that they are of God. They might be of the devil! The only way that we can tell the difference is by testing the teaching by the Bible. We must “prove all things” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). We must be like the Bereans who “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). Only in this way can we protect ourselves from the wiles of the devil.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON MIRACLES

1. What are four foundational Bible teachings about miracles?
2. What was the purpose of Jesus' miracles?
3. What did Jesus mean when He said that believers would do greater works than He did?
4. What was the purpose of the apostolic miracles?
5. In what verse did Paul mention the "signs of an apostle"?
6. If such miracles could be done indiscriminately by Christians in general, the sign of the apostle would be rendered _____.
7. What are three cases in the New Testament that prove that God does not always heal the believer's sickness?
8. In what book and chapter does the New Testament explain how to anoint and pray for the sick?
9. What did Jesus say about those who seek signs?

10. How can the believer be protected from the devil's deception?

A Testing Mindset

MEMORY VERSES: *Psalm 119:128; Proverbs 14:15; Acts 17:11; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Colossians 2:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 Peter 5:8*

One thing that a Christian must develop if he wants to have spiritual victory is a testing mindset. This means that he must learn to test everything by the Bible to see if it is right or wrong, true or false.

I thank the Lord that the man who led me to Christ taught me this so that I started out my Christian life with a testing mindset. It has protected me from many spiritual pitfalls. Traveling together from south Florida to Mexico, we stopped at a Christian bookstore somewhere on the Gulf Coast. I think it was Mobile, Alabama. He bought me a King James Bible, and then he pointed to all of the books that were for sale and said, “You must be very careful and test everything by God’s Word. You can’t trust man; you can’t trust the “big names.” The Bible warns that there will be many false teachers.” It was with this wise counsel that I began my Christian life.

The testing mindset is despised today among most professing Christians, even “evangelicals.” I recall the first ecumenical conference I attended with press credentials. It was in New Orleans in 1987 and there were tens of thousands of attendees representing 40 different denominations. Roman Catholics formed a large presence. There was even a Roman Catholic mass each morning. One day I was talking with an Episcopalian lay leader and he gave me his testimony of salvation which sounded Scriptural. I then said something to the effect, “If you believe the Bible and know the Lord, how can you be comfortable in the midst of this heretical stew?” He replied, “You need to relax more; you are too afraid of being deceived.”

That is dangerous and very foolish advice in light of the warnings that follow.

Matthew 7:15-17

1. Jesus warned that false prophets will deceive men. We should not be surprised that there are so many false churches today. We must expect that there will be false prophets and we must be careful so we will not be deceived by them.

2. Jesus said that the false prophets will appear as true prophets outwardly and by this means they deceive the unwary. They have Bibles; they talk about Jesus and salvation and good living. They have churches and teach doctrine.

3. False teachers are known by their fruit (vv. 16-20).

a. The fruit of false teachers is not works; in verses 22-23 Jesus says that false teachers will do “many wonderful works.”

b. The sure fruit of a false teacher is his false doctrine (Acts 20:30; Rom. 16:17; Gal. 1:6-7; 1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 4:1-2). Consider Mother Teresa. She did many good works in caring for the poor and sick in the neediest parts of the world, but she didn't know Christ and trusted in a false gospel and taught heresies. The 2007 book *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light* contains statements made by the nun to her Catholic confessors and superiors over a period of more than 66 years. She continually referred to her spiritual condition as “my darkness” and to Jesus as “the Absent One.” In March 1953 she wrote, “... there is such terrible darkness within me, as if everything was dead. It has been like this more or less from the time I started ‘the work.’” At the suggestion of one confessor she wrote the following to Jesus: “I call, I cling, I want -- and there is no One to answer -- no One on Whom I can cling - - no, No One. -- Alone ... Where is my Faith -- even deep down right in there is nothing, but emptiness & darkness. ... When I try to raise my thoughts to heaven -- there is such convicting emptiness that those very thoughts return like sharp knives & hurt my very soul. -- I am told God loves me -- and yet the reality of darkness & coldness & emptiness is so great that nothing touches my soul.” In 1962 she wrote: “If I ever become a Saint -- I will surely

be one of ‘darkness.’” In 1984 we interviewed Sister Ann of the Missionaries of Charity, which is Mother Teresa’s organization. Ann was working with elderly people in Nepal, and she said that they do not try to convert dying Hindus to Christ but simply instruct them to pray to their gods.

Matthew 24:4-5, 11, 24

1. Jesus warned again that there will be false prophets and they will multiply at the end of the church age. The closer we draw to His return the more spiritual deception we can expect to encounter, and we are seeing that in our day. Most churches are not true to the Bible. False teachers abound.

2. Observe that the deception of the end times will be so effective that “insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” That is powerful deception. How diligent and cautious we must be!

3. It is the believer’s responsibility to protect himself and his loved ones by being cautious and having a testing mindset.

4. Jesus warned that false teachers will deceive through “signs and wonders.” This brings to mind the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement, which has a great emphasis on miracles. In light of Jesus’ warning, we know that just because a preacher’s ministry is accompanied by alleged miracles does not mean it is of God. Every ministry must be tested by the Bible, and by the Bible alone.

5. Jesus warned about false christs, and the world abounds with them today. The Christ of the Roman Catholic Church is a consecrated wafer and a weak man in strong Mary’s arms. The Christ of Jehovah’s Witnesses and Unitarians is not God. The Christ of the Mormons is a brother to Satan. The Christ of the New Age gained mystical wisdom in India. The Christ of the *Da Vinci Code* is a married man. The Christ of Liberation Theology is a freedom fighter. The Christ of the Jesus Seminar brand is a confused man that didn’t know what he was

doing. The Christ of Christian rockers is a party dude. The Christ of the emerging church is an environmentalist. The Christ of Islam didn't die on the cross.

John 8:31-32

1. The only way to know the truth and to be set free from sin and error is to continue in Jesus' Word. Notice that He didn't say "words" plural but "word" singular. This refers to the inscripturated Word, the Bible. The Word of God has been written under divine inspiration, canonized, and preserved for us in the Bible. Therefore, if we want to know the truth, we need to read it, study it, memorize it, meditate on it, obey it, and test everything by it.

2. This is the only way, and it is also a sure way. Jesus gives His solemn promise that if we continue in His Word we WILL know the truth. This is one of the promises that motivated me to study the Bible diligently as a young Christian and to persist over the past 37 years. I want to know the truth, and Christ has given me His promise. Many voices within Christianity claim that we cannot be certain of what doctrine is correct, so we should just get along, but Jesus gave His promise that we can know. Compare John 7:17.

Acts 17:11

1. The Jews at Berea are commended for testing everything carefully by the Scriptures. This isn't popular in modern Christianity but it is called "noble" in God's Word.

2. Notice that they searched the Scripture daily. Before you can test anything by God's Word you must first study it.

1 Thessalonians 5:21

1. We are admonished to prove *all* things. This is a far-reaching obligation. We should test everything in our lives by God's holy Word, not only Christian teaching and "church" things but also job, friends, fashion, entertainment, marriage, child training methods, music, and all other things.

2. We are also admonished to hold fast that which is good, which refers to those things that are in accordance with and approved by God's Word.

2 Corinthians 10:5

1. God wants the believer to bring every thought into captivity to the truth. What a far-reaching command!

2. We do this by filling our minds with God's Word and letting it measure every thought that enters our hearts.

3. The human imagination is a great spiritual battleground and must be guarded jealously. The modern entertainment industry aims its heavy guns at man's imagination. Satanic-led entertainment creators want to corrupt the imagination through sensuality and turn it from the living God through the creation of vain worlds. There is particular danger for believers in the genres of science fiction and horror.

2 Corinthians 11:3-4

1. There is great spiritual danger for Christians (2 Cor. 11:3-4). Paul was afraid for the Corinthian believers because they were not careful about doctrine.

2. The devil complicates doctrine ("corrupted from the simplicity," 2 Cor. 11:3). Examples of this are theological modernism, Calvinistic Reformed theology, and

emerging church doctrine. The truth of God's Word is exceedingly deep, but it also has a basic simplicity that is comprehensible to ordinary people (Luke 10:21).

3. Paul warned of false christs, false gospels, and false spirits. The believer must be careful not to believe someone just because he talks about Christ or the gospel or the Spirit. Everything must be carefully tested by God's Word.

4. We see in verse 4 that the teaching of the apostles is the standard for the truth ("whom we have not preached"). We have the teaching of the apostles in the New Testament Scriptures. This is the "faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3) by which we are to measure teaching and practice.

5. The devil is clever and must be resisted with much wisdom and zeal (2 Cor. 11:3).

6. Broadmindedness in doctrinal matters is evidence of carnality, not spirituality. Because the Corinthians were carnal (1 Cor. 3:1-2), Paul knew they might "well bear with" the false teachers (v. 4). This does not mean they would necessarily follow the false teaching but they would put up with it; they would not resist it properly. Being able to "see both sides" is not a mark of spirituality. There is only one side to the truth! The way of truth is narrow (Mat. 7:14).

7. False teachers imitate true teachers (2 Cor. 11:13-15). They don't invent new things; they pervert the old things. They have churches and Bibles and preach Jesus. The closer something is to the truth, the more difficult it is to discern its error.

Colossians 2:8

1. Again we are exhorted to beware of false teachers. We must have a testing mindset.

2. Notice that false teachers desire to “spoil.” The idea is to rob. False teachers want to rob believers of their absolute confidence in the truth of God’s Word and in the grace of Christ and to replace this with human tradition and philosophy.

3. The way to defeat these false teachers is to hold fast to the Bible as the divinely-inspired Word of God and as the sole authority for faith and practice (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Revelation 2:2, 6

1. The church at Ephesus was commended for testing false teachers and for rejecting them. Jesus was pleased with this. It is something that every individual believer and every church should emulate.

2. Observe that the church felt very strongly about this matter. They labeled the false teachers “liars” and hated their deeds.

Proverbs 14:15

The book of Proverbs contrasts the wise with the foolish. In this proverb, the foolish person is said to be gullible and easily deceived because he doesn’t carefully test everything by God’s Word. The word “simple” here does not refer to simple-minded; it refers to gullible. The “simple” reads Christian books and hears sermons and attends conferences and takes everything in without testing it.

Psalms 119:128

1. The Psalmist gives the example of loving God’s Word and hating everything that is false. That is a testing mindset. The Bible is the absolute standard for

truth, and by comparing everything in life with this Standard we can be protected from error.

2. We see that the believer should be passionate about the truth. The Psalmist was not neutral or half-hearted in this matter. He held God's Word in great esteem and hated *every* false way.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON A TESTING MINDSET

1. In what book and chapter did Jesus warn the people to beware of false prophets?

2. Why are false teachers able to deceive so many?

3. Can false teachers do good works?

4. What is the fruit of a false teacher?

5. In Matthew 24 Jesus warned that false teachers will deceive by _____
_____.

6. What are some false christs today?

7. Where can we find the word of Jesus today?

8. In what passage did Jesus promise that those who continue in His Word will know the truth?

9. Why were the Jews at Berea commended?

10. What verse says to prove all things?

11. How many of our thoughts should be brought into captivity to Christ?
12. How can we do this?
13. Why was Paul fearful about the believers at Corinth?
14. Who corrupts the simplicity that is in Christ?
15. Paul warned the Corinthians about false _____, false _____, and false _____.
16. Why is broadmindedness not a good trait in doctrinal matters?
17. False teachers don't invent _____ things; they pervert the _____ things.
18. How can we defeat the false teachers who teach philosophy and tradition?
19. Did Jesus rebuke the church of Ephesus for exposing false teachers?
20. Is it right to hate false teaching?

Tongues Speaking Part 1

MEMORY VERSES: Acts 2:4-6; 1 Corinthians 12:30; 13:8; 14:20-22, 27, 33, 34, 37, 40

The biblical gift of tongues is a major emphasis of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movements, but the Bible teaches that this was a temporary practice limited to the first churches. Following are seven important lessons on the doctrine of tongues:

1. Biblical tongues were real earthly languages (Acts 2:4-11).

A foundational fact about biblical tongues is that they were real languages, not some sort of unintelligible mutterings. The law of first mention is an important rule of Bible interpretation, and the first time we see the exercise of tongues in the New Testament is in Acts 2:6-11. Here we see that the gift of tongues was the miraculous ability to speak in a language that one had never learned. At least 14 or 15 different languages are mentioned here. These were normal earthly languages spoken by men in that day, and the Jewish disciples were able to speak in these languages even though they had never learned them. There is no reason to believe that the gift of tongues mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12-14 is different from that mentioned in the book of Acts. In both places the tongues consisted of speaking in earthly languages that one had never learned. The same Greek word “glossa” is used for both. This word refers to the tongue itself (Mk. 7:33) or to a language spoken by the tongue.

2. Biblical tongues were a sovereignly-given miraculous gift (Acts 2:4; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11)

This is a foundational truth about tongues and it teaches us that tongues speaking cannot be worked up or learned, which contradicts the standard practice among

Pentecostals and Charismatics today. For example, Dennis Bennett said: “Open your mouth and begin to speak. Don’t speak English, or any other language you know, for God can’t guide you to speak in tongues if you are speaking in a language known to you. ... Just like a child learning to talk for the first time, open your mouth and speak out the first syllables and expressions that come to your lips” (*The Holy Spirit and You*, pp. 76, 77).

There is absolutely nothing like this in the New Testament. The disciples were not trying to speak in tongues on the day of Pentecost. They had not attended a class in tongues speaking. Nowhere in the New Testament are we given instructions about how to speak in tongues. If you can learn how to do something, it would not be a miracle!

3. The gift of tongues was accompanied by the equally miraculous gift of the interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. 14:27-28).

When we come to the Pentecostal-Charismatic movements, though, the “interpretation of tongues” is a very strange thing, because there is little semblance between the “tongues” and the “interpretation.” I have oftentimes heard tongues messages composed of three or four words (e.g., shalalama, shalabama, shalanoona, shalalama, shalabama, shalanoona) interpreted as a detailed spiritual message. Former Pentecostal Fernand Legrand of France describes the Pentecostal “interpretation dilemma” -- “IN ALL THE CASES OF INTERPRETATION THAT I HAVE CHECKED PERSONALLY WITH THE GREATEST CARE AND WITH AN OPEN MIND, I HAVE DISCOVERED NOTHING OTHER THAN HUMAN FABRICATION AND DELIBERATE TRICKERY”

Legrand devised a test. He recorded a Scottish man saying the Lord’s Prayer and asked some Charismatics to interpret, but “the ‘Lord’s Prayer’ in English transformed itself into a message of encouragement in French!” (Legrand, *All about Speaking in Tongues*, pp. 47-51).

Legrand devised another challenge, but no Pentecostal or Charismatic has agreed to submit to it. “Prepare a meeting where one of you will speak in tongues and three others will make a recorded interpretation in isolation. The interpretations that ought to say more or less the same thing will then be compared. ... HERE IN WRITING I STAND BY THIS YET UNANSWERED PROPOSITION AS A CHALLENGE TO ANY CHARISMATIC TONGUES-SPEAKING COMMUNITY” (*All about Speaking in Tongues*, p. 52).

4. Biblical tongues were a sign to unbelieving Israel regarding the founding of the church and they ceased when this purpose was completed (1 Corinthians 14:20-22).

Another foundational truth about biblical tongues is that they were chiefly a sign to Israel that God was extending the gospel to all nations. The Corinthians were abusing the spiritual gifts and were particularly enamored with tongues. As spiritual infants (1 Cor. 3:1), they were “showing off” to one another. Paul tells them to stop being children and to be men, by understanding the true purpose of tongues. It was a fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 28:11-12 that was directed to the Jews.

The miraculous tongues were a sign to the unbelieving Jews that God was speaking to all nations of men and calling them into one new spiritual body composed of both Jews and Gentiles. “This people” in Isaiah 28:11 refers to the Jewish nation to whom the prophet Isaiah was speaking.

Each time we see the gift of tongues exercised in the book of Acts Jews were present (Acts 2:6-11; 10:46; 19:6). On the day of Pentecost and in Acts 19 it was the Jews themselves that spoke in tongues. Fernand Legrand makes the following important observation:

“It is worth noting that wherever the sign appears, it is always in the presence of JEWS, and where we do not find Jews, as in Athens or in Malta, neither do we find the sign. ... It is in the very nature of the sign that

we find the nature of their unbelief. ... The sign denounced or corrected their lack of faith concerning the salvation of those who spoke languages that were foreign to their own, that is, the Gentiles. But this was precisely what the Jews did not want to believe. In fact, they were 'contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved' (1 Thess. 2:15-16). ... The idea of now being made one with foreigners was more than the first-century Jews could stand. The thought alone was enough to fire up their Hebrew atavism. Yet that was the first thing they had to understand and finally admit. So God gave them the best sign possible to make them understand what they could not or would not believe; HE MIRACULOUSLY MADE JEWS SPEAK IN THE LANGUAGES OF FOREIGNERS. IN SO DOING, GOD PUT JEWISH PRAISE INTO THESE PAGAN TONGUES. ...

"A simple but attentive reading of the Bible reveals the scenario of fierce Jewish opposition towards everything that was not specifically Jewish. We see Jonah who hates the men of Nineveh to the point of disobeying God. ... In his frustration he goes as far as asking for his own death. If Nineveh lives, may Jonah die! ... This spirit of opposition and unbelief will only be reinforced over the centuries. The Jews belong to Yahveh and Yahveh to them, in a closed circle of bigotry; everyone else is cursed. ...

"Daring to suggest that people with a tongue different from their own could benefit from the goodness of God, was to risk one's life. They led Jesus to the top of a hill to throw Him off because He had just said: 'many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.' Jesus added to their immense rage: 'And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian' (Luke 4:25-27). This was, in their eyes, more than enough to deserve death. ...

"What a narrative in Acts 22! The prisoner Paul stands on the steps of the fortress. He motions to the crowd with one hand and asks to speak. As he

begins in Hebrew, silence falls upon the crowd. ... But at the very instant that he starts, ‘And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles,’ the sentence freezes in mid-air. They listened as far as that word Gentiles (or nations); and threw dust into the air, shouting, ‘Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.’ What made them explode like that? Simply the idea that God could also be the God of every man and every tongue.

“It is now easier to understand why speaking in tongues is the sign of this great truth and that for ‘this people’ it was the means of access to it. ...

“They alone had to be convinced to abandon this particular unbelief and to consider no longer impure the people and the languages that God considered pure, languages pure enough to be spoken by His Holy Spirit. ... This sign in foreign languages, like the triple vision of Peter, taught them that salvation was for ‘whosoever,’ for ‘all flesh,’ for ‘every tongue.’ ...

“But WHO in today’s Church composed of peoples, tribes, nations and languages, WHO still needs to be convinced by a repeated sign that the Spirit of God is poured out on all peoples, nations, tribes and languages?” (Legrand, *All about Speaking in Tongues*, pp. 24-27, 33).

It is impossible to have a correct doctrine of tongues without understanding that it was a sign to the nation Israel of the new thing that God was doing, which was extending the gospel to all men and bringing both Jews and Gentiles into a new spiritual body.

This clear biblical doctrine about tongues single-handedly refutes all modern tongues speaking. When Charles Parham’s Bible School students began speaking in “tongues” in Kansas in 1901 or when “tongues” broke out at the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles in 1906, what Jews were present? Had Jews been present, in what way could the tongues speaking have been a sign that God was extending the gospel to all nations and creating a new body through the

Gospel? That sign had already been given 1,900 years earlier. In what way was that sign not entirely fulfilled in the first century? These are the hard questions that every Pentecostal and Charismatic must answer. If someone would reply that the Jews still need the sign of tongues, we would ask, “Why, then, have the Pentecostal-Charismatic movements almost entirely ignored this aspect of tongues?” Parham in Topeka and Seymour in Los Angeles did not seek for tongues as a sign to Israel but as a sign of the “baptism of the Holy Spirit.” The same is true for the Assemblies of God and the Church of God of Prophecy and the Foursquare Pentecostal Churches and all the rest.

“Someone, after reading my book, said to me, ‘For you it all boils down to being a sign.’ Of course it does! Take a sign-post for instance; you may discourse at length on its height, its shape, the colour, the phosphorescence and size of its letters, but however accurate your remarks may be, it is impossible to get around the fact that its sole and ultimate purpose is to be a sign-post. And so is it with speaking in tongues. However you may look at it, the Holy Spirit said it was a SIGN for incredulous Israel. In this matter as in others, it can be seen that the rules of the game are not being followed” (Fernand Legrand, *All about Speaking in Tongues*, p. 67).

Tongues Speaking Part 2

In the previous study we looked at four foundational truths about the gift of tongues. (1) Biblical tongues were real earthly languages. (2) Biblical tongues were miraculously given. (3) Biblical tongues were accompanied by the miraculous gift of interpretation. (4) Biblical tongues were a sign to unbelieving Israel.

In this study we will consider three further foundational truths about tongues:

5. Biblical tongues were bound by apostolic direction (1 Corinthians 14).

Paul said, “*Forbid not to speak in tongues,*” but he also gave many restrictions on how tongues could be used. I have never seen the practice of “tongues” in modern times restrained by the apostolic rules.

a. Tongues are to be spoken only by course, one by one (“*If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course...*” 1 Cor. 14:27). In most of the Pentecostal-Charismatic meetings I have attended, the “tongues” were spoken by many people at once.

b. Tongues must be interpreted (“*and let one interpret*” 1 Cor. 14:27). Rarely are the tongues messages interpreted in modern Pentecostalism, and when they are it is often obvious that the “interpretation” is something different than the “tongue.”

c. There is to be no confusion (“*For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints*” 1 Cor. 14:33). Every time I have been in a Pentecostal-Charismatic service where “the Spirit was moving” I have thought to myself, “This is confusing.” Disorder reigns. The “tongues” cannot

be understood. Things happen that make no sense and that are not found in the Bible. But we are told that God is not the author of confusion, and that covers a lot of territory.

d. Women are not allowed to speak in tongues (“*Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law*” 1 Cor. 14:34). Paul refers to the Law of Moses, which also said the woman is under the man’s authority (Gen. 3:16; Num. 30:3-13). Women have been at the forefront of “tongues” speaking since the inception of Pentecostalism. A woman was the first to speak in tongues at Parham’s Bible School in Topeka, Kansas. A woman was the first to speak in tongues at Seymour’s Azusa Street Mission. A reporter with the *Los Angeles Times* who visited the Mission on April 17, 1906, observed, “The old exhorter [Seymour] urged the ‘sisters’ to let the ‘tongues come forth’ and the women gave themselves over to a riot of religious fervor.”

e. Everything is to be decent (“*Let all things be done decently*” 1 Cor. 14:40). The Greek word translated *decent* is “*euschemonos*,” which is also translated “honestly” (Rom. 13:13; 1 Thes. 4:12). It carries the idea of moral decency and sincerity and integrity, of adorning the gospel of Jesus Christ and the church of Jesus Christ in such a manner that no reproach is brought upon it by our actions. When we think about the deception and fraud that is so prevalent in the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement and when we think about the many times that women are allegedly overcome by the Spirit and fall in an indecent manner and have to be covered, it is obvious that all things are not done decently.

f. Everything is to be orderly (“*Let all things be done decently and in order*” 1 Cor. 14:40). The God of creation is the God of order. George Gardiner was a Pentecostal for many years, and he said that his journey out of Pentecostalism “began with nagging questions about the gulf between Charismatic practices and Scriptural statements--a very wide gulf!” (Gardiner, *The Corinthian Catastrophe*, p. 8). He determined to study the book of Acts. “I reread the book of Acts, slowly and carefully, praying as I did, ‘Lord, let me see what it

says, and only what the Word says. Give me grace to accept it if I have been wrong and grace to apologize if I have been unduly critical. The journey through Acts was an eye opener! The actions and experiences of the early churches were far removed from the actions and ‘experiences’ of the modern movement. In some ways they were completely opposite!” (*The Corinthian Catastrophe*). I discovered the same thing as a young Christian. One thing that convinced me that Pentecostalism is not scriptural was that their “tongues” were not practiced in a biblical manner. I have attended Pentecostal and Charismatic meetings dozens of times in various parts of the world and I have never witnessed tongues operated scripturally.

6. The Pentecostal-Charismatic method of “speaking in tongues” is unscriptural and dangerous.

If we were to agree that there is such a thing today as “tongues speaking” or a “private prayer language” and that it would help us to live better Christian lives and if we were to accept the Pentecostal-Charismatic’s challenge to “try it,” the next question is, “How do I begin to speak in this ‘tongue’ or ‘prayer language’?” The following is a typical reply:

Step Number One. *The first step, we are told, is to stop analyzing things and to open up to new experiences.* A chapter in the book *These Wonderful Gifts* by Michael Harper is entitled “Letting Go and Letting God,” in which the believer is instructed to stop analyzing experiences so carefully and strictly, to stop “setting up alarm systems” and “squatting nervously behind protective walls.” He says the believer should step out from behind his “walls and infallible systems” and just open up to God. That is a necessary but unscriptural and exceedingly dangerous step toward receiving the Charismatic experiences. The Bible warns the believer to be sober and vigilant at all times (1 Peter 5:8). This means we are to be in control of our minds so as not to allow any harmful foreign influence. This is the exact opposite of “letting go” and ceasing to test things.

Step Number Two. *Having stopped analyzing with Scripture, the standard*

method of experiencing the “gift of tongues” or a “private prayer language” is to open one’s mouth and to start speaking words but not words that one understands and allegedly “God will take control.”

This is so grossly unscriptural and nonsensical it would seem unnecessary to refute it. There is absolutely nothing like this in the New Testament. To ignore the Bible and to seek something that the Bible never says to seek, in ways the Bible does not support, and to open oneself uncritically to religious experiences like this, puts one in danger of receiving “another spirit” (2 Cor. 11:4). The Bible warns Christians that there are deceiving spirits that attempt to influence Christians and that can appear as angels of light and ministers of God (2 Cor. 11:13-15; Mat. 24:24). Paul warned the Corinthians that they were in danger of receiving false spirits because of their carnal, tolerant, undiscerning condition (2 Cor. 11:3-4). The true Christian cannot be possessed by evil spirits, but he can certainly be influenced by them.

The Bible plainly teaches that tongues speaking was a divine miracle and that it was sovereignly given. *“But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will”* (1 Cor. 12:11). The disciples did not seek to speak in tongues on the day of Pentecost nor did they take a class on “letting go and letting God.” There is no evidence, in fact, that they even expected to speak in tongues. In every instance in which Christians spoke in tongues in the book of Acts the tongues were sovereignly given. In no instance were the recipients trying to speak in tongues.

7. Biblical tongues were not spoken by all Christians even in the first century (1 Corinthians 12:7-10, 28-30).

Paul asks, “Do all speak with tongues?” The question is rhetorical and the answer is no.

A simple survey of the book of Acts proves conclusively that not all believers in the early churches spoke in tongues. Even on the day of Pentecost, while the

disciples that were in the upper room spoke in tongues (Acts 2:4), those that were saved that day through Peter's preaching did not speak in tongues (Acts 2:40-42). The Jews that believed in Acts 4:4 and 6:7 did not speak in tongues. The Ethiopian Eunuch that was saved in Acts 8:35-39 did not speak in tongues. The first people who were saved at Antioch in Acts 11:20-21 did not speak in tongues. Lydia and her household who were saved in Acts 16:13-15 and the Philippian jailer and his family who were saved in Acts 16:30-33 did not speak in tongues. Those who were saved in Thessalonica and Berea and Athens in Acts 17:4, 12, 34 did not speak in tongues. Crispus and others who were saved at Corinth in Acts 18:8 did not speak in tongues. Those who believed in Ephesus in Acts 19:17-19 did not speak in tongues.

There is no emphasis whatsoever on tongues speaking in the New Testament. It was exercised only three times in all the book of Acts and the vast majority of the believers did not use it. To create the sort of emphasis upon tongues speaking that one finds in the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement one must read many things into the Bible that are not there, and this is not the way that honest brethren use the Scriptures.

(For a much more extensive study on tongues speaking, see *The Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements*, available from Way of Life Literature. In this book we deal with the so-called "private prayer language," the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the filling of the Holy Spirit, the baptism of fire, tongues as a sign to believers, the interpretation of tongues, tongues speaking in the Roman Catholic Church and in the cults, and many other things.)

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON TONGUES SPEAKING

1. What are the seven foundational Bible truths about tongues?
2. Biblical tongues were real _____.
3. What does the Greek word "glossa" mean?

4. What passage in the New Testament explains how we can learn to speak in tongues?
5. What challenge did former Pentecostal Fernand Legrand devise to prove whether Charismatics can interpret tongues?
6. Biblical tongues were a sign to _____.
7. In 1 Corinthians 14:20-22, Paul is quoting what Old Testament prophecy?
8. Each time tongues were exercised in the book of Acts _____ were present.
9. The fact that tongues were a sign to the Jews refutes all modern tongues speaking. How is this?
10. What are the six rules for tongues speaking in 1 Corinthians 14?
11. What are the two steps for speaking in Pentecostal tongues?
12. In what book and chapter did Paul say that all Christians spoke in tongues in his day?
13. Did the 3,000 who were saved on the Day of Pentecost speak in tongues?
14. Did the Ethiopian Eunuch or the Philippian jailer speak in tongues?
15. How many times is tongues speaking mentioned in the book of Acts?

The Rapture

MEMORY VERSES: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Though the word “rapture” does not appear in the Bible, it is a term that describes the catching away of the saints in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. The term “caught up” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is elsewhere translated “pluck” (Jn. 10:28). It is used to describe the Spirit of God snatching away Philip after the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:39). This is exactly what Christ will do to the New Testament believers before the onset of the Daniel’s Seventieth Week.

Lessons on 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

1. At the Rapture two things will transpire: the dead in Christ will be resurrected (1 Thess. 4:14-16) and the living saints will be translated and caught up (1 Thess. 4:17). The translation of the living saints is described in 1 Corinthians 15 as the corruptible and mortal body being instantly changed to an incorruptible and immortal one (verses 52-53). According to 1 Thessalonians the dead in Christ are with Him in heaven; they are not sleeping in the grave as some cults teach.
2. The Rapture is the believer’s hope (1 Thess. 4:13). It is what we are looking forward to. We are not looking for the Antichrist or for the Great Tribulation!
3. The Rapture is certain. It is as sure as Christ’s resurrection (1 Thess. 4:14). It is the word of the Lord (1 Thess. 4:15).
4. The Rapture is a comfort (1 Thess. 4:18). If the Rapture did not occur until the end of the Great Tribulation, it certainly could not produce solace.

The Biblical Evidence for the Pre-Tribulational Rapture

Among those who believe in a literal Rapture of church-age saints, there are three general positions. These pertain to the timing of the Rapture in relation to the Great Tribulation. The three views are Pre-tribulational, which says the church-age saints will be raptured before the Great Tribulation; Mid-tribulational (also called Pre-wrath Rapture), which says the church-age saints will go through the first half of Daniel's 70th Week; Post-tribulational, which says the church-age saints will go through the entire Tribulation period.

For the following reasons we are convinced the Bible teaches a Pre-tribulational Rapture. In this study, we are using the term "church" in a general, institutional sense:

1. *Church-age believers are promised salvation from wrath* (1 Thess. 1:9-10; 5:1-9; Rom. 5:9; Rev. 3:10).

The Great Tribulation is expressly called the day of God's wrath. Today the Lord is withholding His anger; He is seated upon a throne of grace, but the day approaches when He will take the seat of judgment. Then "*the day of his wrath*" will be upon all the world (Psa. 110:5; Isa. 13:6-13; Rev. 6:16-17). It is true that in every century Bible-believing churches have been subjected to persecution, but this is different from the Great Tribulation. The persecutions of the saints are caused by the wrath of wicked men and the devil, whereas the seven-year Tribulation is a period especially pertaining to God's wrath (Rev. 6:16-17; 14:10). Some feel that the church will not be saved *out of* the time of wrath, but will be saved *through* it. This cannot be true, since the Bible clearly reveals that those who are on earth during the Great Tribulation will not be delivered from wrath but will be overcome (Rev. 13:7). The Scriptures that promise church-age believers deliverance from wrath must refer to salvation out from the very presence of the wrath. Concerning the Great Tribulation, we are told that "*as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth*" (Lk. 21:35). Therefore, church-age believers must either be physically removed from the earth, or they will be involved in the day of wrath. God promises, "... *I also*

will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Rev. 3:10). This verse does not say that God will keep the church-age saints through the temptation but from it.

2. The Holy Spirit will be removed before the Tribulation (2 Thess. 2:1-8).

In other passages of the Bible, the Holy Spirit is said to be the restrainer of sin (Gen. 6:3; Isa. 59:19). The Holy Spirit came into the world in His present dispensation at Pentecost (Acts 2), to empower the church for the Great Commission (Acts 1:8). He will remove the church-age believers before the time of God’s great wrath. This does not mean the Holy Spirit will not be present in the world at that time. He is God and is omnipresent. It means that He will not be present in the same sense that He is in this age.

3. The Rapture is said to be imminent, meaning it could happen any time.

Christ taught this (Matthew 24:42, 44; 25:13; Mark 13:33). Paul taught it (Phil. 4:5; Titus 2:12-13). James taught it (Jam. 5:8-9). And Peter taught it (1 Pet. 4:7). The early Christians were living in expectation of Christ’s return (1 Thess. 1:9-10). The apostle Paul instructed the believers at Thessalonica that they did not need to heed signs and times, because the New Testament believer has been promised redemption from the “day of darkness” that shall overcome the whole world (1 Thess. 5:1-9). The church is not waiting for the appearing of the Antichrist, but for the redemption of the Son of God.

4. The church is a mystery that was not revealed in the Old Testament (Eph. 3:1-11).

The New Testament church has no part in the chronology of events foretold by the Old Testament prophets. They clearly foretold the first coming of Christ, His miraculous birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. The same prophets described Christ’s Second Coming in glory, preceded by a time of

unprecedented worldwide tribulation, and followed by the establishment of the glorious Messianic kingdom. But these prophets did not see the present church age--“*which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit*” (Eph. 3:5).

Between the first and second coming, there is a time gap that was not seen by the Old Testament prophets. This gap is the church age. The prophets did not see that Israel would be set aside temporarily while God called out from among all nations a special spiritual body of people. After He has accomplished this purpose and the fullness of the Gentiles is come in, God will restart Israel’s prophetic clock and fulfill all Old Testament prophecies in relation to His ancient chosen nation. “... *blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in*” (Rom. 11:25).

Daniel’s Seventieth Week described in Daniel 9 and the Great Tribulation pertain to Israel, not to church-age believers. This present *mystery* period will end with the removal of the church-age believers from the earth; and the Lord will then take up His plan for the nation Israel as He fulfills the Old Testament prophecies of the time of Jacob’s trouble, the coming of Messiah in glory, the regathering of the remnant, and the establishment of the Messianic kingdom.

5. *The book of Revelation shows that the church is not on earth during the Tribulation.*

The church is not seen on earth after Revelation chapter 3.

The witness for God in the earth during the Tribulation is Israel, not the church (Rev. 7).

The ministry of the two Witnesses of Revelation 11 identifies them with national Israel and with Old Testament prophecies of the “*day of the Lord.*” The two Witnesses minister from Jerusalem, Israel’s capital. The churches have no such

capital, her hope being heavenly, not earthly (Col. 3:1-4; Phil. 3:17-21). The two Witnesses are clothed in sackcloth, typical of Old Testament Israel, not New Testament believers. Nowhere are the churches seen in sackcloth. They are told, rather, to “*rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice*” (Phil. 4:4). The church-age believer’s judgment is forever past, and he is to keep his mind centered in the heavenlies where, in position, he is seated eternally victorious with Christ (Eph. 2:5-10). Revelation 11:4 identifies the two Witnesses with Old Testament prophecy. Zechariah 4:3, 11, 14 is a prophecy of Israel, not the church. Further, the two Witnesses call down judgment upon their enemies in Revelation 10:5-6. Jesus rebuked His disciples for desiring to do just this and instructed the church-age believer to pray for the well-being of his enemies, not for their destruction (Lk. 9:54-56; Rom. 12:14, 17-21).

The devil persecutes Israel, not the church, during the Tribulation (Rev. 12). There can be no doubt that the woman in this chapter is national Israel. Verse 5 shows the woman bringing forth Christ; it is obvious that Jesus was brought forth by Israel, not by the church (Isa. 9:6-7; Rom. 9:5). Also, the symbols of Revelation 12:1-2 recall familiar Old Testament typology of Israel. She is referred to as a woman (Isa. 54:5-7). The sun and moon and the 12 stars of Revelation 12:2 remind us of Joseph’s dream of Israel (Gen. 37:9). The words of Revelation 12:2 are almost an exact quote from Micah 5:3, again referencing Israel’s delivery of the Messiah. These symbols are not used in the New Testament of the churches.

For these and other reasons, we are convinced that the Rapture of the New Testament saints will occur before the onset of Daniel’s Seventieth Week. The Rapture is the next event on God’s prophetic calendar.

The Importance of the Pre-tribulational Rapture

The doctrine of the pre-tribulational Rapture is not a peripheral one. As we have seen, Christ, Paul, James, and Peter taught that the return of Christ is imminent and is to be expected at any time (Mat. 24:44; Phil. 4:5; Jam. 5:8-9; 1 Pet. 4:7). The early Christians lived in expectation of Christ’s return (1 Thessalonians 1:9-

10).

The doctrine of a pre-tribulational Rapture is a great motivator for purifying the Christian life.

1. It encourages the believer in trials and persecutions (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18).

2. It keeps the church's focus on the Great Commission (Mat. 28:18-20; Mk 16:15; Lk. 24:44-48; Acts 1:8). It teaches us that preaching the gospel, winning people to Christ, and establishing churches as the pillar and ground of the truth is the most urgent matter. D.L. Moody had it right when he said: "I look upon this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a lifeboat and said to me, 'Moody, save all you can.'"

3. It motivates us to be busy in the Lord's work (1 Cor. 15:58).

4. It motivates us to live obedient lives (1 Jn. 3:1-3; 1 Th. 5:4-7).

5. It motivates us to separate from evil (Tit. 2:13-14).

6. It keeps believers on the outlook for heresy and apostasy (2 Timothy 4:3-4; 1 John 2:24-28).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE RAPTURE

1. What does the word "Rapture" refer to?

2. What two things will happen at the Rapture?

3. Where are the dead believers?

3. Where are the dead believers?

4. How certain is the Rapture?

5. Why is the Rapture a comfort to believers?

6. What are the three views of the Rapture?

7. What are the five reasons why we believe that the Rapture will occur before the Tribulation?

8. The Great Tribulation is called the day of God's _____.

9. What does the word "imminent" mean?

10. What four preachers in the New Testament taught that the coming of the Lord is imminent?

11. When did the early Christians expect the Lord to return?

12. Is the church waiting for the appearance of the Antichrist?

13. What does the term "mystery" in the New Testament mean?

14. Did the Old Testament prophets describe the church age?

15. How do we know that Revelation describes Israel rather than the church?

16. How do we know that the Witnesses of Revelation 11 are Jews?

17. How do we know that the Woman in Revelation 12 is Israel?

18. What are the six ways that the doctrine of an imminent Rapture purifies the

10. What are the six ways that the doctrine of an imminent rapture purifies the Christian life?

How to Be Wise with Your Money - Tithing

MEMORY VERSES: *Proverbs 3:9-10; Malachi 3:10; Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7*

The Bible says a lot about money. Proverbs speaks much about the use of money, and many of Jesus' sermons were on this subject. He taught that man's heart is bound up with his treasure.

Practice tithing (Mal. 3:8-11).

Tithing, which refers to giving at least 10% of one's income to God, is a way to honor God and to support His great work in this needy world. God has promised to bless it, and multitudes of believers have learned that they are better off living on 90% of their income (or 80%, etc.) than 100%.

a. Tithing was practiced before the giving of the Law of Moses. Abraham was the first man who tithed (Genesis 14:18-20). He did not tithe out of obligation to the Law; he tithed to honor God through God's representative king/priest Melchizedek. Jacob continued the practice of tithing (Genesis 28:20-22). We see, then, that tithing is not something that originated with the Law. It was a principle that has been understood by God's people from the beginning.

b. Tithing was practiced under the Law. Under the Law of Moses, there was actually a double tithe. The Israelites were required to give 10% of all of their increase (Num. 18:24-28; Neh. 10:38), plus they were required to bring offerings to the annual feasts (called the second or festival tithe) (Deut. 14:22-25). They were also to give to the poor (Ex 23:11; Lev. 19:10; 23:22).

Malachi 3:8-12

(1) God says that those who keep the tithe are robbing Him. This is because under the Law of Moses God commanded the tithe and it belonged to Him. Whether or not one considers the exact tithe an obligation on the New Testament believer, it is sure that the believer does have many financial obligations in the church and to fail to fulfill them is to rob God.

(2) God promises to bless those who tithe. The believer can get by in life far better by giving tithes and offerings and living on what is left than he can by not giving to God and trying to live on 100% of his income. This is because it is better to live with God's blessing on my life than to live without it. Thousands of believers have learned that God does indeed bless those who tithe. When God says He will rebuke the devourer, it means that He will not allow things to happen to us that can rob us of our money. This does not mean that those who tithe will never have trouble, that their roof will never leak or their equipment will never break down or their children will never get sick. It means that many things that would otherwise happen will be stopped because of God's blessing.

(3) The tithe should be brought into the storehouse. In the Old Testament, the storehouse was the temple in Jerusalem. Today the church is the house of God (1 Timothy 3:15). In the first church, the people brought their gifts and laid them at the feet of the leaders (Acts 4:34-35). That is the example for us today. The church has much more work than the Old Testament temple had. The church has been commanded to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth (Matthew 28:18-20). This is a very expensive endeavor, and the expenses are to be borne by God's people. The preachers of the gospel are to be supported by the churches (1 Corinthians 9:14; Titus 3:13-14; 3 John 5-8).

Proverbs 3:9-10

(1) Parents are to teach their children how to tithe. Consider verse 1, where we see that this chapter contains the instruction of a father to his son.

Parents can't teach their children to tithe unless they have first learned to tithe themselves. When the parent teaches a child to tithe, he first gives him a small amount of money to put into the offering each week. When the child starts earning his own money, no matter how small, the parent teaches him to give 10% to God. When tithing becomes a habit from childhood it is easy to continue in adulthood.

(2) The tithe should be given from "all thine increase." This means that whenever we earn or receive money we should give a tithe unto the Lord from it.

(3) God promises to bless those who tithe. This promise is repeated in Scripture because God wants to emphasize that it is certain. We can trust God's Word!

c. Some New Testament passages on giving

Luke 6:38

Here Jesus stated a wonderful promise about giving. He is not talking about tithing in particular, but about giving in general. God loves a cheerful giver. It is something that He takes note of and abundantly blesses.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2

In this passage we see that the believers in the first churches took up collections when they assembled on the first day of the week. This particular offering was a special offering that Paul was collecting for the Christians in Jerusalem that were suffering because of famine (Romans 15:26). Even in this case Paul taught them to give "as God hath prospered." This means the giving was to be proportionate. That is the same principle as the tithe. Those who earn more give more.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

This passage refers again to the special offering that Paul was collecting for the believers at Jerusalem.

We see that such offerings are free-will, meaning that each believer makes his own decision about how much to give (2 Cor. 9:7).

Paul promises that God will bless their giving.

d. Tithing must be done by faith

The only way to practice tithing effectively is to practice it by faith. We must believe God's promises even during times of difficulties. And we must remember that God tests faith to see if it is real and to make it grow stronger (James 1:2-4). Many times if a Christian decides to begin tithing, he will have some financial problem to test his decision.

John R. Rice told about an evangelist named Kuykendahl in Texas in the early 20th century. He had a circuit riding ministry and his offerings were very small, so much so that his large family had a difficult time. One year a wealthy businessman visited the area to share his testimony in several churches, and evangelist Kuykendahl was his host, transporting him from meeting to meeting in his buggy. Among other things, the businessman challenged the people to tithe. As they were traveling along one day, the businessman asked the evangelist if he believed in tithing.

He replied, "Yes, I would love to tithe, but I am very poor and must take care of my large family."

The businessman responded, “I will make you an offer. If you will tithe for an entire year, I will guarantee you. If at any time during the year you find that you can’t meet your obligations and don’t know where to turn, just contact me and I will send you the necessary money. I am a wealthy man, and I am a man of my word.”

Kuykendahl enthusiastically replied, “I will gladly take you up on this offer.”

The evangelist kept his word and tithed faithfully, but he never had to contact the businessman. At the end of the 12 months, the evangelist was meditating on what had happened. God had richly blessed him that year and had met every need. People gave him more than ever, and the family experienced many special blessings. As he contemplated these things, his heart was suddenly smitten, when he realized that he had trusted the word of a businessman but he had not been willing to trust the Word of the Living God, who had made even greater promises!

e. What if I do not believe that tithing is a law for New Testament believers?

(1) Remember that tithing pre-dated the Law of Moses. It was not because he was under the Law that Abraham tithed; he tithed because he wanted to honor God and support God’s work as represented by Melchizedek. This is a good example for New Testament believers, because we are children of Abraham by faith (Romans 4:16-17).

(2) The Old Testament was given for our example (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11). Paul used the Mosaic system of giving as authority for his teaching that New Testament believers are obligated to support preachers (1 Cor. 9:8-14).

(3) It is the express will of Christ that His people be giving people (Luke 6:38). Many people I have met who “do not believe in tithing” are stingy.

They do not bear their rightful load in the church. Stinginess and tightfistedness should never characterize the child of God. Even if you do not believe that the tithe is a matter of law, you should be ashamed to keep more than 90% of your income for yourself in light of the great needs of God's work in this present world. I hasten to add that not all people who do not consider the tithe a matter of law today are stingy. In fact, I know some who give 30%, 40%, even 50% of their income to the Lord.

(4) The believer has many financial obligations. The Great Commission is an obligation. We are commanded to carry the gospel to every person in every nation (Mk. 16:18; Acts 1:8). This is called Christ's "Great Commission" because it is repeated five times in the New Testament, thus emphasizing its importance. The worldwide preaching of the gospel is intimately associated with Christ's death in that Christ's suffering for man's sin is ineffective if the gospel is not proclaimed (Luke 24:46-47). World missions is a very expensive enterprise. Every believer is obligated to do what he can to further this work, and this includes preaching the gospel himself, praying, and giving. Supporting preachers and missionaries is an obligation (1 Cor. 9:14; Phil. 4:15-17; Titus 3:13-14; 3 John 5-8). The church is also an obligation. It is the house of God and the pillar and ground of the truth in this age (1 Tim. 3:15). It is the headquarters for world evangelism (Acts 14:1-4). Thus, every believer has an obligation to support the work of the church financially so it can fulfill its God-given function in this needy world.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON TITHING

1. What does tithing mean?
2. Tithing is a way to _____ God and to _____ His great work.
3. When did the practice of tithing begin?
4. How much giving did the Law of Moses require?

5. Why did God call the Jews robbers in Malachi 3?
6. What did God promise to do for those who tithed?
7. What is the house of God today?
8. What passage instructs parents to teach their children to tithe?
9. In what verse did Jesus promise, "Give, and it shall be given unto you"?
10. Paul instructed the Christians at Corinth to bring their offerings on what day?
11. What verse says, "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully"?
12. Why was Evangelist Kuykendahl ashamed of himself?

How to Be Wise with Your Money 2

MEMORY VERSES: *Proverbs 6:9-11; 11:15; 23:20-21; Ephesians 4:28; Hebrews 13:5-6*

1. Put God first and trust Him to supply your needs (Mat. 6:31-33).

If the believer puts God first, everything will work out right, but if he puts himself first, everything will be a mess!

a. Putting God first means to obey God. It means that God's business comes before my business; God's pleasure comes before my pleasure. The believer should seek God first in the matter of the church. As a young Christian I made a decision that I would not take a job that required me to forsake the assembly (Heb. 10:25). The believer should seek God first in the matter of money, giving the first portion of his income to God. The believer should seek God first in the matter of the Bible, setting apart the first part of the day for Bible study and devotion and taking advantage of every opportunity to learn God's Word better. The believer should also seek God first in the matter of his decisions, such as job and friendships and marriage.

b. Putting God first means to trust God. It means believing God's promises and not doubting Him. I must obey Him and then trust Him to take care of me and to work things out.

c. Putting God first means being patient and waiting on the Lord (Psa. 27:14; Prov. 20:22). God requires that we exercise patience; it is a major spiritual law. In God's will, things are not going to happen overnight. He tests us to see if our faith is real. We have to be faithful in our duties and just keep going, regardless of how difficult the situation is.

2. Work hard (Proverbs 6:6-11).

The book of Proverbs is the book of practical wisdom, and it oftentimes warns about being a sluggard. God blesses hard work, and He hates laziness. He tells us to learn from the ant. Consider some lessons from the ant: a. The ant works without oversight, and the believer should emulate this by serving Christ faithfully day in and day out regardless of whether or not someone is watching or urging him along.

b. The ant works while there is opportunity and doesn't wait for a "better time." Likewise, the believer should work "while it is day" and not put it off for later.

c. The ant works in coordination with others. Each ant does his part, and likewise each believer has a particular ministry within the church body.

d. The ant works even though it is small and seemingly insignificant in the great scheme of things. This should be our example in life and in the church. The most humble person and the most simply work is valuable in God's eyes when it is dedicated to Him.

Many other Proverbs warn about being a sluggard because fallen human nature tends toward sluggardism (Prov. 10:4-5; 12:24; 14:23; 15:19; 19:15; 20:4, 13; 21:25-26; 24:30-34; 26:14; 27:23-27).

3. Be honest (Ephesians 4:28).

God is holy and just and He hates dishonesty. But we are sinners and we live in a sinful world, and in many ways we are tempted to be dishonest--to cheat, to steal, to misrepresent, to work with a slack hand, to cut corners, to take bribes, and to otherwise be unjust in our dealings. We must resist these temptations and be honest as ambassadors of Christ in a dark world. God blesses honesty and

judges dishonesty.

4. Learn to give and help others (Luke 6:38; Rom. 12:13; Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 4:28; Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 6:18; Hebrews 13:16). The believer must have a ready heart to give as opposed to being stingy and self-centered. Those who learn to put God first and give tithes and offerings to His work and who learn to help others are those who prosper in this life because they have God's blessing.

But we also must be wise in our giving. In Matthew 5:42 Jesus to give to those who ask, but when we compare Scripture with Scripture we learn that there are many situations in which we should not give, just as there are situations in which we should not loan, as mentioned later in this study. (1) Don't give to a lazy person who does not work (2 Thes. 3:10; Prov. 6:6-10). (2) Don't give to someone who wastes his money on sin and foolishness (Prov. 4:14-17). When we enable people to do evil, we become partakers of their evil deeds (1 Tim. 5:22; 2 John 10-11; Rev. 18:4).

5. Don't hang around worldly people (Proverbs 12:11; 23:20-21).

Foolish persons are those who don't know how to handle money, who have a poor testimony, who have proven that they aren't wise in business dealings, who are walking in sinful ways. The Prodigal Son learned that worldly friends are not true friends. They don't love you; they love what you have. They only want to use you. And those who hang around foolish people do not learn how to be wise and typically end up wasting their income and throwing away opportunities (1 Cor. 15:33). This is what happened to me when I was young. I didn't get the education I could have had and didn't develop myself properly because I was running with a foolish crowd. Time that is wasted cannot be regained even when we repent.

6. Don't pursue promises of quick riches (Prov. 13:11; 21:5).

If a business deal sounds too good to be true, it is!

7. Be careful about borrowing and lending (Proverbs 6:1-5).

This is a warning against unwise borrowing and unwise business contracts.

If you see that you have made a mistake, try to find a way out of it (e.g., a marriage engagement, a business partnership, job, education). If the obligation has been finalized, you are responsible to fulfill the contract, but it is wise to do everything possible to get out of it if at all possible, such as working a second job to pay off an unwise debt quickly.

The borrower becomes a servant (Prov. 22:7). A business obligation is a solemn contract before man and God. Don't borrow unless you are certain you can pay it back. Consider the terrible plight of the prophet's family in 2 Kings 4:1. God holds us responsible when we give our word. He requires us to speak the truth (Zech. 8:16; Eph. 4:25). We are bound by our promises, whether it is in a marriage contract or a business contract. I know of some believers who have filed for bankruptcy in America in order to escape their debts, but that is not the Christian way. It might be necessary under certain conditions to renegotiate the contract and extend the terms of payment, but debts must be paid.

It is especially unwise to borrow on bad terms. A friend in South Asia recently told me that he went to a bank to inquire about a loan. They were going to charge him 20% interest, plus he had to deposit 20% of the borrowed amount into the bank and pay interest on that, too! Many people in this same part of the world borrow from private lenders who charge 30% interest plus many types of fees and penalties. People who agree to such contracts are foolish. God has promised to provide our needs and to make a way for us if we will obey Him and walk in His paths, and we must trust Him and not make foolish decisions in desperation. To do the latter is to act in unbelief rather than faith, but without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6).

Be very careful about lending money. There is a right time to lend (Psa. 37:26; Lk. 6:35), but it is unwise to lend to anyone who asks. The lending must be done with discretion (Psa. 112:5). Don't loan to strangers (Prov. 11:15). Don't loan money to a lazy person or someone who isn't working hard (2 Thes. 3:10; Prov. 6:6-10). Don't loan money to an undependable person with a poor testimony (Prov. 25:19; Lk. 16:10). Don't loan money to someone who is involved in a get-rich-quick scheme (Prov. 28:20). Don't loan money to someone who has proven that he is unwise with money or to someone who is already in bad debt. Don't loan money to someone with bad character (e.g., lying, stealing, hiding from creditors, bad testimony in his or her Christian life) (Prov. 4:14-17). When we enable people to do evil, we become partakers of their evil deeds (1 Tim. 5:22; 2 John 10-11; Rev. 18:4).

8. Seek good counsel (Prov. 19:20; 24:6).

Don't make major financial decisions on your own; get counsel from wise people such as pastors and parents and older saints in the church. Get counsel from those who have proven that they are wise in the matter of finances. If you are a young person, don't get counsel from your peers; go to those who are older and wiser.

9. Don't yoke together with unbelievers in financial matters (2 Corinthians 6:14).

This includes relatives. If a new believer finds himself entangled in this way, he should do whatever he can to disentangle himself from such yokes as quickly as possible, so that he will be free to serve Christ.

10. Appreciate and use what you have (Prov. 12:27); **don't make excuses for not working** (Prov. 20:4; 22:13).

Don't worry about what you *don't* have; start where you are and use what you

have to the best of your ability, and God will bless you and provide more. Ask God for wisdom. When I wanted to play clarinet in the junior high school band (grade 7), my parents didn't have the money to buy me a clarinet. I joined the band anyway and as the band leader taught the clarinet section how to play, I learned the technique and practiced at home just by using my fingers. Eventually my grandmother bought me an instrument and later my parents bought me an even nicer one. When I got saved and began writing sermons that I wanted to distribute, I had no money for printing. But I had a typewriter, so I spent many hours in the evenings after work typing sermons and using carbon paper to make copies. I would then distribute those. Eventually the Lord provided the means to duplicate the messages by printing press, and I have distributed hundreds of thousands of copies through the years. A girl in our church wanted to play the keyboard, but her parents are very poor and could not afford to buy one. Instead of using this as an excuse, she drew out a keyboard on paper and used that to practice her lessons.

This same principle operates in the spiritual realm. You don't wait until you know all about the Bible before you start serving the Lord and talking to people about Christ; you start where you are. You don't wait until you get a library of Bible study books before you start studying the Bible; you start with what you have. Use what you have and God will increase it. Be faithful in what you know you should be doing today and God will open more doors for you tomorrow.

Too many believers make excuses instead of serving the Lord. They don't attend church faithfully because of this and that excuse. They don't try to find a ministry in the church because of this and that excuse. They don't witness because they don't know what to say or they are afraid or they're not the right caste or the aren't educated enough. They don't read the Bible because their eyesight isn't good or they can't read very well or they can't read at all. It isn't that difficult to learn to read, and every believer should find a way to read the Bible no matter what is required. Anyone of normal intelligence who wants to learn to read *can* learn to read, but those who make excuses will never progress in life.

11. Be content with what God gives (Hebrews 13:5-6).

It is not wrong to work hard in order to have more, and it is not wrong to save and to ask God for an increase, but it is not wise to spend money until you have it. When you are content with what you have, you can trust God and you do not have to fear man. It is wrong to live covetously, always wanting more. God likens covetousness to idolatry (Col. 3:5). The desire to be rich is a great spiritual danger (1 Tim. 6:6-10).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON HOW TO BE WISE WITH YOUR MONEY

1. In what verse did Jesus say, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you"?
2. What does it mean to put God first?
3. What can we learn from the ant?
4. Why does Proverbs warn so often about being a sluggard?
5. What does God think of dishonesty?
6. What verse promises "give and it shall be given unto you"?
7. What verse instructs us to distribute to the necessity of the saints?
8. What are two situations in which we should not give to someone?
9. Why is it unwise to hang around worldly people?
10. What did the Prodigal Son learn about worldly friends?
11. What does Proverbs warn about the love of money?

11. What does Proverbs say about those who follow vain persons?
12. If a business deal sounds too good to be true, it _____.
13. The Bible says the _____ is servant to the _____.
14. What happened to the prophet in 2 Kings 4 who borrowed money?
15. How do we know that there is a right time to lend money?
16. Where does the Bible say that we must lend with discretion?
17. What are some types of people to whom we should not loan money?
18. When we enable people to do evil, we become _____ of their evil deeds.
19. What verse says “by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war”?
20. What verse says not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers?
21. What are two Proverbs that say the sluggard makes excuses for not working?
22. What are some excuses that professing believers make for not serving the Lord?
23. According to Hebrews 13:5-6, why should the believer be content with what he has?
24. What passage warns about the desire to be rich?

The Believer and Drinking

MEMORY VERSES: *Proverbs 20:1; 23:19-21; 29-31; 1 Corinthians 10:32-33; 1 Thessalonians 5:22*

Introduction

1. Most professing Christians believe that drinking is acceptable “in moderation.” This is true generally for Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Lutherans, and for a growing number of Emerging Church Evangelicals. For example, the book *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives* contains probably a dozen references to the joys of drinking. The contributors are Karen Ward, Mark Driscoll, John Burke, Dan Kimball, and Doug Pagitt. They meet in bars and taverns for theological discussions, and they exchange beer-making techniques.

2. The word *wine* in the Bible is a generic term; sometimes it means grape juice; sometimes it means alcoholic wine.

The following verses prove that the word “wine” can mean fresh grape juice: Deuteronomy 11:14; 2 Chronicles 31:5; Nehemiah 13:15; Proverbs 3:10; Isaiah 65:8. Non-alcoholic wine is sometimes called “the fruit of the vine” (Matthew 26:29).

The late Dr. Bruce Lackey said, “The context will always show when ‘wine’ refers to alcoholic beverages. In such cases, God discusses the bad effects of it and warns against it. An example would be Genesis 9, which describes Noah’s experience after the Flood. Verse 21, ‘and he drank of the wine, and was drunken,’ clearly refers to alcoholic beverage.”

Alcoholic wine is not a natural product; it is man-made. Grape juice will ferment and turn alcoholic naturally, but it will quickly become vinegar. It will not remain in an alcoholic state. The book *Bible Wines and the Laws of Fermentation* describes the requirements for making alcoholic wine.

Thus, when Jesus turned water into “wine” (John 2:1-11) and when the apostle Paul counseled Timothy to drink a little wine for his stomach’s sake (1 Timothy 5:23), this does not necessarily refer to alcoholic wine. (For more on this see “Did Jesus Make Alcoholic Wine?” at the Way of Life web site.)

For the following reasons we believe that the Bible teaches that the New Testament Christian should abstain totally from alcoholic drinks:

1. The Bible warns that wine is a mocker and deceives men (Proverbs 20:1).

To say that alcoholic beverages can be consumed in moderation sounds reasonable, but very few drunks have ever set out to become drunks. It is an irrefutable fact that a man that does not drink at all will never get drunk and will certainly never become a drunk.

As Bruce Lackey said, “How is alcoholic wine deceptive? In the very way that people are advocating today, by saying that drinking a little bit will not hurt. Everyone admits that drinking too much is bad. Even the liquor companies tell us not to drink and drive, but they insist that a small amount is all right. However, that is the very thing that is deceptive. Who knows how little to drink? Experts tell us that each person is different. It takes an ounce to affect one, while more is necessary for another. The same person will react to alcohol differently in different situations, depending on the amount of food he has had, among other things. So the idea that ‘a little bit won’t hurt’ is deceptive, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise!”

I doubt Noah planned to get drunk and to cause so much trouble for his

grandson, trouble that has abiding consequences to this day -- but wine is a mocker.

My maternal grandfather came from a long line of drunks, and before my grandmother married him she made him promise that he would never touch a drop of liquor, and that is a promise that he made. But one day he and another carpenter were working on a house and the other fellow talked my grandfather into having just a sip "to cool the tongue." They both got roaring drunk and ended up in jail, and my granddad was a deacon in a Baptist church! He was deeply repentant and was restored and never drank another drop as far as anyone knows, but it was a powerful reminder that wine is a mocker.

Alcohol has the ability to deceive and corrupt. One can never know if he will control it or it will control him. The instruction in Proverbs 20:1 tells me that the wise man leaves it entirely alone.

The following is a wise statement from John G. Paton: Missionary to the New Hebrides, 1891:

"From observation, at an early age I became convinced that mere Temperance Societies were a failure, and that Total Abstinence, by the grace of God, was the only sure preventive as well as remedy. What was temperance in one man was drunkenness in another; and all the drunkards came, not from those who practised total abstinence, but from those who practised or tried to practise temperance. I had seen temperance men drinking wine in the presence of others who drank to excess, and never could see how they felt themselves clear of blame; and I had known Ministers and others, once strong temperance advocates, fall through this so-called moderation, and become drunkards. Therefore it has all my life appeared to me beyond dispute, in reference to intoxicants of every kind, that the only rational temperance is Total Abstinence from them as beverages, and the use of them exclusively as drugs, and then only with extreme caution, as they are deceptive and deleterious poisons of the most debasing and demoralizing kind."

Even emerging church people admit that the Bible forbids drunkenness, but can they guarantee that they and their drinking buddies will never get even a “little” drunk? Can they guarantee that they will not tempt someone to become an alcoholic? No, they cannot, because “wine is a mocker.”

2. Alcoholic drink should be avoided because it is associated with many evils and dangers (Proverbs 23:19-23, 29-35).

This passage begins with the father urging his son to hearken to his parents and to buy the truth and sell it not (Prov. 23:22-23). The father exhorts his son to “*buy the truth*” by bending his whole heart and strength and life to it and to “*sell it not*” for any of the Devil’s shallow, deceptive enticements. This is what will protect the person from the enticement of worldly activities and places that promote “social drinking,” such as dance parties, bars, nightclubs, and taverns.

The winebibber has poverty (Prov. 23:19-21). Proverbs counsels the young man to avoid the company of winebibbers and gluttons, because they are associated with poverty. It is certain that they produce spiritual poverty, and they often produce financial poverty as well.

The winebibber has woe, sorrow, contentions (Prov. 23:29). Many of the woes in society are caused by drinking. Examples are broken marriages, lost friendships, fall from social standing, loss of finances, car and air crashes, disease, crime, stabbings, shootings, child delinquency, teenage pregnancy, bankruptcy, and suicide. One of my great uncles was a wealthy man who owned two bars and was a heavy drinker, and one day he drove up to a funeral home in his Cadillac, put a gun to his head, and killed himself.

The winebibber has babbling (Prov. 23:29). The drunk speaks nonsense and foolishness.

The winebibber has wounds without cause (Prov. 23:29). The drunkard can't remember where he was or what he did and he doesn't know how he got his wounds. He doesn't remember the fight or the crash or the fall. My wife's father crashed his car one night in Alaska when he missed a sharp turn after he had gone over a bridge. He was found staggering along the road and didn't even know what had happened.

The winebibber has redness of eyes (Prov. 23:29). He is affected in his body. His eyes are affected; his kidneys are affected; his liver is affected; his brain is affected.

The winebibber's eyes behold strange women (Prov. 23:33). This is a description of the immorality that is intimately associated with drinking. The winebibber's moral inhibitions are weakened and he is attracted to loose women. It has been said that "wine is the oil of the fire of lust."

The winebibber's heart utters perverse things (Prov. 23:33), such as cursing and bitterness and blasphemy and filthy jokes.

The winebibber is careless and foolishly fearless (Prov. 23:34). He would lie down and sleep while floating in the midst of the sea or while lying on the top of the mast of a sailing ship far above the deck. The main mast of a large ship could be 200 feet high. The drunkard drives cars and flies airplanes when he is intoxicated; he staggers along on a busy highway; he enters rowdy bars he would otherwise avoid; he challenges fierce men to a fight. In July 2010 a drunk Australian broke into a wildlife park and tried to ride a 15-foot saltwater crocodile, miraculously surviving with only a leg bite. The winebibber is careless in spending money. He is careless in morals. He is careless in running with the wrong crowd. He is careless in throwing away priceless relationships and precious friendships.

The winebibber doesn't feel pain ("*They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not,*" Prov. 23:35). The drunkard

is oblivious to the pain caused by his drunken folly until he wakes up from his stupor.

The winebibber is strangely enslaved (“*when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again,*” Prov. 23:35). Before one drunken episode is barely finished he wants to seek it yet again. Even when drink has ruined his health and destroyed his marriage and thrown away his career, he usually does not quit. “It is like a deep ditch and a narrow pit, which it is almost impossible to get out of; and therefore it is wisdom to keep far from the brink of it. Take heed of making any approaches towards this sin, because it is so hard to make a retreat from it, conscience, which should head the retreat, being debauched by it, and divine grace forfeited” (Matthew Henry).

3. The Bible commands the believer not to give offense in anything (1 Corinthians 10:32-33).

I quit smoking a few months after I was saved and it was not because I thought it was inherently wrong or because I was concerned about my health; it was because I knew that it could offend others. I wanted my testimony to be pure of offence so that God would use me and I would have eternal fruit. I didn’t want to be witnessing to someone and have them possibly ignore me or be distracted because they saw a pack of cigarettes in my pocket.

If that is true for smoking, and it is, then it is even truer for drinking alcoholic beverages. It is a fact that many unbelievers think that a believer should not drink. They have higher standards for Christians than some Christians have for themselves. Consider Utah, where even Mormons believe it is wrong to drink alcoholic beverages! How would Mormons look upon non-Mormon Christians who drink?

Even the possibility that someone would be offended because of his drinking should be sufficient for the believer to put it out of his life, and that possibility is very great in modern society. Paul was willing to stop eating meat entirely in this

present world if he thought someone would be offended and his testimony hurt (1 Cor. 8:13), and eating meat is a perfectly legitimate activity. How much more should a believer be willing to give up alcoholic beverages, which are highly questionable at best and have the potential in themselves to cause harm (which meat does not)!

4. The Bible commands the believer to abstain from all appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

That is a far-reaching exhortation. Alcoholic beverages are a great evil and curse in modern society. Consider the automobile wrecks, the ruined health and early graves, the adulteries, the lewdness, the divorces, the neglected children, the abused wives, the waste of money, the gambling, the blasphemy, the pure foolishness. Look at the beer and liquor ads, how they invariably flaunt sensuality and irresponsibility.

According to an April 2010 report, vodka consumption in Russia is an epidemic. The average Russian drinks from 15 to 18 liters of hard liquor annually, which reduces the average life expectancy by a decade. For Russian men, the life expectancy is just 61.8 years. In January 2005 the Royal College of Physicians in England warned that Britain is suffering from an epidemic of alcohol-related problems that is fueling violence and illness throughout the country (*The Telegraph*, Jan. 3, 2005). The same epidemic is raging throughout the world.

If anything has the appearance of evil today, it is alcoholic beverages, and the Bible does not suggest that we abstain from all appearance of evil; it commands us to do so!

5. There is a dramatic difference between the alcoholic content of wine today and that of Bible times. Alcoholic Bible wine was typically weak. It was more like the two percent beer that we were allowed to drink in Army boot camp.

“Many wine-drinking Christians today mistakenly assume that what the New Testament meant by wine is identical to wine used today. This, however, is false. In fact, today’s wine is by biblical definition strong drink, and hence is forbidden in the Bible. ... Even ancient pagans did not drink what some Christians drink today” (Norman Geisler, *Focus in Missions*, Sept. 1986).

“To consume the amount of alcohol that is in two martinis today, by drinking wine containing three parts water to one part wine (the biblical ratio) a person would have to drink over twenty-two glasses” (Robert Stein, *Ibid.*).

Conclusion

1. We do not believe that Jesus drank or made alcoholic wine. First of all, priests and kings were forbidden to drink alcoholic beverages (Lev. 10:9; Prov. 31:4-5), and Jesus is both Priest and King. Second, the Bible warns that alcoholic wine is a mocker (Prov. 20:1), and Jesus did not come to mock people. Third, the result of the miracle of the wine shows that Christ did not make alcoholic wine (John 2:11). By this miracle Christ showed forth His glory as the holy Messiah and caused the disciples to believe in Him. This would not have been the case had He provided alcoholic wine that would have made drunken people drunker!

2. While it is true that the Israelites were allowed to drink strong drink on occasions (Deut. 14:26), this does not mean that it is God’s will for His people to do so today. The New Testament believer has a higher standard of living. The Law of Moses made provision for polygamy, for example, but the New Testament nowhere makes such a provision.

3. There is no need for a Christian to drink alcoholic beverages. It adds nothing of value to his life.

4. We live in a world filled with danger (1 Peter 5:8). We have great spiritual enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. It is wise to avoid anything that would produce spiritual weakness and put us in harm's way.

5. We live in an hour of great apostasy (2 Timothy 4:3-4). The reason the emerging church loves to drink is that they boast of liberty and live according to their own lusts in fulfillment of Paul's prophecy. It is foolish to follow their example.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE BELIEVER AND DRINKING

1. The word *wine* in the Bible is a _____ term.
2. What are two verses that prove that the word "wine" can mean fresh grape juice?
3. How can we tell whether wine means grape juice or alcoholic wine?
4. What are five reasons why we believe that the New Testament Christian should practice total abstinence?
5. What verse warns that wine is a mocker and deceiver?
6. If a man never drinks will he become a drunkard?
7. How are alcoholic beverages deceptive?
8. What chapter of Proverbs describes all of the evils associated with drinking?
9. What does the Bible mean when it warns us not to give offence to others?
10. What verse instructs the believer to abstain from all appearance of evil?

11. What is the difference between wine in Bible times and alcoholic wine in modern times?

12. What are three reasons why we believe that Jesus did not make alcoholic wine?

13. What passage warns that apostate Christians will live according to their own lusts?

Abortion

Introduction

Abortion is legal in 54 countries today. It has been legal in America since the infamous Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision in 1973. Worldwide, roughly 46 million babies are destroyed in the womb each year. About one in five pregnancies end in abortion. The overwhelming majority of abortions are done as a means of birth control and convenience.

God's people are obligated to honor God's Law more than man's. Though abortion is legal, that does not mean that it is right in God's eyes (Acts 5:29).

By 21 days the baby's heart begins to beat and the blood flows through its body. At 45 days the tiny baby's brain waves can be detected. By 8 to 9 weeks the eyelids have begun forming and hair appears. By 9 or 10 weeks it sucks its thumb, jumps, frowns, swallows, and moves its tongue. By 12 or 13 weeks the baby has fingernails and its own unique fingerprints; all arteries are present, vocal chords are complete; the baby can cry and recoils from pain. At 14 weeks the mother begins to feel the baby moving inside of her. At 15 weeks the baby has fully-formed taste buds. At 16 weeks, it has eyebrows and eyelashes, and it can grasp with its hands, kick, and even somersault. At 20 weeks the baby can hear and recognize its's mother's voice.

The most common types of abortion are the following:

Suction Aspiration. This is the most common method during the first trimester of pregnancy. The tiny infant is literally sucked out of the womb by a powerful pump with a suction force nearly 30 times that of a home vacuum cleaner. The procedure tears the baby's body into pieces.

Dilation and Curettage (D&C). This method is used up to 18 weeks of gestation. The abortionist uses a curette, a steel knife, to cut the baby into pieces so they can be removed.

Partial Birth (D&X). Used for “advanced pregnancies,” the baby is partially removed from the womb so that about half of its little body is exposed with its legs hanging outside the woman’s body. The abortionist then plunges scissors into the baby’s head at the nape of the neck and spreads them open to kill the child. Its brain is then removed by suction before the lifeless body is removed entirely.

Salt Poisoning. This is used after 16 weeks. The abortionist injects a strong salt solution directly into the amniotic sac (the fluid surrounding the baby). As the baby breathes and swallows the solution, it is poisoned. It takes over an hour to kill the baby, with it struggling and convulsing during this time. Infants aborted in this manner are called “Candy Apple Babies,” because the corrosive effect of the salt exposes the raw, red, glazed-looking subcutaneous layer of skin and its head thus looks like a candy apple.

Prostaglandin Chemical Abortion. Drugs delivered through injection or suppository produces a violent labor and deliver of the child. Sometimes the baby is born alive, but it is too small to survive.

RU-486. This drug taken in pill form produces an abortion by not allowing the newly-implanted baby access to an essential hormonal nutrient. Ru-486 is used after the mother misses her period, at which stage the baby is at least two to three weeks old. This is old enough to have a beating heart.

The Bible forbids the abortion of an unborn child. Consider the following truths:

1. The Bible says that man is created in God’s image (Gen. 1:26). Man is not

the product of blind naturalistic evolution and he is not an animal that can be killed for convenience.

The doctrine of evolution has been a moving force behind the abortion industry, because it teaches that man is only an animal. In fact, the evolutionary doctrine of “recapitulation” claims that the embryo is not fully human until late in its growth stage.

This theory was popularized by Ernst Haeckel, Charles Darwin’s most prominent supporter in Germany. Haeckel taught that “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny.” Ontogeny is the growth in the womb, and phylogeny is evolutionary development. The unborn child supposedly goes through a series of evolutionary stages from single cell to fish to amphibian to reptile to mammal to ape to human. Thus, the fetus only becomes human in its later stages. Haeckel produced drawings that showed that the human embryo is the same as that of animals such as a fish, a pig, and a monkey, but the drawings were fake. Haeckel mislabeled embryos; he changed the size of embryos; he deleted parts; he added parts; he changed parts. For example, he took a drawing of a monkey embryo and removed its arms, legs, navel, heart, and yolk sac to make it look like a fish embryo. He then labeled it “Embryo of a Gibbon in the fish-stage.” Haeckel’s theory has been totally disproved, but his drawings are still used in textbooks today. Haeckel’s myth has encouraged the modern abortion industry. In 1957, child psychologist Benjamin Spock wrote, “Each child as he develops is retracing the whole history of mankind, physically and spiritually, step by step. A baby starts off in the womb as a single tiny cell, just the way the first living thing appeared in the ocean. Weeks later, as he lies in the amniotic fluid of the womb, he has gills like a fish...” (*Baby and Child Care*, p. 223). In 1990, Carl Sagan and his wife argued that abortion is ethical on the grounds that the fetus is not fully human until the sixth month. Taking Haeckel’s recapitulation theory as fact, they claimed that the embryo begins as “a kind of parasite” and changes into something like a fish with “gill arches” and then becomes “reptilian” and finally “mammalian.” By the end of the second month, the fetus “is still not quite human” (“The Question of Abortion: A Search for the Answers,” *Parade*, April 22, 1990).

2. God forbids man to shed innocent blood. Twenty times the Bible forbids the shedding of “innocent blood” (e.g., Deut. 19:10-13; 2 Kings 21:16). This refers to killing a person without a just cause (1 Sam. 19:5). To put a murderer to death, for example, is a just cause, but to kill an innocent person is unjust. God hates those who shed innocent blood (Prov. 6:16-17). What person is more innocent than an unborn child?

3. Modern science calls the unborn a “fetus,” but it is called a “child” in the Bible (Gen. 25:22). The child that dies before it is born is called an “infant” (Job 3:16). Therefore, to kill a “fetus” is to kill an infant child. The Bible says that children are distinct individuals even when they are in the womb. This was true of Esau and Jacob (Gen. 25:23). Jeremiah was called to be a prophet while he was still in the womb (Jer. 1:5), and John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit and responded to Christ while in the womb (Luke 1:15, 41-44).

4. The Law of Moses demanded punishment if an unborn baby was harmed (Ex. 21:22-23). The injury or death of an unborn child was treated as a serious crime.

5. The Bible says that God is in control of conception (Genesis 20:18; 29:31; 30:22). The Bible says children are the heritage of the Lord (Psalm 127:3). The child in the womb does not belong to the mother; it belongs to God.

6. The Bible says God forms the child in the womb (Psalm 139:13-16).

a. God possessed or fashioned David’s *reins* (Psa. 139:13).

(1) The word “reins” refers to the immaterial part of man, his heart, soul, and spirit. The term “reins” is closely associated with the “heart” and refers especially to man’s will, the seat of his desires, affections, and passions. See Psalm 16:7; 26:2; 73:21; Proverbs 23:16; Isaiah 11:5; Jeremiah 11:20; 17:10; 20:12; Revelation 2:23.

(2) This is God's realm. Man doesn't know enough about this to interfere. If an egg is fertilized for scientific research and the new life begins to grow and then is cut off, this means that a life made in God's image has been extinguished. According to Psalm 139 it appears that the reins are already present in that newly conceived person even though its body has not yet formed. The Psalms teach us that man's reins are possessed of God. They are formed by Him and owned by Him and return to Him at death (Ecc. 12:7). Let man beware!

b. God fashioned David's body (Psa. 139:13-16). Here David thinks about the amazing complexity of his body and states that God is the author and should be praised for His works. "*I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well*" (Psa. 139:14). No other evidence for the existence of an almighty, all-wise Creator is needed than the fact of man's miraculous makeup.

(1) David was curiously wrought and fashioned in continuance (Psa. 139:15, 16). This is a wonderful description of how the infant grows in the womb, beginning with the microscopic fertilized egg. The statement that David was made "*in the lowest parts of the earth*" does not refer to places under the earth but to the womb itself. It is a poetic description of the womb as a dark, inaccessible place where man's eye does not penetrate. The Hebrew word translated "curiously wrought" (*raqam*) means "to variegate color, *i.e.* embroider; by implication, to fabricate" (Strong). It is elsewhere translated "needlework" (Ex. 26:36) and "embroiderer" (Ex. 38:23). Barnes comments: "It refers to the act of 'weaving in' various threads--as now in weaving carpets. The reference here is to the various and complicated tissues of the human frame--the tendons, nerves, veins, arteries, muscles, 'as if' they had been woven, or as they appear to be curiously interweaved. No work of tapestry can be compared with this; no art of man could 'weave' together such a variety of most tender and delicate fibres and tissues as those which go to make up the human frame, even if they were made ready to his hand: and who but God could 'make' them? The comparison is a most beautiful one; and it will be admired the more man understands the structure of his own frame" (Barnes). Alan Gillen, M.D.,

says, “The body is woven together just like a tapestry. For example, look at the interwoven complexity of a single skeletal muscle. ... Under the microscope, the amazing interwoven design manifests itself” (*Body by Design*, 2001, p. 8).

(2) A description of David’s body was written in God’s book before he was formed (Psa. 139:16). This amazing divine book of human blueprints apparently exists in heaven.

c. In light of this Bible teaching, abortion is certainly murder. That child does not belong to the mother; it belongs to the Creator. A woman is not free to do with her body as she pleases because she is a created being and is accountable to God, and further, that infant in her womb is a separate body and a separate individual.

7. Idolaters killed their sons and daughters, and this was something that God hated (Psalm 106:38).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON ABORTION

1. What is the shedding of innocent blood?
2. What passage says that God hates those who shed innocent blood?
3. What does the Bible call an unborn "fetus"?
4. Who is in control of conception?
5. Who forms man's soul?
6. In what Psalm did David describe how God fashioned him in the womb?

7. What did idolaters do to their children in Old Testament times?

Evolution

The doctrine of Darwinian evolution is taught throughout the world today. It proposes that life originated spontaneously from inanimate matter and that all living things evolved from an original single-celled creature.

The point of this lesson is that a Bible believer must reject evolution because the Bible and evolution are diametrically opposed.

Some professing Christians try to hold to evolution *and* the Bible by interpreting the early chapters of Genesis as poetical or allegorical. But this is an impossible position, as we will see in our first point:

1. The early chapters of Genesis are literal history.

a. The first 11 chapters of Genesis are written as literal history, not as poetry. “There are 64 geographical terms, 88 personal names, 48 generic names and at least 21 identifiable cultural items (such as gold, bdellium, onyx, brass, iron, gopher wood, bitumen, mortar brick, stone, harp, pipe, cities, towers) in those opening chapters. The significance of this list may be seen by comparing it, for example, with ‘the paucity of references in the Koran. The single tenth chapter of Genesis has five times more geographical data of importance than the whole of the Koran.’ Every one of these items presents us with the possibility of establishing the reliability of our author. The content runs head on into a description of the real world rather than recounting events belonging to another world or level of reality” (Walter Kaiser, Jr., “The Literary Form of Genesis 1-11,” *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, ed. by J. Barton Payne, 1970, p. 59).

b. Genesis is cited as history by Jesus. In Luke 17:26-32, for example, Jesus mentions Noah, the Ark, the Flood, Lot, the destruction of Sodom by fire, and

Lot's wife. Elsewhere Jesus mentions the Creation (Mk. 13:19), Adam and Eve (Mat. 19:4-6; Mk. 10:6-7), Cain and Abel (Mat. 23:35; Lk. 11:50-51), and Abraham (John 8:39-40). Christ always treats Genesis as history, and it is impossible to honor Him as Lord and Saviour and disregard His teaching. In Matthew 19:4-5, Christ mentions both "accounts" of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 and treats them as history. Many theistic evolutionists, such as Francis Collins, head of the Human Genome Project, claim to be "evangelical" and to honor Christ as Lord and Saviour, but this is not consistent with the brazen rejection of His teaching about Genesis and human origins.

c. Genesis 1-11 is cited as history by seven of the eight New Testament writers (all but James); altogether the first eleven chapters of Genesis are quoted from or referred to 100 times. Genesis is always treated as history in the New Testament.

d. Genesis 1-3 forms the historical foundation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

(1) Jesus' genealogy is traced from Adam (Luke 3:23-38).

(2) Adam is compared to Christ (Romans 5:12-19; 1 Cor. 15:45). It is obvious that the apostle Paul considered Adam an historical figure and Genesis as literal history.

(3) The gospel is required because of the Fall of the human race in Adam (Romans 5:12). If the Fall is not real, the gospel is meaningless.

2. The teaching of Genesis cannot be reconciled with the teaching of evolution.

a. *Genesis says God created the world and everything in it in six days as opposed to millions or billions of years.* The days of creation in Genesis 1 were regular 24-hour days, days with an evening and a morning (Gen. 1:5, 8,

13, 19, 23, 31). This is repeated in Exodus 20:10-11.

b. *Genesis says everything was made to reproduce after its kind.* The statement “after their kind” is found nine times in Genesis chapter one (Gen. 1:11, 12, 21, 24, 25). This is precisely what we observe in the world. Dogs reproduce dogs, spiders reproduce spiders, birds reproduce birds, and peanuts reproduce peanuts. Animals can interbreed and “evolve” within kinds (e.g., various kinds of dogs can be interbred to produce different kinds of dogs), but a dog cannot interbreed with a cat. This is what the Bible teaches and this is what we can observe everywhere in nature, but evolution denies that everything always reproduces after its own kind. It teaches that the fish evolved into the amphibian, and the amphibian into the reptile, and the reptile into the bird, *etc.*

c. *Genesis says the first man was created directly by God and was not the product of gradual evolution from the ape kingdom.* The Bible says Adam was the first man (1 Cor. 15:45). And Eve is the mother of all men (Gen. 3:20).

d. *Genesis says man is made in God’s image and is different from the animals* (Gen. 1:27). Evolution says man is an evolved animal.

e. *Genesis says the world was created perfect, then fell under sin and has been deteriorating ever since.* This is consistent with everything we can observe. Everything is proceeding from order to disorder. Everything is deteriorating, running down. This is exactly what the Second Law of Thermodynamics describes, as even secular evolutionists admit. Isaac Asimov was an evolutionist, but his definition of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, as follows, actually refutes evolution and proves the Bible: “The universe is constantly getting more disorderly! Viewed that way, we can see the Second Law all about us. How difficult to maintain houses, and machinery, and our own bodies in perfect working order; how easy to let them deteriorate. In fact, all we have to do is nothing, and everything deteriorates, collapses, breaks down, wears out, all by itself and that is what the Second Law is all about” (Asimov, “In the Game of Energy and Thermodynamics You Can’t Break

Even,” *Smithsonian Institute Journal*, June 1970, p. 10). How contrary this is to the theory of evolution, which says that things have gradually evolved from non-life to life, from chaos to order.

f. *Genesis says everything was designed to fulfill God’s purposes.* Wherever we look in nature, from the microscopic to the astronomic, we see design, which is contrary to the theory of evolution that says the world is the product of blind naturalistic processes. Study the cell, the eye, the ear, the leaf, the flying wing, the atom, light, sound, water--everywhere you find purpose and design. Michael Denton observes, “It is the sheer universality of perfection, the fact that everywhere we look, to whatever depth we look, we find an elegance and ingenuity of an absolutely transcending quality, which so mitigates against the idea of chance” (*Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, 1983, p. 342). Even a “simple” microscopic one-celled bacterium (R. Coli) contains DNA information units equivalent to 100 million pages of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and all of that information works together in perfect harmony and is self-replicating! Purpose and design is what one would expect if God created the world as the Genesis record says He did, but if evolution were true, we would find chaos and haphazardness.

g. *Genesis indicates that the earth’s history is only about 6,000 years old,* whereas evolution claims that it is billions of years.

h. *Genesis says man had the ability to use language from the beginning, so that he might communicate with God.* But according to evolution, language evolved from animal grunts and squeals. It is important to understand that even modern archaeology says that writing began about 6,000 years ago, which fits the Bible’s record exactly (Joseph Naveh, *Origins of the Alphabets: Introduction to Archaeology*, Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Publishing House, p. 6).

i. *Genesis says man had the ability to create an intelligent civilization from the very beginning.* Adam’s children raised cattle, created musical instruments, and worked in brass and iron (Gen. 4:20-22). Evolution, on the

other hand, claims that man's civilization began with a "stone age" in which "cave men" lived like animals.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON EVOLUTION

1. What are four reasons why we know that the early chapters of Genesis are literal history?
2. Name eight people in Genesis that are mentioned by Jesus.
3. How many times are the first 11 chapters of Genesis quoted and referred to in the New Testament?
4. In what three ways is Genesis 1-3 the historical foundation of the Gospel?
5. What are nine ways that the teaching of Genesis is different from the teaching of evolution?
6. How does the Second Law of Thermodynamics disprove evolution?
7. According to modern archaeology, when did writing begin?
8. How does the Bible refute the evolutionary teaching of a stone age?

The Sabbath

MEMORY VERSES: Exodus 31:12-13; Nehemiah 9:13-14; Colossians 2:16

The Sabbath is God's sign to Israel and was first given to her when she was in the wilderness

Seventh-day Adventists teach that men kept the sabbath from the days of Adam, but this is contrary to the Bible's own record. While it is true that the sabbath originated at end of the six days of creation (Gen. 2:1-3), that was God's rest, not man's. There is no record in Genesis that God gave the sabbath to man. The saints in Genesis built altars, prayed, offered sacrifices, and tithed; but the Scripture is silent in regard to sabbath keeping.

Nehemiah 9:13-14 plainly states that the sabbath was first given to Israel in the wilderness.

If Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had kept the sabbath, their children would have been familiar with the practice; but Nehemiah tells us that this was not the case.

Exodus 31:12-13 plainly states that the sabbath was a special sign between God and Israel. If mankind in general had been given the sabbath following creation, it could not have been a sign for Israel. The fact is that the sabbath belongs to the nation Israel and not to any other people.

It is also important to note that the sabbath will be an eternal possession of Israel (Ex 31:16). This sign will never be annulled or transferred to another people. This explains why the prophets foretell that Israel will keep the sabbath even after the kingdom of Christ is established on earth (Isa. 66:23). It also explains why Jesus Christ mentioned the sabbath in His prophecies of the Tribulation (Mat. 24:20). Jews still keep the sabbath today and there are restrictions in the

land of Israel. El Al Airline does not fly on the sabbath, for example.

The Sabbath and the New Testament Believer

In their writings to the churches, the Apostles only mentioned the sabbath three times:

1. The sabbath is a symbol of salvation rest in Christ (Heb. 4). Just as the Jews did not work on the sabbath, even so the believer is saved by God's grace without works.
2. The New Testament believer is not bound to keep the sabbath (Col. 2:16). When Paul speaks of "sabbath days," plural, he is referring to all of the rest days that God gave Israel, including those associated with the feasts. For example, Pentecost always fell on the first day of the week, but it was a special sabbath wherein no work was done (Lev. 23:16-21). Seventh-day Adventists and other sabbath keepers claim that Colossians 2:16 does not refer to the regular weekly sabbath, but there is no evidence that this is the case.
3. The New Testament believer has liberty in the matter of holy days (Rom. 14:4-6).

Those who claim that the sabbath is binding upon the Christian, are teaching contrary to apostolic doctrine.

"The sabbath relates to the old creation and was given expressly to Israel; the Lord's Day relates to the new creation and belongs especially to the church. The sabbath speaks of law as six days of labor which are followed by rest, but the Lord's day speaks of grace, for we begin the week with rest that is followed by works" (Wiersbe's *Old Testament Outlines*).

Why, then, did Jesus keep the sabbath? He kept the sabbath for the same reason He kept all the other Mosaic laws. (He also observed the feasts.) Jesus did these things because He was born a Jew, born under the law, that He might fulfill it and redeem His people from its penalty and bondage (Gal. 4:4; Rom. 9:5).

Bible evidence that the early Christians worshipped on Sunday

1. Jesus rose from the dead on the first day (Mk. 16:9).
2. Jesus first appeared to his disciples on the first day (Mk. 16:9).
3. Jesus repeatedly met with the disciples at different places on the first day after the resurrection (Mk. 16:9-11; Mt 28:8-10; Lk. 24:34; Mk. 16:12-13; Jn. 20:19-23).
4. Jesus blessed the disciples on the first day (Jn. 20:19).
5. Jesus imparted to the disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit on the first day (Jn. 20:22).
6. On the first day Jesus commissioned the disciples to preach the gospel to all the world (Jn. 20:21; with Mk. 16:9-15).
7. On the first day Jesus ascended to Heaven, was seated at the right hand of the Father and was made Head of all (Jn. 20:17; Eph. 1:20).
8. On the first day many of the dead saints arose from the grave (Mt. 27:52-53).
9. The first day became the day of joy and rejoicing to the disciples (Jn. 20:20; Lk. 24:41).

10. On the first day the gospel of the risen Christ was first preached (Lk. 24:34).
11. On the first day Jesus explained the Scriptures to the disciples (Lk. 24:27, 45).
12. On the first day the purchase of our redemption was completed (Rom. 4:25).
13. On the first day the Holy Spirit descended (Acts 2:1). Pentecost was on the 50th day after the sabbath following the wave offering (Lev. 23:15-16). Thus Pentecost was always on a Sunday.
14. The Christians met to worship on the first day (Acts 20:6-7; 1 Cor. 16:2) (D.M. Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*).

Since those days, the vast majority of Christians have always met to worship on the Lord's day. They do this in honor of the resurrection of their Savior. Christ was in the tomb during the sabbath, and rose as the firstborn from the dead on the first day. The sabbath signifies the last day of the old creation (Gen. 2:2). Sunday is the first day of the new creation.

Historical evidence that the early Christians worshipped on Sunday

The Epistle of Barnabas (about A.D. 100) -- "Wherefore, also we keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead."

The Epistle of Ignatius (about A.D. 107) -- "Be not deceived with strange doctrines, nor with old fables, which are unprofitable. For if we still live according to the Jewish Law, we acknowledge that we have not received grace ... If, therefore, those who were brought up in the ancient order of things have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but

living in the observance of the Lord's Day, on which also our life has sprung up again by Him and by His death."

Justin Martyr (about A.D. 140) -- "And on the day called Sunday all who live in cities or in the country gather together in one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read. ... But Sunday is the day on which we all hold a common assembly, because it is the First day of the week on which God ... made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead."

Bardesanes, Edessa (A.D. 180) -- "On one day the first of the week, we assemble ourselves together."

Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 194) -- "He, in fulfillment of the precept, according to the gospel, keeps the Lord's Day ... glorifying the Lord's resurrection in himself."

Tertullian (A.D. 200) -- "We solemnize the day after Saturday in contradiction to those who call this day their sabbath."

Irenaeus (about A.D. 155-202) -- "The Mystery of the Lord's Resurrection may not be celebrated on any other day than the Lord's Day, and on this alone should we observe the breaking off of the Paschal Feast."

Cyprian (A.D. 250) -- "The eighth day, that is, the first day after the sabbath, and the Lord's Day."

Anatolius (A.D. 270) -- "Our regard for the Lord's resurrection which took place on the Lord's Day will lead us to celebrate it."

Peter, Bishop of Alexandria (A.D. 306) -- "But the Lord's Day we celebrate as a day of joy, because on it, he rose again."

day of joy, because on it, he rose again.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE SABBATH

1. When was the sabbath first given to men?
2. Why does Genesis 2 mention the sabbath if it was not given to men at that time?
3. What passage says the sabbath is a sign between God and Israel?
4. Why does the Bible talk about the keeping of the sabbath in the kingdom?
5. According to Hebrews 4, the sabbath is symbolic of what?
6. Why does Colossians 2:16 refer to a plurality of sabbaths?
7. What evidence is there that Colossians 2:16 does not refer to the regular weekly sabbath?
8. What are five Bible evidences that the early Christians met on Sunday?
9. What are three early historical references to Sunday worship?

Dressing for the Lord Part 1

MEMORY VERSES: *Deuteronomy 22:5; 1 Timothy 2:9; 1 Corinthians 11:14-15*

Dress is very important, first, because it both reflects and affects the heart. Second, dress is important because clothing is a language. It is a “social message,” a fashion “statement.” The knowledge of this is the engine that drives the fashion industry, and the child of God needs to understand it, as well. I need to ask myself what message is my clothing broadcasting? Wikipedia defines fashion as “a prevailing mode of expression.” It acknowledges that “every article of clothing carries a cultural and social meaning” and observes that “humans must know the code in order to recognize the message transmitted.”

Abercrombie & Fitch, the clothing company that markets “edgy” clothing featuring loose sexuality, is said to be “best known for its REBELLIOUS ATTITUDE” (“Flip-Flops, Torn Jeans, and Control,” *Business Week*, May 30, 2005). Thus, even the world recognizes the message of Abercrombie & Fitch clothing. They don’t merely sell clothing; they sell an attitude.

Therefore, clothing styles are not innocent. Each style preaches a message, and God’s people must beware of sending the wrong message with their clothing.

We must understand that the clothing industry cares nothing about submitting to God’s Word.

God’s people do not need a list of certain fashions to wear or not to wear. What we need are clear biblical principles whereby we can judge clothing styles. Fashions constantly change, but the principles of God’s Word do not.

A SUMMARY OF THE BIBLE'S PRINCIPLES ON THE CHRISTIAN'S DRESS

1. The Christian's clothing is to be modest (1 Timothy 2:9).

Modesty is described in the New Testament by the words "chaste," "sober," "discreet," and "shamefaced." This would forbid anything that shows the woman off in a lascivious or indecent manner.

First, modest attire covers the body properly and does not expose the parts of the body that have particular sexual appeal. Isaiah 47:2 says that for a woman to bare her leg and to show the thigh is nakedness. Thus, immodest clothing would include short skirts, shorts, slit skirts, low blouses, short blouses that bare the midriff, deep V-necked dresses, backless dresses, halter tops, and any modern swimsuit. Immodest clothing would also include any style that uses flimsy material that can be seen through.

Second, modest attire does not sensually accent the body. Tight, clinging attire is as immodest as skimpy attire because the woman's figure is emphasized and accented, and man's attention is directed to that which is forbidden outside of marriage.

Third, modest attire is not extravagant. When the apostle deals with modest attire in 1 Timothy 2:9, he mentions "broided hair, gold, pearls, and costly array." The goal of this world's godless fashion industry is to create a haughty, ostentatious, worldly-wise look, as well as a sexual look. The godly woman will reject such fashions and clothe herself and her daughters in "modest apparel."

The immodest clothing industry understands these things very well and strives to dress women seductively rather than modestly.

2. The Christian's clothing is to be sexually distinctive (Gen. 1:27; Deut.

22:5; 1 Cor. 11:14-15).

The woman's dress is to be distinctively feminine and the man's, distinctively masculine.

The modern unisex movement is in rebellion against Almighty God and His Word, and the Christian should have nothing whatsoever to do with any fashion associated with it. The androgynous unisex image is not innocent. It was created by rock musicians who intended to overthrow tradition. Female pants were created as a unisex fashion statement and play a central role in the modern unisex movement.

Hair styles are also statements. Long hair on men and short hair on women are not merely harmless fashions, but are statements of rebellion against God's created order (1 Corinthians 11:14-15). One of the rock songs of the 1960s called upon young men to grow their hair long and "let your freak flag show." David Lee Roth of Van Halen testified: "[My long hair] is a flag. It's Tarzan. I'll always be anti-establishment" (John Makujina, *Measuring the Music*, p. 73).

Objections Answered:

Objection No. 1: Deuteronomy 22:5 is part of the Law of Moses that has been done away in Christ.

Answer: While we know that the Law of Moses is not the Christian's Law, it does contain lessons for Christian living. In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul recounts many things from the Law and concludes, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. 10:11). Deuteronomy 22:5 contains a moral principle that is written for our admonition. The principle is that there is to be a clear distinction between how men and women dress.

Paul emphasized this in 1 Corinthians 14:34 when he said, “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.” Thus, according to Paul, the Law of Moses does speak directly to Christian living in the matter of the created difference between male and female.

Objection No. 2: If we follow Deuteronomy 22:5 today we must also follow Deuteronomy 22:9-11, which says we should not sow different kinds of seeds in a garden or wear garments of mixed fibers.

Answer: Though we do not obey these commandments in the material realm today, we still must follow the abiding moral principle that they teach in the spiritual realm. By giving these commands, God was teaching Israel the principle of separation. Such laws were designed to teach them to “put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean” (Lev. 10:10). Deuteronomy 22:9-11, then, reminds the New Testament Christian that he is to separate from everything that is evil and wrong before the Lord (Mat. 6:24; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; 1 John 2:15-16, etc.).

Commentators of past centuries, who were not prejudiced one way or the other by the debate on modern fashions, held that the teaching of Deuteronomy 22:5 is applicable to the Christian life.

The footnotes in the Geneva Bible (1560) said: “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God. For that alters the order of nature, and shows that you despise God.”

Matthew Poole (1624-1679) said: “Now this is forbidden, partly for decency sake, that men might not confound, nor seem to confound, those sexes which God hath distinguished, that all appearance of evil might be avoided, such change of garments carrying a manifest umbrage or sign of softness and effeminacy in the man, of arrogance and impudency in the woman, of lightness

and petulancy in both; and partly to cut off all suspicions and occasions of evil, which this practice opens a wide door unto.”

Matthew Henry (1662-1714) said: “The distinction of sexes by the apparel is to be kept up, for the preservation of our own and our neighbour’s chastity, De. 22:5. Nature itself teaches that a difference be made between them in their hair (1 Cor. 11:14), and by the same rule in their clothes, which therefore ought not to be confounded, either in ordinary wear or occasionally.”

John Gill (1697-1771) said: “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man ... It being very unseemly and impudent, and contrary to the modesty of her sex. ... neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment; which would betray effeminacy and softness unbecoming men ... since in nature a difference of sexes is made, it is proper and necessary that this should be known by difference of dress, or otherwise many evils might follow; and this precept is agreeable to the law and light of nature...”

Adam Clarke (1762-1832) said: “It is, however, a very good general precept understood literally, and applies particularly to those countries where the dress alone distinguishes between the male and the female. The close-shaved gentleman may at any time appear like a woman in the female dress, and the woman appear as a man in the male’s attire. Were this to be tolerated in society, it would produce the greatest confusion.”

Albert Barnes (1789-1870) wrote: “The distinction between the sexes is natural and divinely established, and cannot be neglected without indecorum and consequent danger to purity (compare 1 Cor. 11:3-15).”

Jamieson, Fausset, Brown (1864) said: “They were properly forbidden; for the adoption of the habiliments of the one sex by the other is an outrage on decency, obliterates the distinctions of nature by fostering softness and effeminacy in the man, impudence and boldness in the woman as well as levity and hypocrisy in both; and, in short, it opens the door to an influx of so many evils that all who

wear the dress of another sex are pronounced ‘an abomination unto the Lord.’”

Perhaps you have observed that many of these older commentators cross-referenced the principle of Deuteronomy 22:5 with that of 1 Corinthians 11:14-15 where Paul teaches that the woman and the man are to maintain a difference in appearance.

Paul says the distinction in appearance should be maintained because of the created order and the different roles that the man and the woman were designed to fill (1 Cor. 11:7-9).

God made man and woman for different roles on earth (Gen. 1:27).

Thus, both the Old and the New Testaments teach that it is God’s will for the man and the woman to dress distinctively. One woman made the following important observation:

“People seem to be playing ‘pick-n-choose’ with Old Testament verses. They want the twenty-third Psalm, the hundredth Psalm, and all the OT verses that won’t affect their lifestyle, but then they try to explain away any OT verse that would have any effect on how they live. Well, 2 Timothy 3:16 says, ‘ALL SCRIPTURE is given by inspiration of God, and IS PROFITABLE for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness’ (<http://www.momof9splace.com/modesty.html>).

Why would the godly woman want to be identified with a fashion that is so intimately associated with a movement and philosophy that is in rebellion against God’s created order?

Many men of God have observed that the popularizing of pants-wearing by women in the past 40 years has gone hand-in-hand with a shocking decline in female modesty. One pastor wrote:

“I believe it leads to a breakdown of the sexes, causes immorality and contributes to homosexuality. Pants cause a woman to act masculine. Women today do not know how to sit like a lady or to act modestly because of their pants. They no longer bend at the knees, but they bend at the waist, exposing their chest in even a modest garment. They do not sit with their knees together and the ankles crossed.”

Another wrote:

“Are we godlier today than our grandparent’s generation? I think not! They were scandalized by women who wore pants and swimsuits and mini-skirts. Today, those things are commonly accepted among believers and even in churches.”

Another man said:

“I am 68 years old and have been married to a wonderful, modest lady for 49 years. I am appalled at how so many women dress even in church. My mother is 88 years old and worked in the cotton fields alongside my father back when we did it all by hand. I’ve never seen my mother or either of my grandmothers in pants or shorts and they all worked in the fields. Thank God for the example they were to me. By the way, they all washed their clothes by hand and I never saw any women’s undergarments hanging out on the clothes line for all that passed by to look at. This proves that their modesty went far deeper than what they put on their bodies. It was in their hearts.”

While we can’t turn the clock back to a bygone era, God’s people can hold to the old Bible paths and reject the dictates and mores of this shallow, lascivious, and rebellious age.

Objection No. 3: When it comes to short hair on men and long hair on women, how long is long and how short is short?

The first answer to this is that the length should not be questionable within the particular societal context. Hair length has varied in various societies and in various times, but if a man's hair is considered long according to the context in which he finds himself, then it is not short enough. And if a woman's hair is considered short, then it is not long enough.

The second answer is that the believer's hair length should not be offensive to others (Rom. 14:19, 21). As a young Christian I cut my long hair so that it was much shorter than it was before my conversion. But one night when I was on visitation, my hair was criticized by an elderly woman who felt that it was too long for a "man of God." Instead of getting upset and standing on my "rights," I humbled myself and got it cut the next day. Men and women both should be sensitive to this principle. There are many women today in Bible-believing churches who have very short hair. This is true for younger women, but it seems to be even more the custom of elderly women. I know many men and women of God who are offended by this and believe it is wrong, and these women should take heed to this warning and avoid offense. Biblically, this is far more important than "convenience" and "fashion" and "my rights."

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON DRESSING PART 1

1. What are two reasons why dress is important?
2. What Bible chapter discusses hair length on men and women?
3. Why was the unisex image created?
4. Abercrombie & Fitch markets a " _____ "
5. What are the seven principles of dress that we cover in these lessons?

5. What are the seven principles of dress that we cover in these lessons.
6. What are other New Testament words for "modesty"?
7. What are three requirements for modest apparel?
8. What verse says the things in the Law of Moses are our examples?
9. What is the abiding moral principle of Deuteronomy 22:5?
10. What is the abiding moral principle of Deuteronomy 22:9-11?
11. Name four Bible commentators who applied Deuteronomy 22:5 to the Christian life?

Dressing for the Lord Part 2

MEMORY VERSES: Romans 14:21; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; Titus 2:2-5; 14

In the previous study, we looked at two Scriptural principles for dress: The Christian's clothing is to be modest, and the Christian's clothing is to be sexually distinctive. Here we will consider five more principles:

3. The Christian's clothing is to be identified with holiness and godliness and not to be identified with anything that is evil (1 Thess. 5:22; Eph. 5:11).

If a clothing style is identified with rebellion against God's laws, with anarchy, with sexual freedom, with blasphemy, with idolatry, with moral decadence, or with any other evil it should not be worn by a Christian. This would prohibit fashions, for example, that have come out of the world of punk and rap, such as long hair on men, tight jeans on women, torn jeans, low-slung baggy pants, and such. This would also prohibit tattoos with their identification with rebellion and self-expression (the "me" generation) and paganism.

4. The Christian's clothing is to be characterized by separation from the world (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; Titus 2:12-13; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-16).

The Christian's clothing is not to be conformed to anything in the world that is associated with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Examples of fashions that are worldly are indecent female dress styles that flaunt her sexuality and ostentatious fashions that cry, "Look at me."

5. The Christian's clothing is to mark him or her as peculiar unto the Lord, which refers to one who has been redeemed from all iniquity and who is

zealous for good works (Titus 2:14).

God's people are to be separate, peculiar, different, set apart. We must bear His stamp. We must stand out from the crowd because we are walking by heaven's light. We must not fly the world's flag. When God's people are no longer peculiar before the world they have compromised the Word of God. We must fear God more than man. We must be more concerned about pleasing God than society. We must not draw back from bearing Christ's reproach in this wicked world. He said, "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" (Mk. 8:38). Paul said that if we deny Christ, he also will deny us (2 Tim. 2:12).

6. The Christian's clothing should not cause others to stumble (Romans 14:21).

The Bible says that I am my brother's keeper. Any clothing style that would cause others to lust or that would be a poor example for others to follow or would otherwise cause offense should be avoided. We would mention in particular SLIT SKIRTS AND SLIT DRESSES. One purpose for this fashion is to tease men. Even if the slit is below the knee the effect is very sensual. We once asked a group of young Bible college men if they were tempted sexually by slit skirts, and every one of them admitted that they are. This should speak volumes to Christian women and young ladies to avoid this immodest fashion.

Many women seem to think that the issue of modesty is basically the man's problem and that if he would keep his eyes to himself that would be the end of the matter. The fact is that both the man and the woman have a grave responsibility.

Christian men most definitely should keep their eyes in check and say, with Job, "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?" (Job 31:1).

This is not to say, though, that Christian women can dress as they please because they have no responsibility in the matter. *If she knows that men are seriously tempted in the matter of sexual lust and if she knows that certain types of dress can cause more problems for men than others, why would a godly girl or woman not want to do everything she can not to cause a potential for stumbling?*

As Richard Baxter wrote in the seventeenth century,

“Though it be their [men] sin and vanity that is the cause, it is nevertheless your sin to be the unnecessary occasion: for you must consider that you live among diseased souls! And you must not lay a stumbling-block in their way, nor blow up the fire of their lust, nor make your ornaments their snares; but you must walk among sinful persons, as you would do with a candle among straw or gunpowder; or else you may see the flame which you would not foresee, when it is too late to quench it” (Richard Baxter, 1615-91).

David was a man after God’s own heart, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, a man who had determined not to set any wicked thing before his eyes; yet look at what happened to him after seeing a woman innocently (apparently) bathing on her roof. Why was she bathing in a place where someone could see her?

Most women don’t understand how powerful the visual element is to the man in the realm of sex and sensuality.

One man wrote to say:

“I do believe most women just do not know how men think. Period. I BELIEVE THAT THERE IS A WHOLE SEGMENT, GROUP, CLASS OF WOMEN, WHO, IF THEY REALLY UNDERSTOOD MEN, WOULD CHANGE THEIR DRESS CODE, BECAUSE THEY DO

WANT TO PLEASE GOD. ... *They just need to understand it's not just a list of do's and don'ts set forth to force them in to 'frumpiness,' but a desire of godly men to gain their cooperation in helping them NOT lust, and to not be stumbling blocks, because they just want to please God."*

Another man wrote,

“THE BIBLICAL ISSUE OF MODESTY IS BEST UNDERSTOOD BY AN UNDERSTANDING OF DEFRAUDING. No one should take any action whereby he causes desires to be raised in another that cannot be righteously satisfied. ... That our society drenches every inch of media in sexually explicit advertising is a source of much temptation, sadness and concern for this man. Facing that sort of issue with Christian sisters in a church setting is most grievous. I believe the phrase ‘long, loose and lots of it’ should be the motto of Christian women’s apparel.”

7. The older Christians should be an example for the younger (Titus 2:2-5).

Older women might be able to wear certain clothing styles without causing men to lust, but they need to be examples to girls and to the younger women.

In conclusion we quote the following statement by the late Bruce Lackey about the importance of the heart.

Dress is a matter of the heart. You might get somebody straightened out on the matter of the clothes they ought to wear and they still be just as lost as they were before you met them. Before I talk to anybody about clothes or anything else, the first thing I want to know is what about the heart? Have you been saved? Acts 15:9. Has your heart been purified by faith? Romans 10:9. Have you believed in your heart that God raised Christ from the dead? The first thing I want to know is about the heart and salvation. If you haven't been saved, it's not going to help your soul one way or the other to

change your clothes. You first have to come to Christ.

If you are saved, it is still a matter of the heart. If I were talking to a Christian about this, the first thing I would want to talk to him about would be the heart. Is your heart right with God? If your heart's not right with God, you are going to resent every argument and resent anybody even bringing up this discussion.

The Bible talks about the heart. Hebrews 10:22, 'Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.'

God is talking to Christian people there. And in verses 24 and 25, 'And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.'

Dressing properly is a matter of the heart (Bruce Lackey, "Bible Guidelines for Clothing").

The book *Dressing for the Lord* goes into this subject in great detail. This is available from Way of Life Literature.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON DRESSING PART 2

1. What is a biblical principle that prohibits believers from wearing tattoos?
2. What are some ostentatious fashions that cry, "Look at me"?
3. What does it mean to be "peculiar unto the Lord"?

4. Why must the believer stand out from the crowd?

5. In what verse did Jesus warn, “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...”?

6. In what verse did Paul say that if we deny Christ, he also will deny us?

7. What is the purpose of slit dresses?

8. Job said, “I made a _____ with mine eyes...”

9. Why does the woman have an obligation to dress modestly?

10. Did Bathsheba have any responsibility in David’s downfall?

11. Most women don’t understand how powerful the _____ element is to the man.

12. The biblical issue of modesty is best understood by an understanding of _____.

13. Why should older women dress modestly even if they are no longer sexually alluring?

14. Dress is a matter of the _____