

Discovery Series



SECTION THREE



Discovering Discipleship

Hope Christian Fellowship

"Making disciples who live & love like Jesus"

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FEATURES OF THIS WORKBOOK

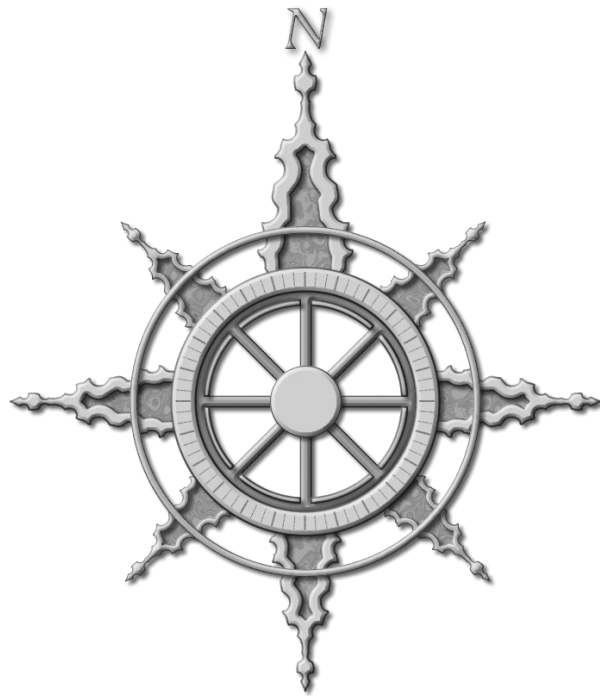
Now that you have completed *The Discovery Series: Discovering our Foundations*, you are ready to continue your discipleship journey. We have prepared this workbook for you to help you along the way. As with *Discovering our Foundations*, there are several features built into this workbook you should be aware of.

1. It is designed for self-study. Although someone may help you through it, or you may attend a group going through it together, you will be doing most of the work yourself. The material is arranged so you will cover one topic each week. You may either complete all five pages of this weekly material at one time or you may easily break it up and complete a page on five separate days.
2. We cite most of the Bible verses for you to look up rather than being quoted in the text for you. This is intentional, and we do in order to help you learn how to find your way around the Bible for yourself. At first you may need to look up each book of the Bible in the table of contents of your Bible. But as time goes on, you will find yourself becoming more and more familiar with the Scriptures and easily turn to any book of the Bible.
3. The workbook is based on the New International Version (NIV2011) of the Bible. There are several good translations of the Bible available, but we chose to use the NIV because of its contemporary wording. If you do not already have an NIV2011 Bible you should get one to make your studies more smoothly.
4. When you have completed the material for a topic, it is a good practice to go over it with a mentor, perhaps someone in your home group (who has already gone through it). They will be available to answer questions you may have. Their main purpose will be to help you see the importance of what you learned for being a more effective disciple of Jesus Christ. You can also complete the test in the back, turn it in to the office & receive a certificate of completion.
5. Don't be alarmed at the length of time involved. You can go through it one step at a time and at your own pace so you will not be overwhelmed. And remember, you have a lot of ideas, desires, and habits left over from your old life that must be overcome if you are to be an effective follower of Jesus Christ.

ALSO – remember to begin each chapter with prayer. Ask the Lord for His guidance, understanding and wisdom as you continue to learn more and more about Him and His Kingdom.

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The Kingdom of God



What the Kingdom of God IS

Once a person becomes saved, they are identified as different from those around them who are not saved. The term "the world" is used to refer to those who are not saved, and the terms such as "Christians" or "children of God," among others, are used to describe that group of people who are living in that salvation. Another term used to describe this called-out group of people, and their working and living in the world, is the "Kingdom of God." In the English language, a "kingdom" is a king's domain: it is that which is subject to him. Actually, a better translation of the Greek word rendered as "kingdom" is "rule." What we are talking about is the "rule of God", or his authority and dominion.

The kingdom of God is where God's will is done, where He governs.

Isaiah 9:7a

His government and its peace will _____ . He will _____ with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for _____ .

Earthly kingdoms are temporary and last only until they are overthrown by another. But the kingdom of God is always expanding and will last forever (See Daniel 2:44-45).

Matthew 6:10

May your Kingdom come _____ .
May _____ be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Matthew 7:21

Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who _____ of my Father in heaven will enter.

The kingdom of God is found within people not a territory.

Luke 17:20

One day the Pharisees asked Jesus, 'When will the Kingdom of God come?' Jesus replied, 'The _____ of God can't be _____ by _____.'

You cannot see God's kingdom. It is not as though God conquers a territory with an army and marks its borders visibly with fortifications and walls.

Luke 17:21

You won't be able to say, ' _____ !' or 'It's over there!' For the Kingdom of God is _____ .

God's kingdom is not defined by location. While earthly kingdoms have borders, the kingdom of God is unbounded.

The kingdom of God is found within the hearts of people, not in a specific region. It is people not places who do the will of God.

Now that you have filled in the blanks on this page, read over each verse again, substituting the word "**rule**" for "**kingdom**." By doing this you will get a clearer understanding of what the Bible means by "kingdom of God."

The "kingdom of God" and the "kingdom of heaven" are exactly the same thing. Both expressions are used interchangeably in the Bible (compare Matt. 4:17 with Mark 1:15; Matt. 10:7 with Luke 9:2; Matt. 11:12 with Luke 16:16). Perhaps you have heard the evening news report, "The White House said such and such." This is precisely the same thing as saying, "The President or one of his spokesmen said such and such." It is simply an expression identifying the President with the seat of his office. Likewise, the "kingdom of heaven" is the same as the "kingdom of God" and merely identifies where it is God rules from.

Who is In the Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God includes the entire realm of personal beings who are freely submitted to the will of God. It is God's rule within the hearts of angels, men and women of all ages. With this in mind, there are several kinds of persons who are the King's subjects in the Kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is established today through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Acts 8:12

But now the people believed Philip's message of Good News concerning the _____ of _____ and the name of _____. As a result, many men and women were baptized.

This implies that proclaiming the Kingdom and preaching the Gospel are the same thing. Faith in the Gospel produces obedience to the will or rule of God (see Romans 1:5, 16:26).

All the angels who did not rebel are included in the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 18:10

Beware that you don't look down on any of these little ones. For I tell you that in _____ their _____ are always in the presence of my heavenly Father.

All the Old Testament believers are included in the Kingdom of God.

Luke 13:28

There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for you will see _____, _____, _____, and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, but you will be thrown out.

These are people from the Old Testament, who followed faithfully in obedience after God..

All the New Testament Christians are included in the Kingdom of God.

Revelation 1:6

He has made _____ a _____ of priests for God his Father. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.

This refers to the "universal church," marked with a capital "C," which consists of all true Christians of every age and includes many local churches all over the world.

The Kingdom of God is entered by being born again as we believe the Gospel.

John 3:3

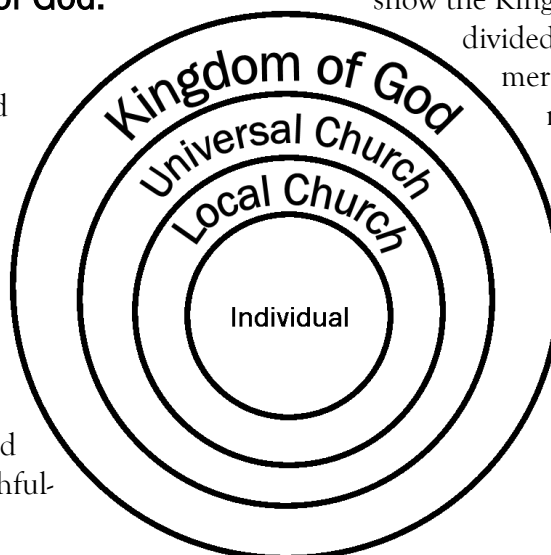
Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are _____, you _____ the Kingdom of God.

Only when we are born again can we see the truth of the Gospel and do the will of God.

John 3:5

Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can _____ the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.

Regardless of when they lived, everyone who has ever followed the will of God is a part of the Kingdom of God. The concentric circles at the left show the Kingdom of God may be subdivided into the universal Church, numerous local churches, and even more numerous people. If you are a Christian, you are already in the Kingdom of God and subject to His rule within your heart.



The Universal Church & Local Churches

The Bible, in several places, refers to a group of Christians gathered in one place as “a church”, even though they were only a small part of the universal Church, also called the Body, shown with a capital “B” (1 Corinthians 11:29, Ephesians 4:15, 5:23).

For example, Paul speaks of several churches in the Roman province of Galatia (Galatians 1:1-2). He also mentioned churches that met in people's homes (Rom. 16:15, Colossians 4:15, Philemon 2).

The Greek word, “ekklesia” translated into English as “church” means “the called-out ones.”

The universal Church consists of the people “called out” to Jesus Christ *regardless* of time and place.

A local church consists of the people “called out” to Jesus Christ at a *particular* time and place.

If you are born again and have the Spirit of God within you, you are already a member of the universal Church. But it is up to you to “join” a local church which is a part of the universal Church.

Membership in a Local Body

How many local churches should you “belong” to? Some feel they do not need a church at all, thinking instead that because they are believers they are already a part of the universal Church. Others move from church to church, based on their own preferences and without seeking the Lord’s direction.

Neither of these extremes are the will of God. You may visit other churches on occasion, and (if led by the Holy Spirit) you may change membership from one church to another. However, **you must actively take part in one and only one church at a time.** This does not mean one church

is necessarily better than others. It simply means the church can do its job for you and you do yours for the church only if you are devoted to one local church. **It is God who places you in the body as HE desires,** and you must allow Him to do so.

1 Corinthians 12:18

But our bodies have many parts, and God has _____ just where he wants it.

Only in one local church can you follow a leader.

Hebrews 13:17

_____ your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are _____ to God. Give them reason to do this with _____ and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.

Who are you going to submit to if you are not an active part of a single local church? Which pastor will you follow? How can you give joy to your leaders in their work, and how can they be accountable, if you never stay and submit unto them?

Only in one local church can you be equipped for ministry.

Ephesians 4:11-12

Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to _____ God’s people to do his _____ and _____ up the church, the body of Christ.

Are you one of God's people? Then you need to

be equipped and trained for ministry.

Only in one local church can you serve by using your spiritual gifts.

Ephesians 4:16

He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As _____ part does its _____ special work, it helps the _____ parts grow, so that the _____ body is healthy and growing and full of love.

How many families were you raised in **at one time**? How many high schools did you attend **at one time**? How many armies can a soldier serve

in **at once**? The church is also a family, a school and an army.

A local church is part of the universal Church which gathers in a specific place at a certain time to fulfill the Great Commission. It is not the building we meet in. Nor is it confined within the walls of the building we meet in. The local church is a group of believers in Jesus Christ **working together** to reach their community with the Gospel and to build each other up in the faith. It is the Body of Christ, mandated to be His hands and feet, His bride working until He returns.

The Kingdom of God includes YOU!



This brings us back to **you**. You are part of something immense, nothing less than Christ's body here on earth, but you are also a very **important** part of it. Local churches consist of people like you and me who are submitted to the rule of God within their hearts. Obviously, this means you must obey the will of God. But I want to point your attention to two specific Bible verses that speak of our response to the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God is forcefully advancing.

Matthew 11:12

And from the time John the Baptist began preaching until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been _____, and violent people are attacking it.

The Kingdom of God is **here and now**. It is not just something we are waiting for in the future. The Kingdom of God is **advancing**. Indeed, the Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached to all nations before Jesus comes back (Matt. 24:14). Most important for you, the kingdom of God is seized by **bold** men and women. Do not *wait* for things to happen. **You** make them happen! Don't always wait for other Christians to tell you what to do. When you see in the Bible that you are sin-

ning, repent! When you see something you can do to help others, serve! When you have an opportunity to share the Gospel, preach! Take the initiative to fulfill God's will.

The Kingdom of God cannot be shaken.

Hebrews 12:28

Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be _____ God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe.

The rule of God cannot be shaken, and the gates of Hell cannot prevail against the Church (Matt. 16:18 ESV). You are on the winning side of an all-or-nothing struggle with eternal consequences! Therefore, thank God for your salvation, and worship Him in love and respect.

How do you fit in all this? You are called to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20). Being a disciple means we are to learn from Him and to endeavor to be more like Him. We learn to value what He values.

We value relationships with people because God the Father values relationships. He sent his only Son into the world to make a way for fallen people to come into relationship with Him again.

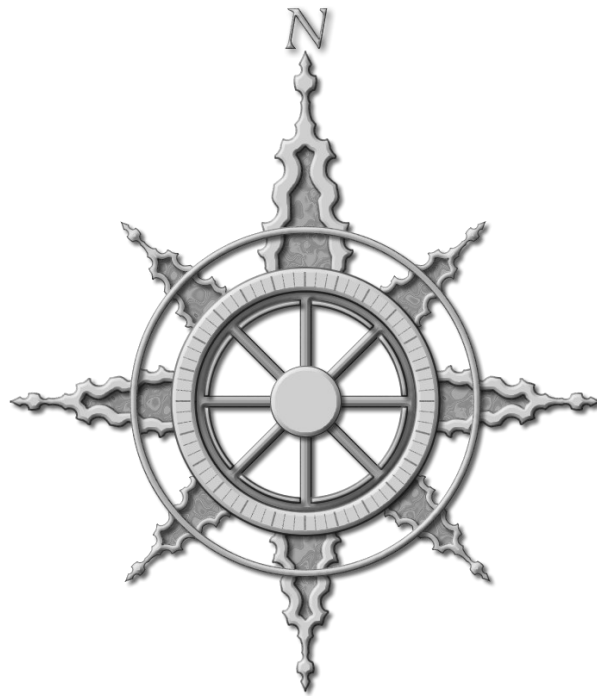
We believe that "**Relationships are the bridges over which values are transferred**" because we have realized that God Himself desires relationship with us

Here at Hope Christian Fellowship, we value relationships.

That's why our stated values are:

- **Loving God completely**
- **Loving Ourselves correctly**
- **Loving others compassionately.**

Making Disciples



The Condition of the World

Following the world's leading is very appealing, especially when you understand their main message centers around YOU!

There is only one commandment in the Satanic bible, "Do as thou wilt, and that shall be the whole of the law."

Our flesh naturally wants to go where it is restrained the least.

What the world approves, the Devil empowers. If our flesh submits to it, this is a recipe for delusion, deception, and destruction.

In the Psalms, David used some very strong words to describe this kind of condition.

Psalm 14:1-3

The _____ says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good. ² The LORD looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. ³ All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is _____ who does good, not even one.

Definition of a fool: a silly or stupid person; or person who lacks judgment or sense.

As we move away from following Christ, common sense leaves us.

Synonyms of a fool: Birdbrain, Blockhead, Bonehead, Bore, Dimwit.

This message offends us. We don't like the word "fool," applied to us. However, our discomfort with this word does not change the truth.

Jeremiah 4:22

My people are _____; they do not **know me**. They are senseless children; they have no understanding. They are skilled in doing evil; they _____ how to do good.

If our culture has moved away from God, that explains why we seem to lack even common sense. We have become fools. How can we ever hope to see our society transformed? What is the answer to such a daunting task?

Jesus Wants Disciples!

Making disciples is God's answer to the problems in the world today. Take your time pondering the next two passages:

Matthew 9:35-38

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had **compassion** on them, because they were **harassed and helpless**, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

When we stop and think about the state of the people of the world, we can see the helplessness, the foolishness, etc. We should be moved to **compassion**, as Jesus was.

Matthew 28:18-20

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

It was out of compassion that Jesus gave us this command. He cares, deeply. And so—he commands us to go and make disciples? He longs to embrace people, EVERY person, ALL nations.

Description

Where are Disciples Made?

It is through the Church that disciples are made and the plan of salvation is revealed through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 3:10

His intent was that now, _____ the _____, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms . . .

What Does a Disciple Look Like?

Colossians 1:28

He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully _____ in Christ.

A disciple is one who is **growing toward** maturity – living and loving like Jesus, wherever they are and whoever they are with.

What is a Disciple's Focus?

As disciples, we are to keep our eyes on Jesus and the reality of eternity.

Hebrews 12:1-3

. . . let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our _____ on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. . . . ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will _____ grow weary and lose heart.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Therefore we do _____ lose heart . . . ¹⁸ So we _____ our _____ not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

A Disciple's Motive

Our motive should always be LOVE.

2 Corinthians 5:14

For Christ's _____ us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

A Disciple's attitudes & Actions

Proverbs 1:7

The fear of the LORD is the _____ of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 2:1-15

My son, _____ you accept my words and store up my commands within you, ² turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding— ³ indeed, _____ you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, ⁴ and _____ you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, ⁵ _____ you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

If you continue to read Proverbs 2 through to verse 15, you will see all the things the Lord provides and promises to us as we continue to follow Him:

- Wisdom
- Success
- Knowledge
- Understanding
- Discretion
- Protection

This journey of discipleship is not always easy or fun, but it is rich and rewarding and, frankly, it's simply the right way to live.

Whole-hearted!

God wants people who are whole-hearted followers. That is what it means to **love God completely**.

He wants a people who will cry out to those who are more mature, "Teach me the Word! Show me how to live it! Train me in the way I should go! I want to follow the Lord Jesus Christ! I want to do what God wants me to do!"

Proverbs 3:1-10

My son, _____
my teaching, but keep my commands in
your heart, . . .

If you continue to read Proverbs 3 to verse 10, we see that again, the Lord promises his presence and provision as we continue to follow Him.

- Prolonged life
- Peace
- Prosperity
- Favor/a good name
- Health/nourishment

Are All Believers Disciples?

Many call themselves, "Christian." They say they believe. But there is a great difference between a believer and a disciple.

James 2:19

You believe that there is one God. Good!
Even the _____
that—and shudder.

You see, being a believer is not enough. Satan Himself "believes" in God! But he's going to end up thrown into the lake of fire!

When a person fully receives the Lord Jesus Christ, they are saved — no question about that. Their sins are forgiven, and they are welcomed into the Kingdom of God — but **this is not discipleship. It is salvation.**

A disciple is a whole-hearted follower. Jesus said

that unless you forsake all that you, have you cannot be my disciple.

Now you can be a Christian, and on your deathbed pray frantically, "Lord forgive me for all the sins I have committed and all those I don't know about. I am about to die Father, and I don't want to go to hell, let me go to heaven."

Many Christians go out this way — still frightened of death, broken, not confident in their relationship with their Lord, because they spent their life pursuing the world.

John 12:43

. . . they loved _____ praise
more than praise from God.

They avoid responsibility and avoid standing up for Christ or taking hold of the provisions offered by Him, not contributing anything of worth to their fellow man.

They don't feel they have any value, any aim or goals to accomplish.

Loved by God? Yes. Saved? Yes. Love, accepted & forgiven? Absolutely.

Yet they fail to grasp the great opportunity of heaven because they are still more worried about pleasing the world than the Lord.

When you find a person that is a disciple, the Bible says *that* person "Shall know the truth and the truth will set you free." When you find yourself continually being bound, ask yourself if you are a disciple or just a believer.

Because if you're just a believer you will be bound all your life. You will be twisted and torn and fighting but never having any sense of direction.

But the minute you become a disciple, you can be hit, slammed, and knocked around, but you will have direction, and you will know how to fight back!!

Discipleship Rewards and Costs

If you pursue the Lord as a disciple, he will teach you His ways. **Instead of *needing* counsel, you'll be *giving* counsel.**

Hebrews 5:12 (NLT)

You have been **believers** so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word. You are like **babies** who need milk and cannot eat solid food.

There are those who have been "in Christ" for 40 years but they are still babies. They can't give up this and they can't give up that, and they can't do this and they can't do that.

We hear endlessly of what they cannot do ~ all of which is true.

It is true only because of only ONE thing – they never made themselves a *disciple* of the Lord Jesus Christ! But the minute they say with true conviction in their hearts, "Lord make me a disciple not just a person who sits in the pew." they begin to violently take the Kingdom of God by force.

They are no longer waiting for someone to show them, they are aggressively pursuing what the lord has for them.

As a disciple, you come to know your own inability to make yourself into anything. You admit to the Lord, "I can't do it. Nothing in me can make it happen, but please make me a disciple, Lord!"

Then forsake all that you have and go follow Him. He will help you. He will set you free. The chains that have held you bound will be loosened. He will make you into a whole new person.

Where do you start? Right here. Right now. Today. Where you are.

What is the Cost of Discipleship?

- **You must be born again!** (John 3:7)
- **You must practice self-denial** (Matthew 16:24)
- **You must give up the rights to your life.** He is now the master and you are the follower.

We have too many Christians still in charge of their own lives. If you stay in charge of your own life, you won't know the power of God's Kingdom.

We have Christians still declaring what they want to do. There is no power in what you want to do!

There is no authority in your plans, your goals, your determination, or your positive thinking!

Proverbs 21:30

There is _____ wisdom, _____ insight, _____ plan that can succeed against the LORD.

- **Renouncing anything more important than Christ.** (Luke 14:26 & 33)
- **Steadfastness**

John 8:31

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you _____ my teaching, you are really my disciples.

- **Fruitfulness**

John 15:8

This is to my Father's glory, that you _____ much _____, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

No Secret Disciples

We cannot be disciples if we take on the belief that we can do it on our own, "Just Jesus & me!" We are called to be a PART of the BODY of Christ, not a bunch of individuals doing what is "right in our own eyes" apart from the will and purpose of Christ.

Proverbs 21:2

A person may _____ their own ways are right, but the LORD weighs the heart.

Part of a Body

1 Corinthians 12:20-27 (NLT)

Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. ²¹ The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you." ²² In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. ²³ And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, ²⁴ while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. ²⁵ This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. ²⁷ All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.

What Can A Disciple Expect?

- Rest

Matthew 11:28

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and _____ give you rest.

- The Keys of the Kingdom

Matthew 16:19

_____ give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

- Power over evil spirits

Luke 10:19

_____ given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.

- Spiritual knowledge

2 Peter 3:18

But _____ in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory . . .

- Spiritual light

John 8:12

. . . he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

- Guidance by His voice

John 10:27

My sheep _____ to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

- Heavenly Honor

John 12:26

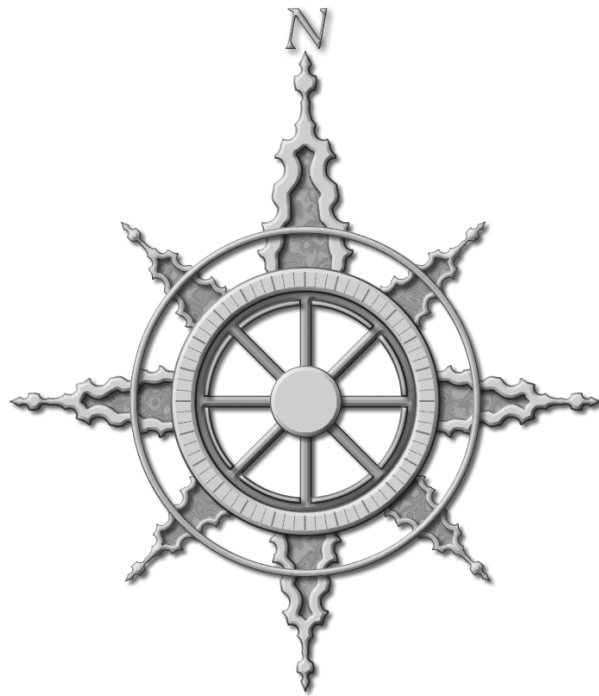
. . . My Father will _____ the one who serves me.

- To Live and Love like Jesus

1 Peter 2:21

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an _____, that you should follow in his steps.

Loving God Completely



Relationship

Understanding our destiny and destination in life is very important.

- Our destiny is to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.
- Our destination is to be one with the Father.

Our Values keep us focused on our destiny and destination.

- Love God Completely
- Love Ourselves Correctly
- Love Others Compassionately

There is a story of a man who had been shipwrecked in a terrible storm. All he had to hold on to through the storm was a big rock. After he had been rescued, people asked him, “Weren’t you afraid?” He replied, “Yes, very much so - but the rock I was clinging to wasn’t.”

A lot of people run to the Lord or stay close to him during times of trouble or difficulty. The challenge is - How do we *stay* close to him at all times, not just when we need him or when we’re in trouble?

Loving God completely involves our whole personality—our intellect, emotion, and will.

Mark 12:30

Love the Lord your God with all your _____ and with all your _____ and with all your _____ and with all your _____.

The better we come to know God, the more we will love him. The more we love him, the greater we grow in our willingness to trust and obey him in all he calls us to do.

When you want to get to know someone, to develop a relationship with them, the first thing you need to do is spend time with them.

James 4:8

_____ near to God and he will
_____ near to you.

As we state again and again in *Discovering God*, He **WANTS** you to know Him. He **DESIRES** to have a relationship with you. So if you make an effort to get close to Him, He promises to respond and come close to you as well!

We’ve all heard this before – **Christianity is not a religion but a relationship.** It’s a relationship that is borne out of the love of the Father.

God is not a distant being watching over us from afar. He is very near to us **ALL** the time.

Acts 17:27

God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is _____
_____ from any one of us.

Our Lord invites us to the highest calling of all—intimacy with him—and day after day, we often decline the offer, preferring instead to fill ourselves with short-lived pleasures and prospects.

SO ~ What does it take to know God intimately?

Two Essential Ingredients:

- Time
- Obedience

We may look at these words and feel overwhelmed. We may react, “Time? I don’t **HAVE** time.” And when we look at the word “Obedience.” we often respond negatively.

However, let’s remember that we are on a journey. A journey begins with one step – one step in the right direction.

In the next few pages, we will explore these two ingredients more closely.

The First Essential Ingredient — Time

Let's put our relationship with God in perspective. Throughout the Bible, God is described as our Father. Then, in Ephesians 5:22-23, the Bible describes our relationship with Christ as a marriage. WE are His church, His bride. HE is the bridegroom, our Savior, our Lord. So we should relate to God as a father, and to Christ (also God) as a husband. When you think about earthly relationships, during our childhood, our fathers are in authority over us. Then, when we become adults, if a woman marries, she submits herself to her husband as her leader, giving him her trust and her honor. That relationship is the highest priority relationship.

The Bible also describes straying away from God as adultery! How much more descriptive can you get than that? That's how seriously God takes his relationship with us. He says, "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God." (Ex 20:5, 34:14)

It takes time to cultivate a relationship. If you marry and never spend any time talking to or listening to your spouse, you're not going to have much of a relationship! So, in the same way, we need to spend some time cultivating our relationship with the Lord.

Suggestions:

- **Set aside some time** each day to spend with God. I like to have my time with Him first thing in the morning because it starts my day off with a good perspective, it makes me more conscious of my "following" role in our journey together. However, for some people, the morning just doesn't work. Find a time that works for you, set the appointment, and keep it! This is a priority appointment!
- **Set aside a place** to spend time with God. Having a special place helps you to focus on Him, especially if you set aside that place and deliberately remove distractions from it.
- **Set the attitude** of your heart to tune in with God. There are many ways to do this. I like

to start with worship, because He is worthy of all our praise and he deserves it. Others begin with prayer, or reading their Bible, or by simply quieting themselves in the presence of God.

- **Talk to Him!** Don't use fancy "King James" language - just talk to Him like you would talk to your best friend, because that's what He is! Be yourself, be real. He knows you anyway, better than you know yourself.
- **Read Your Bible!** More often than not, God "speaks" to us through reading His Word. This is where we learn the most about Him, the best way to become familiar with Him. We learn about His character, His goodness, His love, His kindness. We learn from the stories of others written down in these pages. If you're struggling, it's amazing how often the Holy Spirit will direct you to a helpful verse or chapter.
- **Listen to Him!** Yes, just sit quietly and listen. Wait upon Him. See if He speaks anything to your heart. Remember two things:
 - 1) His voice is, more often than not, a gentle, quiet voice. (I Kings 19:12)
 - 2) God will *never* contradict His Word. For example, if you hear something like, "Go rob First National Bank." You will know that is NOT God, because He tells us not to steal.

If we don't set aside consistent time to speak with our Lord and listen to Him; if we neglect disciplines such as feasting on the Word, we will hinder ourselves from becoming intimate with Him. The closer we get with Him, the more intimate our relationship becomes. Then we find our desire to please him grows—not out of an obligation to legally obey, but out of an affectionate desire to please our closest loved one.

The Second Essential Ingredient – Obedience

Why is it that the word “Obedience” seems to rub us the wrong way? It is because we tend to be rebellious and stubborn! We want our own way, and we want it enough to fight for it. But now, we are in a Kingdom with a King who says . . .

John 14:15

If you love me, _____ my commands.

Jesus speaks very plainly here – our obedience, following the ways of our loving Lord, is the fruit of our relationship with Him.

Growing in Obedience

Mark 10:15

Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God

_____ a little

_____ will never enter it.

Think of yourself as a child. You have a Father who loves you enough to teach you right ways. You are growing, learning obedience.

Obedience is not an easy thing to learn. It means you don’t always get your own way. Indeed, a person who insists on his own way is an immature person! Obedience involves you rejecting your own way, and instead, acting in a way that lines up with His character and His teaching.

For example, one day I was in the middle of a heated argument with my spouse, and it wasn’t pretty. In the midst of my anger, a ‘voice’ came to me saying, “A soft answer turns away wrath.” I knew that this voice hadn’t come from me, because the LAST thing I wanted to do was answer my spouse softly! I also knew this voice was the Holy Spirit, because He was reminding me of a verse in the book of Proverbs (Pr. 15:1).

At that moment, I had a choice to make. I could either continue my harsh responses toward my spouse, or I could quiet myself and begin to speak more gently. I knew the Lord was speaking to me, so in obedience to Him (not because I wanted to please my spouse in that moment), I started speaking more softly and humbly.

I took a step of obedience. Do you know what I learned? I learned that the word of God works! Our argument was turned for the better and we resolved our issue quickly. That was a very important principle for me to learn, not just for my marriage, but for any situation where I struggle with an angry person.

It is as simple as that! It’s a moment-by-moment choice we make to obey our Lord, whether it’s from something we learn from the Bible, or to a nudging He sends by His Spirit.

The more we obey Him, the more we grow in understanding of just about everything:

- the way the world works taught by the One who created it all
- the way relationships work best, taught by the originator of relationships
- the way to train children by the One who loves them more than we ever could.
- The way to handle possessions and attitudes about possessions from the One who owns it all.

The more we succeed and learn these things, the more we trust the One who created it all – who loves us beyond anything we can imagine. The One who wants the best for us.

Obedience is the proper response to His presence. It is our personal expression of *trust* in the promises of the Person we are coming to know

Because HE loved US!

Trust truly is the most important factor. We cannot trust someone we do not know. And even when we know a person, we have to see over a long period of time how trustworthy that person is. So take time to truly know Him.

The more we are impressed by him, the less we will be impressed by people, power, and things. The one True God of the universe seeks us and rescues us from our self-centered deception. The more we get to know Him in the day to day experiences of our lives. We begin to realize all the things He does for us. And then we get to respond more and more with our love and gratitude.

1 John 4:19

We love because he _____ loved us.

For some incomprehensible reason, the Creator of time, space, matter, and energy has chosen to love us individually, to the point of ultimate sacrifice. Because of that, we have the opportunity to embrace the unconditional security we long for.

God's love for all of us is spontaneous, free, uncaused, and undeserved. He did not love us because we were lovable, beautiful, or clever, because in our sin we were unlovable, ugly, and foolish.

He loved us because he *chose* to love us.

As we expand our vision of our acceptance, identity and security in Christ who loved us and gave himself for us, we begin to realize that God is not the enemy of our joy but the source of our joy.

When we respond to this love, we become the people he has called us to be.

By God's grace we need to grow in love with him in our thoughts, in our emotions, and in our actions.

This requires us to make tough choices.

As we grow to know and love God, we learn that we can trust his character, promises, and principles. Whenever he asks us to avoid something, it is because He knows that it is not in our best interests. And whenever he asks us to do something, it is always because it will lead to a greater good.

Faith is a submissive response to the presence of God.

If we are committed to following hard after God, we must do the things he tells us to do. But the risk of obedience is that it will often make no sense to us at the time. It is counter-cultural to obey the things the Holy Spirit reveals to us in the Scriptures.

Radical obedience sometimes flies in the face of human logic, but in but in these times our loving Father tests and reveals the quality of our trust and dependence on him.

If we love Jesus, we will keep his commandments (John 14:15); he taught us that obedience to his commands is the way we test and express our abiding relationship with him

John 15:10

If you keep my commands, you will _____ in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and _____ in his love.

Our great task in the spiritual life is to will to do His will, to love the things He loves, and to choose the things He sets before us for our good.

Taking Up the Cross

How do we practically live out this love walk in our day to day lives with the different issues we face?

Luke 9:23

Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must _____ themselves and _____ their cross daily and follow me.

What is said here is a universal principal. We put our own interests in a secondary place for the sake of the Kingdom of God. This is where your submissive response to the presence of God is thoroughly tested.

We are to take up our cross daily. Have you ever wondered what your cross is? Charles Simpson once said, "Your cross is where your will and the will of God cross!" This is the place where you can "lay down your life" by choosing to please God rather than yourself. Most of us struggle with this type of decision every day. The more mature we become in loving God completely, the greater we trust Him, and the struggle to obey will be lessened. Then as we continue to yield to Him, our insecurities can be exposed and overcome.

Proverbs 3:5-6

_____ in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways _____ to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Fulfilling our Purpose

There is a statement made in the Westminster Catechism:

"The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

Enjoy God? YES! Please – *enjoy Him!* If you don't know him, introduce yourself, *for your own sake* (He already knows you)! Ask Him to make Himself known to you! Tell Him you *want* to know Him. You will be amazed and overwhelmed at the depths of love he pours out upon you, just because you want to know Him.

He does not call us to Himself to make us miserable! He calls us to Himself because of His great love for us. He wants to enjoy YOU and delight in YOU! So get to know Him well enough to bask in His presence, to delight in Him.

Psalm 37:4

Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

FOR THIS TO SUCCEED, WHAT IS REQUIRED OF US?

Galatians 6:9-10

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do _____.¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

So, continue to do the good you know to do, and don't give up – ever!

Love Yourself Correctly



Defining Yourself

Sometimes it is difficult for us to understand who we are.

The world around us tries to tell us who we are, defining us by what we do or by how they relate to us. They label us. Often these labels are innocuous - "Banker," "Educator," "Musician," "Contractor," "Secretary," etc. Sometimes the labels are demeaning and/or harmful - "Stupid," "Tramp," "Thief," "Fat," "Punk," etc.

In addition, we have an enemy. Satan is a very practiced and cunning deceiver - and he often succeeds in getting us to thinking badly about ourselves - "Worthless," "Hopeless," "Loser," etc.

Because we fail to understand the truth:

- We waste a great deal of time not realizing our true identity.
- We often relate to others in a shallow way.

The truth is, we have choices:

- We can be defined by our world;
- We can be defined by our enemy; or
- We can be defined by our God.

To love ourselves correctly is to see ourselves as God sees us. He alone has made us. He is the only One who fully knows us. He knows us better than we know ourselves.

Seeing ourselves as God sees us involves a process of exposure to the truths of Scripture. God reveals Himself through Scripture and through His Spirit. He WANTS us to know the truth and to have an understanding of our new identity in Christ Jesus.

We will realize the significance of relationship to ourselves and others only as we get to know the depth of who we are in Christ as believers.

Who Defines You?

It is only natural to shape our self-image by the attitudes and opinions of our parents, our peer groups, and our society.

None of us are immune to the distorting effects of performance-based acceptance, and we can falsely conclude that we are worthless or that we must try to earn God's acceptance.

Only when we define ourselves by the truths of the Word rather than the thinking and experiences of the world can we discover our deepest identity.

All of us have encountered psychobabble about self-love, including the call to look within ourselves to discover the answers to our problems.

The Scriptures exhort us to look to Christ, not to self, for the solutions we so greatly need.

So, let's define the biblical view of self-love in this way, **"Loving ourselves correctly means seeing ourselves as God sees us."**

This will never happen automatically, because the scriptural vision of human depravity and dignity is countercultural.

To genuinely believe and embrace the reality of who we have become as a result of our faith in Christ requires consistent discipline and exposure to the Word of God.

It also requires a context of fellowship and encouragement in a community of like-minded believers.

Without these, the visible will overcome the invisible, and our understanding of this truth will gradually slip through our fingers.

To what degree are you defined by the world? By the Word? How can you develop your identity more fully in the latter?

Seeing Yourself as God Sees You

What does it mean to see ourselves as God sees us?

Contrary to our culture, the biblical doctrine of grace humbles us without degrading us and elevates us without inflating us.

It tells us that apart from Christ, we have nothing and can do nothing of eternal value.

We are spiritually impotent and inadequate without him, and we must not put our confidence in the flesh.

Philippians 3:3

For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put _____ confidence in the _____ . . .

Grace also tells us that we have become new creatures in Christ, having been transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of his light, life, and love.

In him, we now enjoy complete forgiveness from sins and limitless privileges as unconditionally accepted members of God's family.

Our past has been changed because of our new heredity in Christ, and our future is secure because of our new destiny as members of his body.

Thus a biblical understanding of grace addresses both human depravity and human dignity.

It avoids the extreme of "worm theology" ("Oh, what a worm am I!" I'm worthless, I'm no good, I'll never amount to anything, I'm nothing but a rotten sinner, etc.) and the opposite extreme of pride and autonomy.

1 Corinthians 4:7

For _____ makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not

_____? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

Grace teaches us that the most important thing about us is not what we do but *whose we are* in Christ.

In Scripture, **doing** (our actions) should flow out of **being** (our identity); the better we grasp our identity in Christ, the more our actions should reflect Christ-like character.

What does it require to see yourself as God sees you?

In the next few pages, we will explore God's view of you, taken from His Word.



Who Does God Say You Are?

The following biblical affirmations about our identity in Jesus Christ are derived from a few selected passages in the New Testament.

These passages teach a portion of the many truths about who we have become through faith in God's Son.

- I am a child of God.

John 1:12

Yet to _____ who did receive him, to _____ who _____ in his name, he gave the right to become children of God . . .

- I am a branch of the true vine, and a conduit of Christ's life.

John 15:1 & 5

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. . . ⁵ I am the vine; _____ are the _____.

- I am a friend of Jesus.

John 15:15

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you _____, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

- I have been justified and redeemed.

Romans 3:24

. . . and all are _____ freely by his grace through the _____ that came by Christ Jesus.

- My old self was crucified with Christ, and I am no longer a slave to sin.

Romans 6:6

For we know that our old self was _____ with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should _____ be slaves to sin . . .

- I will not be condemned by God.

Romans 8:1

Therefore, there is now _____ condemnation for those who are _____ Christ Jesus,

- I have been set free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:2

. . . through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you _____ from the law of sin and death.

- As a child of God, I am a fellow heir with Christ.

Romans 8:17

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and _____ with Christ . . .

- I have been accepted by Christ.

Romans 15:7

Accept one another, then, just as Christ _____ you, in order to bring praise to God.

- I have been called to be a saint.

1 Corinthians 1:2

To the church of God . . . to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and _____ to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .

SEE ALSO: Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2

Who Does God Say You Are?

- In Christ Jesus, I have wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

1 Corinthians 1:30

... you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us _____ from God—righteousness, holiness and redemption.

- My body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in me.

1 Corinthians 6:19

... your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is _____ you, whom you have received from God?

- I am joined to the Lord and am one spirit with him.

1 Corinthians 6:17

But whoever is united with the Lord is _____ with him in spirit.

- God leads me in the triumph and knowledge of Christ.

2 Corinthians 2:14

But thanks be to God, who always _____ us ... in Christ's triumphal procession ...

- I am a new creature in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has _____, the new is _____!

- I have become the righteousness of God in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:21

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might _____ the righteousness of God.

- I have been made one with all who are in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are _____ in Christ Jesus.

- I am no longer a slave but a child and an heir.

Galatians 4:7

So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his _____, God has made you also an _____.

- I have been set free in Christ.

Galatians 5:1

It is for freedom that Christ has set us _____ ... do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

- I have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 1:3

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with _____ spiritual blessing in Christ.

- I am chosen, holy, and blameless before God.

Ephesians 1:4

I am redeemed and _____ by the grace of Christ.

- I have been predestined by God to obtain an inheritance.

Ephesians 1:10–11

In Him also we have obtained an _____, having been predestined according to His purpose ...

Continued ...

Who Does God Say You Are?

- I have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

Ephesians 1:13

. . . you were _____ in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.

- Because of God's mercy and love, I have been made alive with Christ.

Ephesians 2:4-5

But God . . . made us alive together _____ Christ . . .

- I am seated in the heavenly places with Christ.

Ephesians 2:6

And raised us up with Him, and seated us _____ Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

- I am God's workmanship created to produce good works.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus _____ good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would _____ in them.

- I have been brought near to God by the blood of Christ.

Ephesians 2:13

But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were _____ off have been brought _____ by the blood of Christ.

- I am a member of Christ's body and a partaker of his promise.

Ephesians 3:6

. . . Through the Gospel, the Gentiles are . . . _____ of one body,

and sharers together in the promise of Christ Jesus.

- I have boldness and confident access to God through faith in Christ.

Ephesians 3:12

In whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.

- My new self is righteous and holy.

Ephesians 4:24

Put on the _____, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

- I was formerly darkness, but now I am light in the Lord.

Ephesians 5:8

You were formerly darkness, but now you are _____ in the Lord; walk as children of Light.

- I am a citizen of heaven.

Philippians 3:20

For our citizenship is in heaven, . . .

- The peace of God guards my heart and mind.

Philippians 4:7

And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- God supplies all my needs.

Philippians 4:19

And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

- I

Continued . . .

Who Does God Say You Are?

have been made complete in Christ.

Colossians 2:10

In Him you have been made

_____ . . .

- I have been raised up with Christ.

Colossians 3:1

Since, then, you have been _____
_____ with Christ, set your hearts on
things above . . .

- My life is hidden with Christ in God.

Colossians 3:3

For you have died and your life is
_____ with Christ in God.

- Christ is my life, and I will be revealed with him in glory.

Colossians 3:4

When Christ, who is our life, is revealed,
then _____ will be revealed
with Him in glory.

- I have been chosen of God, and I am holy and beloved.

Colossians 3:12

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

- God loves me and has chosen me.

1 Thessalonians 1:4

Knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you.

We recommend a **frequent review** of these powerful statements from God's Word. They remind us of the truths we quickly forget amidst the worries and cares of this world.

The more we embrace these affirmations from Scripture, the more stable, grateful, and fully assured we will be in the course of our lives.

Ask yourself:

- To what degree are you defined by the world? By the Word?
- How can you develop your identity more

Loving God Has an Effect

The closer our walk with God, the more we are empowered to manifest our love for him through acts of love and service to others.

When we understand that Christ's resources are our resources, we can become secure enough to serve other people without expecting something in return.

Loving Christ more than people increases our capacity to love, serve, forgive, and give ourselves away for people.

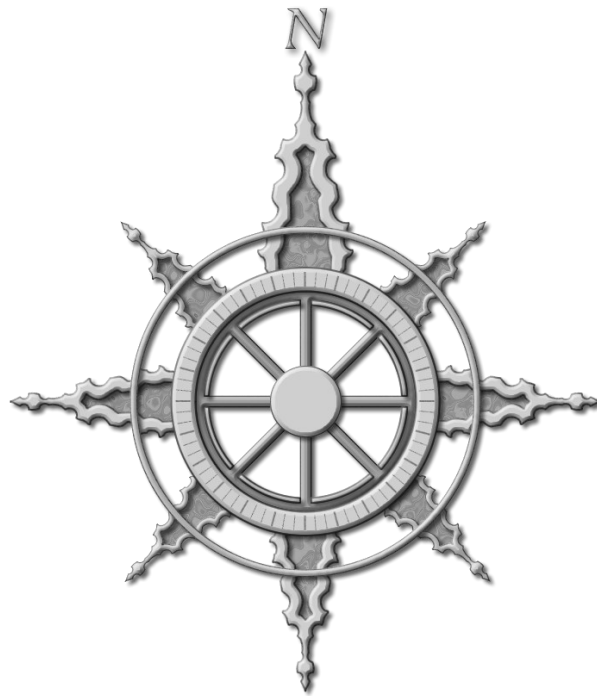
We have been created for an intimate relationship with the infinite and personal God who loves us.

He initiates this relationship, and we love him because he first loved us.

Loving God completely is the key to loving self correctly (seeing ourselves as God sees us), and this in turn is the key to loving others compassionately.

As we grow in our understanding of God's unconditional love, acceptance, and forgiveness of us in Christ, we are increasingly liberated from using people to meet our needs.

Love Others Compassionately



Expressing God's Love

Our vertical relationship of loving the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will express itself on the horizontal, since there is no act that begins with the love of God that does not end with the love of neighbor.

Matthew 22:37

Jesus replied: "Love the _____ your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'

Jesus declared this commandment the first and most important commandment. Then directly afterward he declared this as "like it," or similar.

Matthew 22:39

And the second is like it: 'Love your _____ as yourself.'

After washing the feet of his disciples, Jesus elevated the standard by which we are called to love others:

John 13:34

A new command I give you: Love _____ . As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

This commandment is different from the first two. First, Jesus declares it a "new command." Then he elevates the command to love. We are to love others as Christ has loved us - that is the highest standard of all!

This new commandment is universal. We are not only to love our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ, we are also to love our neighbors in this

world who do not know Jesus.

Our choices and works of love that we express in the present, have their basis in the work that Jesus did for us in the past, and our hope in the completion of His work in the future.

The greater our love for God is, the more we will express his boundless love in deeds of kindness and goodness to those around us.

1 John 4:7-11

Dear friends, _____ us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.¹¹ Dear friends, _____ God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

While we come to faith in Christ as individuals, we do not grow in isolation but through the interdependence of the body of Christ.

Our modern world view is highly individualistic, autonomous, and self-serving, but as we will see, the biblical world view is covenantal, interdependent, communal, relational, and it requires a level of selflessness from every individual.

The Quest for Greatness in the Eyes of Others

Near the end of our Lord's earthly ministry, His disciples were arguing about who would occupy the best positions in his kingdom.

Instead of listening to His increasingly frequent words about His coming crucifixion, they focused instead on the part they wanted to hear.

Mark 10:35-41

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."³⁶ "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.³⁷ They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."³⁸ "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"³⁹ "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with,⁴⁰ but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."⁴¹ When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.

Next, let's look at Jesus's response to their indignant request:

Mark 10:42-45

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them."⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants _____ among you must be your _____,⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Weeks later, when Jesus celebrated the Passover with his disciples on the night before his own sacrifice, the dispute surfaced again.

Christ's answer to their quest for recognition was that true greatness is found in those who are willing to serve.

Luke 22:27

For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But ____ am among you as _____ who _____ .

John 13 records a visual parable that communicated this precise issue to the disciples.

Evidently there was no servant to wash the feet of the Lord and his men before they reclined at the table.

This must have been an embarrassing situation. Foot washing was a customary part of hospitality in the ancient Near East, but it was obvious that if the disciples were fighting for a prominent place, none of them would volunteer to be the servant of all.

Their agenda became real when Jesus rose from supper, laid aside his garments, tied a towel around himself, and began to wash the disciples' feet and wipe them with the towel.

His lesson was evident: if their Teacher and Lord became their servant, they should also serve one another.



The Basis of True Greatness

The heart of Jesus's willingness to serve others in place of being served by them is even more impressive when we realize that Jesus possessed all authority, and yet he was willing to love others as a servant.

John 13:3

Jesus _____ that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God;

- He knew his own dignity and power – His Father had given all things into His hands
- He knew his own significance and identity – He had come forth from God
- He knew his own security and destiny – He was returning to His Father.

Jesus derived his identity from his relationship with his Father and not from the opinions of his family and peers.

Consider these passages:

Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? (John 1:46)

Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners? (Mark 2:16)

“Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?” And they took offense at Him (Mark 6:3)

The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ (Matthew 11:19)

“If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.” For not even His brothers were believing in Him (John 7:4–5)

They said to Him, “We were not born of fornication” (John 8:41)

The Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?” (John 8:48)

When He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects, plotting against Him to catch Him in something He might say (Luke 11:53–54)

Jesus was criticized, rejected, slandered, misunderstood, plotted against, betrayed, denied, and abused by his family and friends, his disciples, the Jewish religious leaders, and the Romans.

As his ministry progressed, our Lord faced increasing levels of hostility and opposition.

In spite of all this, **He knew who and whose he was**, and his relationship with the Father gave him the power and security to love and serve others.

It would have been impossible for Jesus to have done this if he had allowed himself to be defined and bound by the opinions of the people around him.

Christ's Resources are Our Resources

Just as Jesus knew who he was, where he came from, and where he was going, so all who have put their trust and hope in him should know the same. But few do.

Only as we frequently renew our minds with the spiritual truth of the Scriptures will we move our thinking into alignment with the reality of who we are in Christ.

Like Christ:

- We have dignity and power ~ every spiritual blessing has been given into our hands (Ephesians 1:3, 19; 3:16, 20-21)
- We have significance and identity ~ we have become the children of God (Romans 8:16; 1 John 3:1-2)
- We have been given the security and destiny of knowing that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8:18, 35-39).

These limitless resources meet our deepest needs and overcome the human dilemma of loneliness, insignificance, and meaninglessness.

When we allow these truths to define our self-image, they make us secure enough to love and serve others and minimize our concern over our own interests.

Because of our security and significance in Christ, we do not need to be controlled by the opinions and responses of others.

We have nothing to prove because we know who and whose we are.

Rather than trying to impress and manipulate people, we can do our work with excellence as unto the Lord.

The more we are concerned with what God thinks of us, the less we will be worried about what others think of us.

And when we are no longer enslaved to people's opinions of us, we are free to love and serve them as Christ loves us—with no strings attached.

Things to Think About:

How relevant are the two great commandments in your daily experience?

Why are we more concerned with impressing others than with pleasing Jesus?

How do you define greatness in people?

What are the keys to true humility and servanthood?

To what extent do you believe that Christ's resources are your resources?

What prevents you from fully embracing this concept?

Vertical and Horizontal

While we are aware that in a sinful world such a lifestyle makes us more vulnerable to the pains of rejection, indifference, demands, misunderstanding, and betrayal, we also realize that a wise person finds more joy in serving others rather than pursuing possessions, power, performance, or prestige.

Both the Old and the New Testaments resonate with this theme, telling us that a vital vertical relationship with the Lord is the key to quality horizontal relationships with others.

Philippians 4:1

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, _____ in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: _____ !

The Lord should be the ultimate and continual source of our joy, whether our circumstances and dealings with people are positive or negative.

The more we take pleasure in loving and serving God, the greater our capacity to take pleasure in loving and serving people.

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? ²⁰ Indeed, _____ are our glory and _____.

1 Thessalonians 3:9

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God _____ of _____?

When we are secure in Christ, the rewards of investing our lives in people exceed the pains that people can cause. Paul saw people not only as a source of joy but also as a reward, both in the present and in the future.

There is great reward in being part of the process of people coming to Christ and growing in their character and relationships with their mates, children, and associates.

There is joy in being used of God in encouraging, comforting, and building up others in our arenas of influence.

Jonathan Edwards observed that the ultimate good in life is to treat things according to their true value.

The reverse is also true, and we face the ever-present danger of treating the eternal as though it were temporal and the temporal as though it were eternal. The world system switches the price tags and encourages us to pursue things that will not last.

Luke 16:15

. . . What people value highly is detestable in God's sight.

If we want to be rich toward others, we must give our lives in exchange for the things God declares to be important.

The heart always provides for what it values, and if we value God first, our capacity to love him and others will expand.

If we value the world first, we will miss out on not only the joys of knowing God but also the joys of this life. Relationships will degenerate into contacts, and we will seek to manipulate people to get what we think we want. We will be driven to accomplish and impress, and this will detract from quality time with those we love we love.

Activities will take precedence over intimacy, both with God and with people. The idol of accomplishment will erode the principles of the Spirit and leave us busy and weary. We will work harder to influence people, and by seeking our security in their responses, we will become disconnected from our true security in Christ.

The only way off this treadmill is repentance and return to the pursuit of Christ in place of the pursuit of the world.

From the Temporal to the Eternal

It has been said that “everyone ought to fear to die until he has done something that will last forever.”

These are strong words, but they deserve serious consideration, as does this statement that has been attributed to Joan of Arc:

“It is not a tragedy to die for something you believe in, but it is a tragedy to find at the end of your life that what you believed in betrayed you.”

This thought captures the essence of our ongoing struggle between the claims of the temporal and those of the eternal.

1 John 2:17

The world and its desires _____, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

This planet is not permanent.

2 Peter 3:10

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will _____ with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid _____.

Yet something in us longs for the eternal, for that which will not pass away. We cannot satisfy this longing through earthly accomplishments such as building things, collecting valuables, achieving positions of power, or anything else that we can think of, all of these things are destined to disappear.

What, then, can we do that will not be destroyed? What can give our lives permanent meaning and impact?

The answer lies in this biblical truth: After our fleeting years on earth, people go on into eternity.

When we invite Christ to manifest his life in and through us, when we represent the Lord Jesus in our spheres of influence and encourage others to know him better, we are investing in something that transcends this planet.

This should be our prayer for ourselves and for those who enter into our sphere of influence.

All of us want to do something that will endure.

It is frightening to think that we could run life’s course in vain, ending up without a single work that will live on beyond the grave.

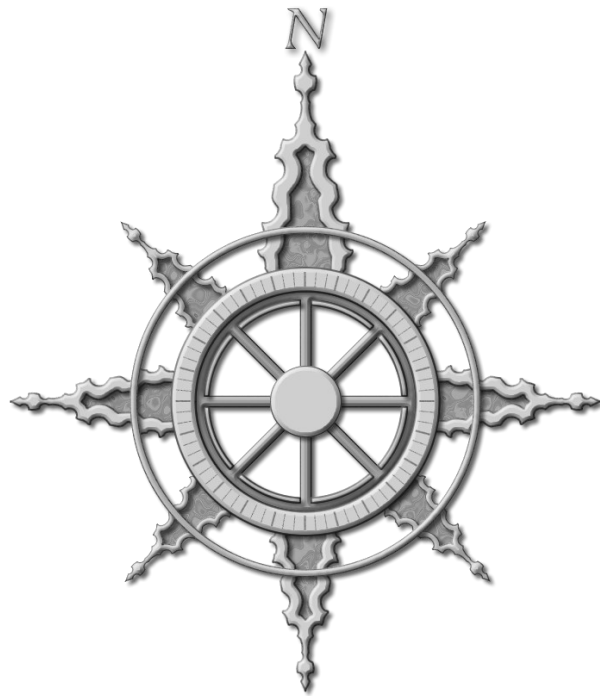
But the Lord Jesus has promised that when we allow him to accomplish his work in and through us, the results will last forever.

We cannot take our earthly possessions with us, but according to the gospel, we can take people with us.

We bring nothing into this world, and we can take nothing material out of it.

But if we are investing in the lives of people, our investments will accrue dividends forever, since people were made in the image of God to inhabit eternity.

Christian Character 1



What is Character?

The etymology of the word is quite revealing. The word comes from the Greek *kharaktar* for “engraved mark,” “symbol or imprint on the soul,” and “instrument for marking,” and can be traced further back to the words for “to engrave,” “pointed stake,” and “to scrape and scratch.”

In ancient times, a character was the stamp or marking impressed into wax and clay and onto coins, and as Henry Clay Trumbull explains in 1894’s *Character-Shaping and Character-Showing*, it served as:

“another name for the signature, or monogram, or personal superscription, or trademark, of the potter, the painter, the sculptor, the writer, or any other artist or artisan, or inventor, as indicative of the personality of the maker, or of the distinctive individuality of the article marked. It is the visible token by which a thing is distinguished from every other thing with which it might otherwise be confounded.”

In the 17th century, the word came to be associated with “the sum of qualities that defines a person.” These qualities included a person’s intellect, thoughts, ideas, motives, intentions, temperament, judgment, behavior, imagination, perception, emotions, loves, and hates.

All of these components go to the shaping and coloring of a person’s character.

They have all some part in producing that final type of self, that **ultimate habit of will**, into which the man’s whole activities at last shape themselves.”

What Is *Christian* Character?

Christian character is, very simply, the life of God living within you and through you.

Paul refers to Christians as “new” persons and Peter says that we partake of the divine nature.

2 Corinthians 5:17

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a _____ person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

2 Peter 1:4

. . . he has given us great and precious promises. . . promises that enable you to share his _____
_____ and escape the world’s corruption caused by human desires.

Our character is grounded in our personal relationship with Christ and in our commitment to godly values. It is who God knows us to be. It is what we are when no one else is looking. We are what we have been becoming. The test of character is what we would do if no one ever knew. Character is in large measure a function of our integrity, convictions and moral fortitude.

The thing that makes the difference in Christian character is that we answer to God. Pleasing Him becomes our first priority. Therefore, Christian character is lived out in reverence for and respect for God, as opposed to simply honoring man.

The “fear of God” is the biblical terminology for it. The fear of God is the starting place, but what it boils down to is the willingness to die to our own agendas, to die to our own conveniences.

Genuine Christian character involves sacrifice, and that is something that the culture will not require of us. That is something that only faith will bring us to.

We are called to be servants—not just honest people, but servants. Jesus cast it in the most severe terms.

Luke 17:10

In the same way, when you obey me you should say, ‘We are unworthy servants who have _____
_____ our _____.’”

Developing Christ-Like Character

God's Plan For Us = Christ-like Character

God has predestined us to be conformed to the image (or the character) of His Son.

Romans 8:29

For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to _____
_____ his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

His plan is that His Spirit transform us so that we can become like His Son.

2 Corinthians 3:18

So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and _____ the _____ of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

We are more conformed to the character and conduct of Christ as we grow in His grace and knowledge.

The Development of Christian Character is Important

- It will determine our **legacy**—that for which we will be best remembered.
- It will determine our **heritage**—our greatest heritage we give to our posterity is a godly example.
- It will determine our **destiny**, according to Paul in Galatians 6:7-8.

Galatians 6:7-8

Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always _____ what you _____.⁸ Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spir-

it will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.

Someone said, "Sow a thought, reap an attitude; Sow an attitude, reap an action; Sow an action, reap a habit; Sow a habit, reap a character; Sow a character, reap a destiny."

Christian Ministry Related to Character

Our Primary Goal:

Our primary goal, according to the Apostle Paul, is to bring everyone up to his or her full maturity in Christ—helping others to be more conformed to Christ-like character and conduct

Colossians 1:28-29

So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to _____ them to God, perfect in their _____ to Christ.²⁹ That's why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ's mighty power that works within me.

Our Primary Motivation:

Our primary motivation is to please and glorify God out of gratitude in response to His grace. We learn to please God by reflecting His attributes through Christ-like character

1 Corinthians 10:31

So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, _____ it _____ for the glory of God.

The Main Things

Basic Principles & Core Values for Forming Christ-like Character

Character formation is not optional but essential in the maturing process.

- It is a life-long **process** of **sinning less**—putting off the old man and putting on the new.
- It is a function of God’s Word and Spirit—knowing, desiring and **doing** God’s will.
- It is uniquely **tailored** to the individual’s needs, temperament, gifts and personality.
- It requires conscious **cooperation** with God’s Spirit as He works in our lives.
- It involves radical self-examination and genuine repentance—a change in **thinking** and attitude.
- It involves our personal responsibility/accountability—it takes **others** to bring out the best in us.
- It involves loving service/gift related ministry—**unselfishly** meeting the basic needs of others.
- It involves being an **agent** of God’s grace—passing on to others the grace God has given us.
- It involves being a **vessel** of God’s truth—speaking and living God’s truth in love.

Our Main Problem

“The biggest problem with me is me.”

Too often, I think I am the center of the universe and that the world should revolve around me. The chief problem with me is my selfish pride—it is my failing to honor God as God and give Him His rightful place in my life.

Romans 1:21

Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn’t worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up _____ of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused.

Our Main Difficulty

Our chief difficulty is that we are deceived into thinking that, “I am the captain of my fate, I am the master of my soul.”

Nothing could be further from the truth. We are deceived into thinking that we are better off disobeying God than obeying God. We are deceived into thinking we can save ourselves.

Our Main Error

We are deceived because of our ignorance of God’s Word and Power.

Matthew 22:29

Jesus replied, “Your mistake is that you _____ the _____, and you don’t know the _____ of God.

We err greatly when we are not willing to learn from God’s Word or we are not willing to submit to the control of God’s Spirit.

Colossians 3:15

And let the peace that comes from Christ _____ in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

Ephesians 5:18

Don’t be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be _____ with the Holy Spirit,

God’s Word and Spirit illuminates and humbles us.

Our Character Development Tool

The main tool that God uses to transform our character is His Word—the Bible.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to _____ us what is _____ and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It _____ us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.¹⁷ God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

Through assimilating God’s Word, we can learn to think God’s thoughts after Him.

Isaiah 55:8-9

“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.⁹ For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so _____ are _____ than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

The Chief Agent in The Maturing Process

The chief agent of character formation is God’s Holy Spirit.

Our lives gradually become brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like Him.

2 Corinthians 3:18

So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit— _____ us _____ and _____ like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

This transforming activity is the work of the Spirit. It takes the Spirit to bring about the fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23

But the Holy Spirit

_____ this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

The Best Context for This Maturing Process

It’s not, “Jesus and me,” it’s “Jesus and WE!” It takes other believers to bring out the best in us. Just as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

Proverbs 27:17

As iron sharpens iron, so a friend _____ a friend.

The best context for the maturation of Christ-like character, is the Christ-centered, Bible-believing faith community.

Hebrews 10:24-25

Let us think of ways to

_____ one another to acts of love and good works.²⁵ And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but _____ one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

What Maturity is NOT

Maturity is NOT

- **The Passing of Time**

Both Christians and their leaders sometimes think that spiritual maturity is primarily just a matter of regular church attendance.

They think if you come to Sunday services, prayer meetings, and Bible studies then you are a mature believer. "All you have to do is show up."

Hebrews 5:12-13

You have been believers so long now that you ought to be

.....
..... Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food. ¹³ For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn't know how to do what is right.

When it comes to maturity, let's not confuse showing up with growing up!

Maturity involves more than marking the passing of time.

- **Having Talent**

Sometimes we think because people have a special talent that they have special anointing and as a result are somehow more mature because of their

talent or anointing.

No one has it all together, regardless of how gifted he or she might be. People can be great, let say in music, while their lives are falling apart.

Talented people are not exempt from messing up. Being gifted is not the same as being mature.

- **Having Knowledge**

1 Corinthians 8:1-2

Now regarding your question about food that has been offered to idols. Yes, we know that "we all have knowledge" about this issue. But while knowledge makes us, it is that the church. ² Anyone who claims to know all the answers doesn't really know very much.

We can become so impressed by someone's knowledge that we make the mistake of thinking that these learned believers are mature.

Knowing truth and living truth, however, are separate matters.

The truth that someone has in his or her head needs to be lived out.

Information does not equal transformation. Knowledge and maturity are not the same.

Method and Challenges

Our Main Method

As we offer ourselves as living sacrifices, we are transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Romans 12:1-2

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. ² Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but _____ God _____ you into a new person **by changing the way you think**. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

God wants us to assimilate (become one with) His written word so that it becomes living in our lives.

We are to let Christ's Word dwell in us richly, making us wise.

Colossians 3:15

And let the peace that comes from Christ _____ in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

Our Main Challenge

Our biggest challenge is that we don't naturally think God's thoughts! The Bible specifically addresses this fact in the book of Isaiah:

Isaiah 55:8-9

"My thoughts are _____ like your thoughts," says the LORD. "And my ways are _____ anything you could imagine. ⁹ For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

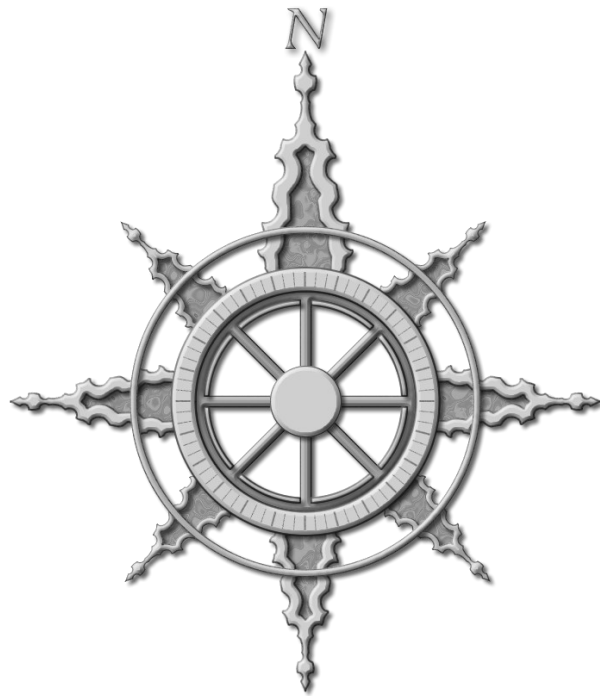
As a matter of fact, we have many ideas and thoughts that do not correspond to reality – to God's Word.

It is a very challenging thing to tear down the barriers (unbiblical ideas) that are erected against God's truth—to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:5

We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious _____ and teach them to _____ Christ.

Christian Character 2



Development and Building

Developing Christ-like Character

Christ-like character is developed by beholding the Living Word in the written Word. Many approaches to character development involve, at their root, seeking to modify people's behavior without seeking a corresponding internal change.

They involve seeking to DO something different without having to BE something different first.

In the end, human effort only affects the appearance of a person.

True character starts from within and expands outward. Our character must precede our conduct. "It can't happen *through* you until it happens *to* you."

2 Corinthians 3:18

So all of us _____
_____ that _____
_____ can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

John 5:39-40

"You search the Scriptures because _____ they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! ⁴⁰ Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life.

Philippians 2:12-13

Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. ¹³ For _____ is _____ in you, giving you the _____ and the power to do what pleases him.

The Building Blocks Of Character

We are to discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness—Christ like character.

1 Timothy 4:7

Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives' tales. Instead,

_____ to be godly.

These godly disciplines or habits include feasting on and applying God's Word. They also include prayer and fast-ing, submission to the Spirit, service, stewardship, public and private worship, confession, guidance, accountability.

Habits

The term "habit" refers to a settled or regular tendency or practice.

It can be used in a negative way in reference to bad habits, such as ignoring people when they're talking and consistently failing to do what one has promised.

We say, "he/she has the bad habit of never following through"; in Paul's language such as person has a habit of being "unfaithful."

But the term "habit" can also be used in a positive way, in reference to good exercise habits as well as good eating habits and a host of other attitudes and practices.

Obviously we want to develop the "good" and put off the "bad".

For here we are talking about building good habits and practices into our lives.

We are talking about putting off the acts of the sinful nature and cooperating with the Spirit in his quest to transform and mature us.

Developing Godly Habits

It is largely through “godly habits” that the Spirit transforms us. You may wonder where this truth is taught in Scripture. Let’s look at two passages:

Galatians 6:7-10

Don’t be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always _____ what you _____.⁸ Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.⁹ So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up.¹⁰ Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.

James 1:22-24

But _____ to God’s word. You must _____ what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.²³ For if you listen to the word and don’t obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror.²⁴ You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like.

Godly habits or spiritual disciplines as they are sometimes called, are not, however, the mere product of human strength and desire.

Godly habits are initiated, carried on, and matured through the sanctifying work of the Spirit who indwells us.

They are the fruit of the Spirit, but they are worked out in our lives—not as erratic psychological and sudden impulses, but growing, settled dispositions and attitudes, showing forth and leading to the transformation of character.

We are to cooperate with the Spirit in striving to see these traits developed in us.

The Purpose for Developing Christ-Like Habits

Paul is very clear about why we discipline ourselves to live out certain godly habits.

1 Timothy 4:7

Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives’ tales. Instead, _____ yourself to be godly.

Titus 2:11-12

For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people.¹² And we are instructed to _____ from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God,

There is a goal. It is not just drudgery, as one author put it.

Thus the reason we develop and struggle with godly habits is to cooperate with the Spirit in the development of a holy and Christ-like character—”godliness” as Paul refers to it here.

In short, this is what the grace of God aims at, as Titus 2:11-12 makes clear. Further, the quest for godliness and Christ-like virtues, through the practice of the disciplines, is the only logical response to God’s mercy and grace.

2 Corinthians 7:1

Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us _____ ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete holiness because we fear God.

Some Sources of Struggle

The World

When we refer to the “world,” we are not thinking about people only, but rather sinful habits, relationships and systems which fallen people erect in opposition to the will, works, and ways of a holy God.

The world system, which lies in the lap of the evil one, is often used by him to lure and arouse us to sin.

We are to realize that the death of Christ is God’s judgment on unregenerate man’s sin and sinful systems.

We are to have no part in it, lest we become a “friend of the world and an enemy of God”.

James 4:4

You adulterers! Don’t you realize that friendship with the _____ makes you an _____ of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God.

Let’s make this next point very clear, we are not talking about ceasing relations with non-Christian people.

1 Corinthians 5:10

But I wasn’t talking about _____ who indulge in sexual sin, or are greedy, or cheat people, or worship idols. You would have to leave this world to avoid people like that.

God, just like he showed us in Christ, wants us to be in the world as salt and light, just not of the world, lest we lose our saltiness and no longer be any good to the Master.

1 John 2:15-16

Do not love this _____ nor the _____ it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. ¹⁶ For the world offers only a craving for physical

pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world.

The Sinful Nature

The “sinful nature” in Scripture is used several times to indicate “physical flesh,” “frail humanity,” etc., without necessarily referring or alluding to, sinfulness.

But it is also used numerous times by Paul to refer to that fallen power living within us, that anti-God impulse that powerfully drags us down into sin.

In fact, the “sinful nature” lusts against the Spirit in order to bring us into bondage to the reign of sin and death.

Paul makes several very derogatory comments about the sinful nature in Romans 7.

He says that nothing good lives in him, that is, in his sinful nature; that it rears its ugly head right at the point that he would do good, and that it is so powerful that it is as a law to him.

Romans 7:18

And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can’t. ²¹ I have discovered this _____ of _____—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. ²³ But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me.

The good news is that the sinful nature with its desires and lusts has been crucified with Christ.

Romans 6:6

We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might _____ its _____ in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin.

Some Sources of Struggle

The Devil

The Devil is a personal, spiritual being (a fallen angel) who tempts the saints to sin. He uses the propensity of the sinful nature and the evil in the world to harden our hearts and lead us astray.

Some sins he is particularly famous for inciting, include:

- The sin of pride, leading to divisions of all sorts among God's people
- The sin of changing the gospel and /or detaching it from a person who should be reflecting it.
- He also works strenuously with non-Christians in order to blind their minds to the truth of the gospel.

2 Corinthians 4:4

Satan, who is the god of this world, has _____ the minds of those who don't believe. They are _____ to _____ the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

Assurance of Victory

We are told in Scripture that God has crucified the sinful nature with its desires and lusts.

Now, insofar as the sinful nature was the touch point for temptation and sin, he has thus freed us from sin's reign.

Romans 6:4-5

For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live _____.⁵ Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was.

We, the saints, quickened by the Spirit and armed with the sword of the Spirit and faith in Christ must daily resist Satan.

James promises us that if we do resist the Devil, he will flee.

James 4:7-8

So _____ yourselves before God. _____ the devil, and he will _____ from you.⁸ Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world.

Because he who lives in us is greater than he who lives in the world, we have victory over the Devil and the evil, rebellious systems he sponsors.

Some of the primary means by which the Spirit gives us victory over our three enemies (the world, the flesh, and the Devil) include:

- (1) the Spirit of God;
- (2) the word of God, and
- (3) the people of God.

Christians must choose to do good to their enemies.

In Luke 6:27, Jesus says "Do good to those that hate you."

The phrase, "do good," is written in a grammatical tense which means a command to do something in the future which involves continuous and repeated action. It's the picture of, "keep on doing good to those who keep on hurting you."

"Success, in terms of character, is when those who know you best love and respect you the most."

John Maxwell

Developing Good Habits

Our stated mission at Hope Christian Fellowship to make disciples who live and love like Jesus.

We want to help each disciple to grow to maturity, just like Paul said in Col. 1:28-29.

Colossians 1:28-29

_____ is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present _____ fully _____ in Christ.²⁹ To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

The most practical and powerful way to get believers headed in the direction of spiritual maturity is to help them establish habits that promote spiritual growth.

Development of Character

You cannot talk about character without talking about habits. Character is seen by the way you habitually act.

For example, if you are honest only part of the time or if you are honest only when you consciously choose to be honest, you cannot claim to have the character quality of integrity.

Having integrity means you are always honest. It is your habit. You don't even have to think about it. When someone asks you a question or gives you back too much change, you habitually do the honest thing.

Of course, there are dozens of good habits we need to develop as we grow to maturity. But the foundational habits must be learned first in order to grow.

Here is a list of what we call the "Habits of Hope." We hope you will choose to pursue these habits for your life.

- Feast on the Word
- Pray without Ceasing
- Cleanse through Confession
- Love like Jesus
- Forgive Daily
- Build relationships
- Learn to Give

The Idea of a "Habit"

The term "habit" refers to a settled or regular tendency or practice.

It can be used in a negative way in reference to bad habits, such as interrupting people when they're talking and consistently failing to do what one has promised.

We would say, "he or she has the bad habit of never following through." In Bible terminology, such as person has a habit of being "unfaithful." They are not faithful to follow through.

But the term "habit" can also be used in a positive way, in reference to good exercise habits as well as good eating habits and a host of other attitudes and practices.

Obviously, we want to develop the positive habits and forsake the negative habits. We are talking about forsaking the acts of the flesh and cooperating with the Spirit in his quest to transform us.

It is largely through these "habits of hope" and those like it that the Spirit transforms us.

The “Habits of Hope”



A Scriptural Mandate

You may ask, where is this truth taught in Scripture? Let's look at two passages:

Galatians 6:7-10

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man _____ what he _____.⁸ Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to _____ the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers..

So we see the Scriptural paradigm of sowing and reaping. As we sow good habits into our lives we will reap good things – good character, good behavior, good attitudes, and good reputations.

James 1:22-25

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. _____ what it says.²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and _____ in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

The “Habits of Hope” (sometimes called spiritual disciplines), are not, however, the mere product of human strength and desire.

Godly habits are initiated, carried on, and matured through the sanctifying work of the Spirit who lives within us.

They are the fruit of the Spirit, but they are worked out in our lives—not as erratic psychological and sudden impulses, but growing, settled tendencies and attitudes, showing forth and leading to the transformation of character.

We are to cooperate with the Spirit, striving with determination to see these traits developed in us.

In Conclusion

For those who belong to Jesus Christ, forming new habits, being controlled by the Holy Spirit becomes a way of life.

Many of the coming chapters of this book will expand on the “Habits of Hope.” We pray that the Holy Spirit will use these things to help build your life and character as you continue your journey.

This is all a part of loving Jesus.

John 14:23

Jesus replied, "_____ anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him"

Most importantly, we are encouraged, ". . . and whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor 10:31)

Let's glorify God together!

Influence of Character

The Essence Of Character

It can be understood as the desire and the ability to do what is right even when the going is tough; especially when the going gets tough.

This necessitates a series of pre-decisions; it requires one to determine and commit to what is right before the struggle to do what is right ensues.

Many people believe that character is made in a crisis, but this is not the case. Character is merely *revealed* in a crisis. The same sun that melts butter hardens clay. Circumstances can affect people differently, depending upon their character.

Our character is reflected in every decision we make and every relationship that we establish.

The test of character reveals the 'law of the harvest.' In the moment of testing, we reap what we have sown.

There are no shortcuts to character.

The Turning Point In Character

The turning point in character development is the regeneration of the heart. Being born again makes us new creatures in Christ with new desires and abilities to please God.

No religious event or righteous cause can accomplish what God intends: Christ living in and through us.

The indwelling Spirit works within us to will and do His good pleasure.

Philippians 2:13

For God is working in you, giving you the _____ and the _____ to do what pleases him.

Our Character affects our Influence

When our beliefs and our practice do not line up, we lose credibility and our ability to influence others is damaged. Conversely, when our beliefs and behavior are in alignment, we have credibility and a corresponding influence.

So then, our character determines our moral authority, which is the credibility we earn by "walking the talk."

Consequences Of Violating Character

We compromise and suffer by trading character for something of lesser value.

When we compromise godly convictions, we begin to pick and choose what parts of the Bible we want to believe.

Because we are not in fellowship with God, we no longer sense His presence in or His blessing on our lives.

The power to please God and our ability to positively influence others declines.

At the beginning of each day it would be a good thing to pray, "Lord, give me the wisdom to know what is right and the courage to do what is right, even when it's hard. Amen"

Andy Stanley

The Alternative To Living A Life Based On Character

A life of character is based on the principle: by the grace of God, we are going to obey the wise and loving principles of God's Word. It considers the long-term consequences that our actions have on our relationship with God.

The alternative is a life based on comfort and convenience which in turn is based on impulse and emotion. It says, "I'm going to do whatever I feel is best. I'm going to do whatever brings me immediate pleasure—whatever seems good at the moment." It looks to someone other than God for guidance and is based on preferences rather than moral convictions.

Our Effect on Others

The Effect Of Others On Our Character

Whether we like it or not, the people we spend time with have an effect upon us. The effect of bad company is clear: it ruins good morals and good character.

1 Corinthians 15:33

Don't be fooled by those who say such things, for "bad company _____ good character."

The effect of walking with the wise is that we grow still wiser.

Proverbs 13:20

Walk with the wise and _____ wise; associate with fools and get in trouble.

We are called to follow others as they follow Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1

And you should imitate me, _____
_____ I imitate Christ.

We will all be influenced by others; the only question is how? —Positively or negatively? It is not wise to believe otherwise.

Be Teachable

In our culture, we don't hear much about being teachable. Being teachable means that you are still willing to learn, to grow and change. You accept the fact that you don't know everything and you don't have your life totally together.

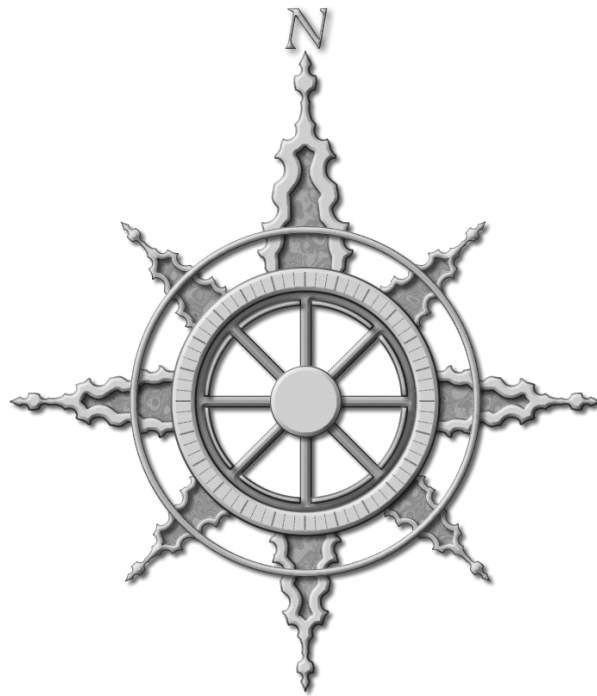
One woman shared with us how she was praying to the Lord, sharing her struggles with Him, and she asked, "Lord, am I really such a mess?" and He replied, "Yes, you are, but I love you and I will teach you." What a wonderful testimony! Whether we want to admit it or not, we are all in that same situation.

God has many important and valuable lessons that He desires to teach us. Surrender to Him and allow Him to have His way in you. You will find that your life becomes much easier to bear, and the problems you face will be easier to face.

The more we resist Him, the more difficult our lives will be.

- The wise person is willing to learn the easy way—from God's Word and the mistakes of others.
- The carnal person insists on learning the hard way—through his/her own personal mistakes.
- The foolish person, blinded by pride, refuses to accept the truth and learns nothing.

Feasting on the Word



The Importance of the Bible TODAY

The Bible is different from any book that has ever been written. First, it is inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, a gift straight from Him. It tells historical tales that both inspire and caution us.

God didn't breathe on the scriptures *after* they were written by men. God breathed *out* into certain men to give us the words we need to know the truth. This is why we approach the Bible with such confidence.

2 Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is God-breathed and is _____ for teaching, correcting and training in righteousness,

It is not just any book! It teaches us, corrects us, and trains us - if we allow it and pursue it. If we do not - the only wisdom we have is the wisdom we get from the world - which is really no wisdom at all. That should be a frightening thought!

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is _____ and _____. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it _____ the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

The living God speaks from His living Word! God's word is not confined to past history. It comes to us in our "now," with freshness, power and clarity. God's word judges the motives and thoughts of our hearts. It reaches into a person and correctly reveals motives and intentions, helping us to see ourselves so that we can mend our thoughts, attitudes and behavior.

God's word exposes any faithlessness, disobedience and indifference as we grow toward spiritual maturity.

The Bible is the primary way God speaks to His people. It is the way we learn about Him and His will for our lives. It provides spiritual food for growing believers toward Christ-likeness.

God's word shows us our wrongs—why? So He can lead us to forgiveness and peace! He does not want us to be trapped or bound when we can be set free.

2 Timothy 3:17

... so that the servant of God may be thoroughly _____ for every good work.

Paul completes his thought from verse 16 into verse 17, encouraging young Pastor Timothy, that if he nurtures his life from scripture, he will be prepared and qualified for every task God assigned to him. Isn't that something we should all desire for our own lives? Whether we are at our job, with our family, in the church, or in the business arena - we should desire to be *fully* equipped for anything God leads us to do.

Joshua 1:8

Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. _____ you will be prosperous and successful.

God himself speaks, promising a reward for immersing ourselves in His Word. The reward he promises is prosperity and success. Many people think of prosperity and success only in terms of finances. But Joshua's success wasn't one of financial riches. His life was not easy - but it was successful, because he accomplished what God had called him to do. God may prosper us and give us success in various ways—in relationships, in talents & giftings, in our health, in wisdom. Our goal in all of this is to be rich in God (Luke 12:21).

Benefits

Protection

As a child is taught by his parents to obey, he doesn't always understand that obedience to his parents will protect him from things he is not aware of. For example, a mother instructs her young son child not to insert objects into an electrical socket. He knows nothing about electricity. But if he does not obey her, he will have a shocking experience—and will learn about electricity “the hard way.”

In the same way, obedience to God's Word protects us from what we may not know or understand. The Bible says that we have an enemy who “prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” (I Peter 5:8)

Psalm 119:11

I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might _____
against you.

Knowing and obeying God's word will protect us, even from ourselves, as we go through life and face various temptations.

Encouragement

We face many obstacles in life. Some of them are quite grievous, and cause us heartbreak and fear. The Bible is a great source of encouragement. When we face difficult times, we need to be reminded:

Isaiah 41:10

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I _____ strengthen you and help you; I _____ uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Deuteronomy 31:8

The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you; he will _____ leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.

These are only two of the many scriptures in which God promises his constant presence. To quote a popular song, “Your love never fails, it never gives up, it never runs out on me.”

Correction

“Correction.” That word does not appeal to us, does it? However, we need to be corrected at times, probably more often than we would care to admit.

Job 5:17

_____ is the one whom
God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.

Correction often comes simply through reading God's Word. It can also come through the Spirit, or even through a faithful believing friend or leader. When this happens, we may not enjoy it, but we should consider it a blessing, because we know God cares enough about us to mend our ways. He is a faithful Father and we are His children.

Comfort

We may go through times of great sorrow. Perhaps we lose someone we love through death, or other tragic occurrence. Or we may go through some other kind of tragedy. In all these things, we can be assured that our God is with us. He is truly the God of all comfort.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in _____ our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

Warnings

People can come up with all kinds of strange teachings. They probably want to make the Bible “fit” into their view of the world. Instead, they should seek to make their life “fit” with the teachings of the Bible. False teachings can be very enticing. We have a tendency to want God to fit inside our own worldview “box” – where we can make sense of Him and control Him. But the very idea of trying to control God is absurd!

Hebrews 13:9

Do not be carried away by all kinds of _____ teachings.

Evidently, the Hebrew believers were being enticed by rules about eating, as if eating can make us more godly! Think about it – doesn’t it feel “right” somehow to hold ourselves to a list of rules and regulations, thinking we’re accomplishing something, thinking we’re more “right” because we’re following rules? But that’s exactly what it’s warning against!

Colossians 2:20-23

Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, _____, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: . . . ²² These rules, . . . are based on merely human commands and teachings. ²³ Such regulations indeed have an _____ of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they _____ any _____ in restraining sensual indulgence.

You see? The Bible, here in Colossians, says that these “rules” have an “appearance” of wisdom – indicating that following them has a deceptive quality. They *appear* to be the way to wisdom, but they are not – they lead us away from wisdom. They are based on “merely human commands.” Also, in this passage, we are asked the question, “Why?” — Why, now that we belong

to Christ, are we submitting ourselves to the world again? This indicates that if we do so, we are going backwards instead of forward.

Matthew 22:29

Jesus replied, “You are in error because you _____ the Scriptures or the power of God.

Jesus corrected the thinking of the Sadducees because they did not know two things:

- the Scriptures, and
- the power of God.

That should be a warning to us that we need to know the Scriptures – otherwise, we can fall into error. We also need to know the power of God, or we can fall into error.

The Scriptures and the power of God are in relationship to one another. The Holy Spirit wrote the Scriptures, and the power of God is demonstrated through the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit is the author of both the Word and the power.

God, the Holy Spirit will never lead us apart from what His Word says.

Let us give some examples of how the Spirit & the Word work together:

- The Holy Spirit’s activity finds its basis in the Word of God.
- Any ministry of the Holy Spirit will find its basis in the principles of the Word of God.
- When the Holy Spirit speaks, we can find the guidelines in the Word of God.
- When we worship in Spirit and in truth, we find the substance of our worship in the Word of God.
- When the Holy Spirit moves in power, we’ll find the parameters in the Word of God.
- As the Holy Spirit guides, we’ll find the disciplines for that guidance in the Word of God.

From Milk to Solid Food

Here is where we must ask the question, “How well do you know your Bible?” We don’t mean to be offensive, but it’s time to evaluate, “Are you ignorant of God’s Word?” We are very concerned that the present generation of Christians generally do not know the Bible.

There was a time that even if Christians didn’t know a lot about God’s power, at least they knew the Bible! We’re not just talking about the ministers and preachers. Generally, any typical church member knew his Bible so well that if you started to quote a verse, the person could finish it, and knew where to find it in the Bible. That is not true today!

What about you? Have you read the Bible? Jesus actually put that question to the Sadducees in Matthew 22, verse 31, asking, “Haven’t you read what God said to you?”

He also said they were ignorant of God’s power. Why do you think He brought up the subject of the power of God? What about you? What do you personally know about the power of God? Is it merely second hand information to you? Have you only read about it in Scripture or church history?

Have you felt that your knowledge of the Bible is enough? Are you one of those who think that the manifestation of the power of God was only meant for the apostolic era?

So – what do you do when you come across our enemy, not just Satan, but *any* enemy? How do you handle it if you come across a demon-possessed person? Are we to believe that demonic possession ceased after Peter & Paul’s time was ended? Are we to believe that God would strip us of any power to deal with the demonic today?

So, how often do you read the Bible? Do you have a Bible reading plan? Perhaps you need a plan that will take you through the entire Bible in one year. We have plans like this available in

our Welcome Center – free. We urge you to find a Bible reading plan and start TODAY!

Why should we know our Bibles so well? Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would remind the disciples of what He had taught them. (John 14:26)

Here is the wonderful thing; The Holy Spirit will remind us of what we have learned. Why go to Bible studies? Why read the Bible every day? Why sit under teaching and preaching of the Bible? Because the Holy Spirit will bring it back to you when you need it.

At a time when you least expect it, the Holy Spirit will bring to your mind what you have taken the time to read and learn. Guaranteed.

Hebrews 5:11-6:3

We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. ¹² In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! ¹³ Anyone who lives on _____, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the _____, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. ^{6:1} Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, ² instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³ And God permitting, we will do so.

This passage clearly teaches us that there is a process of growing to maturity in God, and it involves knowing the Word of God and putting it into practice. Let us move on to maturity!

Feasting!

Psalm 34:8

_____ and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.

This verse from the book of Psalms is an invitation – “taste,” it says, “and see . . .” It all begins with a taste. This invitation comes directly from God Himself and carries a promise with it. IF you taste, THEN you will see that the Lord is good!

Psalm 119:103

How _____ are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Here we see that the very *words* of God are sweet. How can we know this if we never “taste” of it?

Matthew 4:4

Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every _____ that comes from the

mouth of God.’”

Jesus teaches us that physical food has some value, but we are not to live *only* by it. There is also spiritual food – and it is “every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Jeremiah 15:16

When your words came, I _____ them; they were my _____ and my heart’s delight, for I bear your name, LORD God Almighty.

The prophet, Jeremiah, also uses this metaphor—the taking in of God’s word, and he speaks of the emotional and spiritual joy the word brought to him.

And so, feasting on the word ties in to loving God completely, because we learn to know Him better as we feed on His words to us.

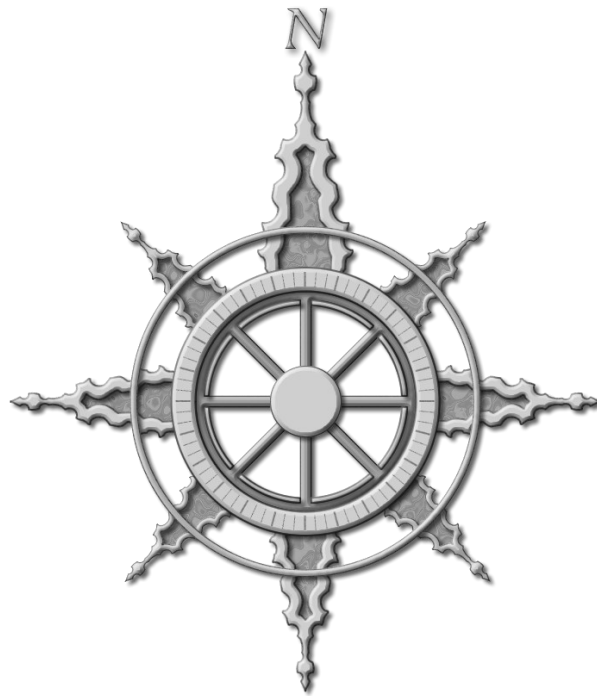
We want to encourage you to taste; to dive in, and to feast! This is all a part of getting to know and enjoy our God.

Definition of Feast

n. 1) Any rich or abundant meal. 2) A sumptuous entertainment or meal for many guests 3) Something highly agreeable. 4) A periodical celebration or time of celebration, usually of a religious nature, commemorating an event or a person.

v. 1) To have or partake of a feast; eat sumptuously. 2) To dwell with gratification or delight, as on a picture or view. 3) To provide or entertain with a feast.

Pray Without Ceasing



Christian Prayer Is . . .

Prayer is one of the greatest gifts the Lord gives. Unlike anything else in all of creation, we can communicate with our Lord.

Prayer is sincere communication from man to God.

- First, it is **sincere**. What we say to God must truly reflect our hearts to avoid hypocrisy.
- Second, it is **communication**. Whether audible or silent, prayer communicates something.
- Finally, prayer **comes from man and goes to God**. If God speaks to us it is revelation (which may occur during prayer), but this is not, itself, prayer. Prayer flows from earth to heaven.

Since prayer is designed to communicate to God, there is no ordained **stance** for prayer. A quick survey of the Bible would show you can pray sitting down, kneeling or standing. You can pray out loud or silently. You can pray with your head bowed or looking up to heaven. You can pray with your eyes closed or open. **What matters is not the position of your body but the condition and expression of your heart.**

The fact that prayer is communication is an important point. Prayer is broader and much more than just asking God for things. A good acronym for describing some distinct aspects of prayer is "A.C.T.S." This stands for:

Adoration:

When we adore God and tell Him how much and why we love Him, we are praying. In this sense, worship is a form of prayer.

Confession:

When we confess our sins before God, this is also prayer because it is admitting God's judgment is right.

Thanksgiving:

Thanking God for His mercy in saving us, in providing for us, for healing us or for anything is a type of prayer.

Supplication:

Finally, we can ask God for things by making specific requests, and He will answer this kind of prayer according to His will. But remember this is only one kind of prayer.

There is so much in the Bible about prayer that a person might become overwhelmed in studying and understanding it all. I have found it to be convenient and helpful to make three distinctions among the various Scriptures concerning prayer. Virtually every biblical passage about prayer may be categorized as a **command** which we must obey, a **statement of fact** telling us how prayer works, or an **example** which records a specific prayer. Recognizing these differences helps us to sort out what to do in prayer: what **we must do**, what we **could** do, and what **God will do**.

There are many models of prayer, starting with what we call, "The Lord's Prayer," (really an outline for prayer) when Jesus taught His disciples how to pray. We will use that example ourselves starting on the next page.

These examples of prayer are not intended to be repetitious, as if simply repeating the words holds any special power. Rather, they are to be used as guidelines to model our prayer lives upon. The fact that God answered a prayer in a particular way does not mean the same prayer would be answered in the same way under different circumstances.

So we will focus primarily on what the Bible generally **commands** and **teaches** us about prayer. Then we will explore the "key" to answered prayer and offer some practical insights as to how you can have a more effective life of prayer.

Commands Concerning Prayer

On this page is the essence of what the New Testament commands us to do as we pray. **These are the things we are responsible to do in prayer.**

Matthew 6:5

Do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray to be _____ by _____.

Our prayer must be sincere and from the heart. It should not be a "show" for others (James 4:3).

Matthew 6:6

When you pray, _____, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.

This does not mean we should never pray in public, just that we should never pray for the purpose of looking good to the public.

Matthew 6:7

When you pray, do not keep on _____ like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their _____.

The effectiveness of prayer does not depend on the length or wordiness of the prayer nor on the eloquence of our words.

Mark 11:22

Have faith _____.

Jesus said this in the context of prayer (Mark 11:22-25). Notice the Bible never tells us we must have faith so God will answer a **particular** prayer, only that we must believe God exists and rewards those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). It is up to God to give us the faith for and answers to specific requests.

Mark 11:25

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, _____, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your

sins.

God commands us to forgive others before He will forgive us or answer our prayers.

I Thessalonians 5:16-18

Be joyful always: pray _____; give _____ in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

We are commanded to pray on **all occasions** (Ephesians 6:18; see also Colossians 4:2). The Greek does not mean we must pray continuously for 24 hours a day, but that we never give up praying. We must also be thankful **in** all situations for God's grace, though not necessarily **for** all situations.

II Thessalonians 3:1

Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may _____ rapidly and be _____, just as it was with you (See also Colossians 4:3).

We must pray the gospel is preached and believed because only God can save people.

I Timothy 2:1-2

Pray for kings and all those in _____.

James 5:13-14

Is any one of you in _____? He should pray . . . ¹⁴ "Is any one among you _____? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them . . ."

Elders **should** pray for the sick, but every Christian can also pray for the sick (James 5:16).

I Peter 4:7

. . . Therefore be _____ and of _____ mind so that you may pray.

The Facts about Prayer

This page contains the essence of what the New Testament teaches as statements of fact concerning prayer. **This is what God does in response to prayer.**

Matthew 6:8

Your Father _____ what you need
_____ you ask him.

When you pray, you aren't telling God anything He doesn't already know. It is just that He wants to hear it from you. "You do not have, because you do not ask God" (James 3:2).

Matthew 7:7

_____ and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

The Greek word for "ask" means to keep on asking over and over. God does not promise **when** He will answer, only that He **will** answer.

Matthew 7:11

If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give _____ to those who ask him!

God gives only good gifts (James 1:17). Sometimes God does not give us what we ask because He knows it wouldn't be good for us.

Mark 11:24

Therefore I tell you, whatever you _____
_____ in prayer,
_____ that you have received it, and it will be yours. (See Matt. 21:22, John 15:7, James 5:15)

Prayer offered in true faith always gets results.

- Faith is a **gift from God** which He gives only at His will.
- Faith is certainty of **truth**, not of what we *think* is true.

- Faith comes by understanding the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).
- God never **commands** us to believe for a **particular** prayer.

There is no formula for answers according to **our** desires.

Luke 18:7

And will not God bring about
_____ for his chosen ones,
who cry out to him day and night?

Persistent prayer pays off (Luke 18:1).

Romans 8:26

We do not know what we _____ to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

The Spirit never "misses" when He prays for us.

James 4:3

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with _____
_____, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Motives are important. Seek to fulfill God's will, not your own.

James 5:16

The prayer of a _____
man is powerful and effective.

One Christian praying is as effective as many if he is right with God (1 Peter 3:12) through the blood of Jesus Christ.

1 John 5:14

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything
_____ to _____
_____, he hears us.

The Key to Answered Prayer

What is the "key" to answered prayer? Let's start by showing what the key is NOT:

It is not the number of people praying.

One righteous man praying in faith is all it takes for prayer to be answered (James 5:16). Of course, the greater the number of people praying, the more likely it is there is one among them who is righteous and faithful.

It is not the specific words we say.

Whether we say a long prayer as we lay hands on someone or a short prayer for someone on the other side of the world, both prayers are equally effective if offered in faith according to God's will.

It is not in the asking

Asking in prayer is necessary (James 4:2), but it does no good if we ask for the wrong things or with wrong motives.

James 4:3

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with **wrong** _____, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

I could **ask** God to make you give me all the money in your bank account, but I rather doubt He would comply with that request.

It is not in the amount of faith.

Prayer offered in true faith will work (James 5:15). But we cannot generate faith by ourselves. I could try to believe with all my heart that you will go irrevocably blind as you read this, but I suspect you would still be able to finish this chapter. And the amount of faith we do have does not matter to God. "If you have faith **as small** as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move" (Matthew 17:20).

It is not in the persistence

Persistence in prayer is often necessary (Luke

18:1). But it will only pay off **for sure** if we are appealing to God to do the right thing. "Will not God bring about **justice** for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?" (Luke 18:7). I could ask God a thousand times over for Him to make you my slave for life but you would still remain free because this would not be right.

The key to answered prayer is the Lord's will

When we know God's will, then we can **ask** with true **faith** and **persistence**, confident He will answer our prayer because we know we are praying for good things.

I John 5:14

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything _____ to _____ he hears us.

Now, we do not need to be in the dark about what God's will is and pray blindly in unbelief. We know for sure that we can believe God's promises in the Bible and therefore can pray with confidence according to His Word (see Romans 10:17). We can also seek to know the Lord's will for a particular situation through prayer itself (see Acts 9:40, II Corinthians 12:7-9).

The point is our confidence should not be in our own ability to muster up faith or in the precise wording of our prayer. Rather, our confidence is in God's faithfulness and ability to answer prayer. Knowing God's will produces true faith. And prayer offered in true faith will be answered because it asks for something God is willing to give or do.

Our motivation should be to please the Lord, not to have the Lord please us! It's not that the Lord won't please us, he often showers down blessings upon us – however this is not why we pray!

How To Pray

Jesus Taught Us How to Pray

Read Matthew 6:9-13 which is where Jesus taught His disciples the Lord's prayer. This is an excellent model for our own prayers to God.

Matthew 6:9

This, then, is _____ you should pray.

This is an instruction on **how** we should pray not **what** we should pray. The precise wording is simply an example. If we recite this prayer repeatedly, then it becomes a mindless ritual and mere babbling, which Jesus warned against in:

Matthew 6:7

Our _____ in heaven.

Addressing God as "Father" at once recognizes His authority over us while indicating His intimacy with us. He wants both our love and respect. So when you pray you do not need to be formal, but neither should you be irreverent.

"_____ be your name."

Begin with adoration (remember A.C.T.S. on page 36). Tell God how much you love Him and why you love Him so much. How would you like it if all your best friend ever did was beg, beg, beg, without ever just being your friend?

Matthew 6:10

Your kingdom come, _____
_____ be _____ on earth as it is
in heaven.

Our priority should always be to seek God's will before we seek our wants. As we follow God's will, He will be faithful to give us all we need (see Matthew 6:33).

Matthew 6:11

Give us _____ our _____

bread.

If you think you can pray once and that's it, think again. God wants you to pray regularly. So He will see to it that you regularly have need of Him. He will also regularly meet those needs.

Matthew 6:12

Forgive us our debts, as _____ also have
_____ our debtors.

God **requires** us to forgive those who sin against us. Be sure when you seek God for something you hold nothing against other people. Otherwise, God will not answer your prayer (see Matthew 5:23-24, 18:15-20).

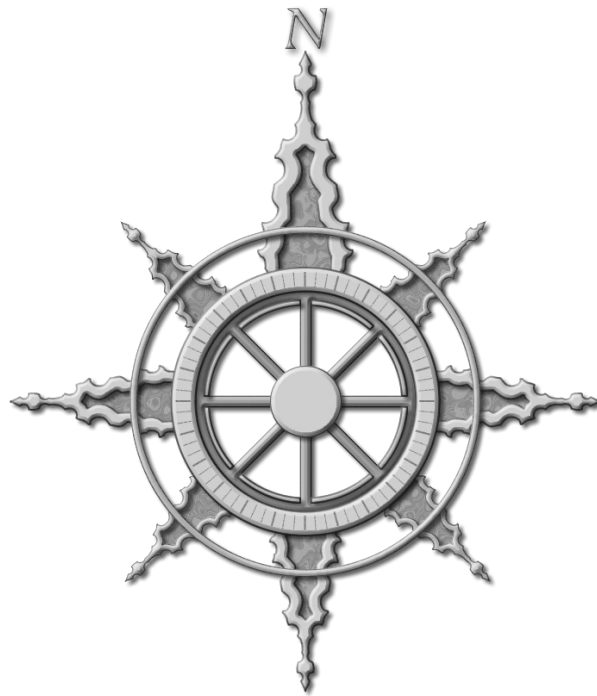
Matthew 6:13

And lead us not into
_____, but
_____ us from the evil one.

God never tempts us to sin (James 1:13-15). This is simply a way of asking Him to help us resist sin as we are tempted. There is always a way to escape when we are tempted. But we must ask God to provide the way of escape (I Corinthians 10:13, Hebrews 4:16).

The bottom line is you should "be real" when you pray. Do not use flowery language. Just relax and be yourself as you talk to God. Remember we are only responsible for the activity of prayer, not for its results. You do not need to force or fake faith or emotion. But as you commit your requests to God, He is faithful and able to answer you according to His will. "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

Cleanse Through Confession



A Pure Heart

There are certain things that must be done if we want to build or maintain any relationship. For example: A husband and wife are in relationship. How would that relationship continue if the husband and wife never spoke to one another? Another example: Two friends are in relationship. What would happen if the two friends could never agree about anything?

We have come in to relationship with a Holy God, by turning (repenting) from our own ways and declaring Him the Lord (Master) of our lives. We have decided to follow His ways and His precepts. However, we fall short of the purity and holiness of God. Therefore, there are things we must do. One of those things is called *confession*.

When we confess our sins, our shortcomings – we are simply coming into agreement with God, bringing ourselves into alignment with Him. This is for the sake of our relationship with Him. It is not done to win his love – He already loves us! It is not done to manipulate Him into doing something for us. It is done because we love him so much that we don't want anything to spoil our relationship with Him.

Psalm 24:3-4

Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? ⁴ The one who has _____ and a _____ heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god.

Clean Hands

After Pontius Pilate finished his interrogation of Jesus, he washed his hands with water in front of the crowd and declared, "I am innocent . . ." He was symbolically declaring himself free of guilt. So, according to Psalm 24, to continue in our relationship with God, we must be free of guilt. There is only one way to do this – to confess and receive forgiveness and cleansing.

Pure Heart

"100% Pure," the label reads on our orange juice bottle. This means that the juice contained in this bottle is not mixed with anything else. It is, simply, orange juice. When we come to the Lord, entering into His presence, we must come with a pure heart – an undivided heart, a heart that is mixed with nothing else. Here in Psalm 24, it continues to explain that lack of division by clarifying we will trust in no idol or false god.

Hebrews 10: 22

Let us draw near to God with a _____ heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to _____ us from a _____ conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Here in the book of Hebrews, we can see that having a sincere heart is linked with having a singleness of loyalty. Purity means that there is no mixture. Sincerity means there is no division, no deceit. We are not coming with ulterior motives.

James 1:8 (KJV)

A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

Indeed, a person who is divided in his heart is not only unstable toward God, but he is unstable in ALL his ways. This might be a good time to examine your own heart and ask the Lord to show you if you have any double-mindedness.

James 4:8

Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you _____.

James, while exhorting us to come near to God, at the same time warns us against being double-minded.

How to Confess

While the Bible does not lay down an exact method of confession, there are many good examples we can find. One is taken from the life of King David.

Psalm 51:4

Against you, you only, have I
_____ and done what is
_____ in your sight; so you are
right in your verdict and justified when
you judge.

Here, David is coming into agreement with God and admitting his wrongdoing.

Today, we use words like “Mistake, wrongdoing, error, etc.” By using words like those, we minimize the impact of what we have done. We even have a tendency to place blame upon others.

But David, when he was confronted with what he had done, confesses to the Lord and calls it what it is, “Sin” and “evil.” He goes on to say, “You are right in your verdict . . .” Even though he knows he has greatly displeased his God, he still trusts in God’s judgment and mercy. He does not want his sin to spoil his relationship with the God he loves so much.

Just as we use the Lord’s prayer as an example of how to pray, we can use this as an example of how to confess. In the next example, we have the confession from the *Book of Common Prayer*, which is used in corporate church services with many people saying the same confession together. We have modified it, making it more an example for an individual person.

“Most merciful God, I confess that I have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what I have done, and by what I have left undone. I have not loved you with my whole heart. I have not loved my neighbor as myself. I am truly sorry and I humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on me and forgive me; that I may delight in Your

will and walk in Your ways, to the glory of Your Name. Amen.”

This is a solemn moment. It is between you and God alone. No one else can confess for you. It will be unique to you, because you are a unique individual. Your sin may be *similar* to others’ sins, but no one else knows the depth of your heart, your thoughts, your intentions, your motives. You can’t use someone else’s confession, this is yours alone. Feel free to be very honest with God. He knows it all anyway!

Job 6:24

Teach me, and I will be quiet;
_____ where I have
been wrong.

Ask the Lord to show you your sin. And when He does, just simply agree with Him. He knows. He is not waiting to strike you down with a lightning bolt. He longs for you to fellowship with Him. He is pleased with our confession and promises to purify us! It is Him who does this work, thanks be to God!

1 John 1:8-9

If we claim to be without sin, we
_____ ourselves and
the truth is not in us.⁹ If we
_____ our sins, he is
faithful and just and will forgive us our
sins and _____ us from all
unrighteousness.

We can’t afford to be prideful and act as if we have done no wrong. If we do that, we deceive ourselves. If we *continue* in that, we choose to walk down a path of deception. It so much better to just agree and confess and allow Him to do His work in us! Then we can ask Him to teach us a better way.

Psalm 25:4

_____ me _____
ways, LORD, teach me your paths.

Ongoing Cleansing

In order to clarify what we mean by “ongoing cleansing,” we want to go to the evening of the “Last Supper.” The first passage, from the gospel of Luke, describes something that takes place earlier in the evening:

Luke 22:21-24

But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. ²² The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed. But woe to that man who betrays him!” ²³ They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this. ²⁴ A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest.

Jesus is having a special evening with his disciples. He loves them. He is trying to prepare them for what is to come. Instead of simply listening and allowing Jesus to continue, they begin to quarrel with one another, to the point of arguing over which one is the greatest! In response, the Master rebuked his disciples.

Luke 22:25-27

Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. ²⁶ But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. ²⁷ For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.”

This passage from Luke sets the tone for the foot-washing in John's Gospel.

John 13:5-11

After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, dry-

ing them with the towel that was wrapped around him. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” ⁷ Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” ⁸ “No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” ⁹ “Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!” ¹⁰ Jesus answered, “Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.” ¹¹ For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not everyone was clean.

People did not wear socks and shoes that enclosed the feet. Sandals were the only protection from sharp stones and the dusty road. The feet became the most unclean part of the body. Washing the feet of guests was common courtesy, and it brought refreshment to the one being served.

According to the custom the guests reclined on low couches with their heads toward the table. The sandals had been left at the entrance of the home, and the bare feet extended so that the washing could be easily done.

The disciples must have felt silly and ashamed. After their argument over who was the greatest, the Master was washing their feet!! Foot-washing was a job so lowly that it was regarded beneath the dignity of a Hebrew slave to wash his Master's feet. Those who owned Hebrew slaves were not to ask them to do this. But here was Jesus, voluntarily performing this service.

“A Hebrew slave must not wash the feet of his master, nor put his shoes on him, nor carry his things before him when going to the bathhouse.” (Mechilta Tractate

Ongoing Cleansing, continued

Nezikin, from the Hebrew rule book for Rabbis)

Think about it for a moment. Even though Jesus had already divested himself of all the external markings of His divinity, He is still God! Although He has taken on himself the form of a servant, He is still Lord. He doesn't have to serve. Peter's reluctance came from his failure to understand.

Apparently Peter thought it was enough for Jesus to dress like servant. He didn't actually have to act like one! The whole thing probably made him feel very uncomfortable. Peter's resistance doesn't come from defiance but from misdirected devotion. He wants to protect Jesus from humiliation, just as he does at His arrest.

Next, let's look at the other part of Jesus' response to Peter, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with me." (vs 8).

If we won't humble ourselves to let Jesus serve us, to let him die for us, to let his atonement cleanse us, we can have no part with him. If we are too proud to admit that we need him, his blood, his death and his resurrection, we have no part with him. We must let Jesus wash us, it's the only way.

Here we see another significance of foot washing. It's a ministry to those who are already clean all over. Any time there were sacrificial meats involved, such as at Passover, they bathed by immersing themselves before the meal. So, more than likely, the disciples have had a bath already.

This is an example of how we are initially cleansed from our sins by justification of grace through faith.

We're cleansed all over. But we are also on a journey throughout our lives with the Lord. The One who has cleansed us doesn't want us to stay at the bath house. He's gone to prepare a place for us in the Father's house and has called us to come and be with him in that place.

When we began to walk from the cleansing place to the abiding place we come into contact with the things of the world. We are sometimes defiled by what we walk through, but only on our feet. We become defiled by anger, resentment, various lusts, selfish ambition, and things like these. **We need ongoing cleansing.**

We call this practice "**Cleansing through Confession.**"

1 John 2:1-2

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

We can rejoice because he has provided cleansing for the sins we commit *after* we're converted as well as those we committed *before* we turned to him.

He has filled the basin with water to take care of any daily contamination while we're on the journey.



*Why did I wait so long
To learn such a living song?
And how could I stay so close
Without seeing Him, never seeing Him?*

*Clean before my Lord I stand
And in me, not one blemish does He see.
When I placed all my burdens on him
He washed them all from me.*

Nancy Honeytree,
© 1974 Word Music, Inc., UBP



The Benefits of Cleansing through Confession

Continually cleansing through confession is a choice that you make, and there are so many benefits. Once you begin to experience the benefits, you will want to experience more! Keep it up long enough, and you will have no desire to go back to what you did or had before.

We could sum up the benefits in one word – “JOY!” But we will break it down so we can understand it more clearly.

A Clear Conscience

You will no longer feel guilt and worry about the choices you make and what direction your life is taking.

Hebrews 13:18

Pray for us. We are sure that we have a _____ conscience and desire to live honorably in every way.

A Clear Sense of Direction

You will experience a clear direction and purpose in your life, and no day is a waste, regardless of what is going on around you. Sin clouds your vision, but when you confess and get cleansed, God is able to direct your paths as He intends.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and _____ will make your _____ straight.

Temptations will be Lessened

The direction the world is taking will have less impact on your thoughts, feelings and actions. You will grow in your ability to recognize bad moral choices and the ability to steer clear of them because you are training yourself to distinguish good from evil. You can “fly like an eagle” above all these things, because your kingdom is not of this world, and you have a greater Master than the world. Your motivation is your love for God, not an “obligation.”

Isaiah 40:31

. . . but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will _____ on wings like _____; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Less Despondency, More Hope!

Negative feelings and thoughts drag you down. Overcoming them can turn bad days into the best days as you gain victory over those thoughts and feelings. These are the days you can use as an opportunity to be purified and become free from sin. Life becomes a great adventure with mountains to climb, rivers to cross, battles to fight, and victories to be won!

Psalms 146:5

_____ are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God.

Satisfaction, Fulfillment and Happiness

Your life becomes “unified” because you are no longer divided or mixed, you are steadfast in your heart for the Lord. Stress is lessened, and peace becomes a normal heart condition.

Isaiah 26:3

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are _____, because they trust in you.

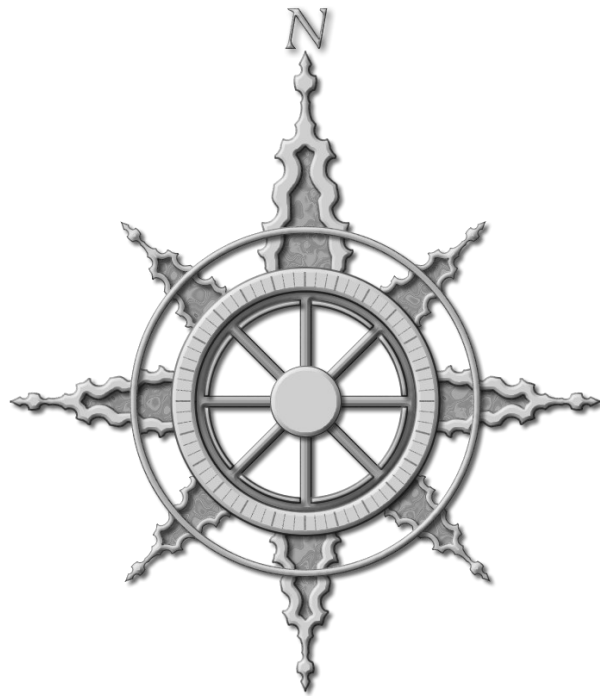
Eternal Life

If Jesus were to return right now, you’d be confident, knowing that you have kept yourself cleansed. There would be nothing standing in the way between you and your Maker.

Matthew 5:8

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will _____.

Forgive Daily



You Cannot Serve God All By Yourself

A man once filed an insurance claim to pay for his hospital and doctor bills after an accident. The form asked what the nature of the accident was and the man responded, "I tried to do it myself." Of course, the insurance company was not satisfied and desired more complete information. The following is a rough paraphrase of this man's account. While I am unsure of some of the details, the gist of the story is true.

"I was laying brick on the third story of a building. At the end of the day, the construction crew had gone home, but I still had some bricks to get back down on the ground. I tied a rope to a barrel, hoisted it up to the roof with a pulley and fastened the rope to the ground. After I went up to the roof to fill the barrel with bricks, I returned to the ground level and untied the rope. That was my first mistake. For, you see, the bricks in the barrel weighed more than I did. Immediately the barrel dropped and I flew into the air because I did not let go of the rope. That was my second mistake. On the way up, I was hit in the shoulder and head by the barrel. Then I continued up and my hands were smashed into the pulley. Unfortunately, the bottom of the barrel broke on the ground and dumped all the bricks so I was now heavier than the barrel. I went down and the barrel went up. I again hit the barrel along the way and landed on my back on the pile of bricks. This is when I made my third mistake: I let go of the

rope and I saw the barrel crash back down upon me, breaking both of my legs. This is what I meant previously when I said the cause of the accident was that I tried to do it myself."

This story appeared in an insurance magazine. The man had apparently recovered and could look back on his misfortune and laugh. But this story also captures an attitude many of us have. We are "rugged individualists." We want to do everything ourselves. We do not want to ask for help for anything. As we face life's problems and temptations we are sure we are strong enough to deal with them, but eventually the world crushes us and every part of our being collapses in defeat.

This "rugged individualism" is not God's plan for you and me. First and foremost, we Christians must depend on the grace of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit to avoid trouble and to face it when we run into it. But God also wants us to depend on Him **through each other**. He has given each of us certain gifts that will build and encourage the rest of us. Don't hide or ignore your own gifts. Put them to good use. And do not refuse help from others. We must all band together, especially in our small groups, to strengthen each other so we will be prepared to go out and preach the gospel to a lost and dying world. Please, don't try to do it alone.



Christians Must "Bear With" One Another

Ephesians 4:4-6

There is one body and one Spirit ~ just as you were called to one hope when you were called ~ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all"

We all have much in common from day one of our conversion. Whether single, married or divorced, young or old, male or female, rich or poor, we share in the same basic beliefs, hope for eternal life and love of Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:28). Regardless of our background, we are called together in unity so we may have rich fellowship with one another. From this springs our ministry and evangelism by which we fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

This unity we possess, this fellowship we experience, this common task laid before us is to be prized and guarded by us at all costs. For we have an enemy which can divide our unity, smother our fellowship and cripple our evangelism if we do not meet it face-to-face whenever it appears. I am not talking about Satan, although he is no doubt behind much of this enemy's progress. The enemy I am talking about is the evil and wicked sin of unforgiveness.

We must forgive others just as God has forgiven us!

Paul was well aware of the threat of unforgiveness when he wrote the words of Ephesians 4:4-6. So he wisely preceded these words with a warning to beware of unforgiveness and the divisions among us it will cause.

Ephesians 4:2

Be completely humble and gentle; be _____,
_____ with one another in _____.

We must "put up with" others.

Ephesians 4:3

_____ every _____ to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

It takes human effort to maintain unity within a church of diverse people.

There are several reasons why we must always be willing to forgive our brothers and sisters in Christ for **anything** they may have done against us.

- 1) **We must forgive simply because the Bible commands us to.** "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32)
- 2) **We must forgive to maintain our unity and fellowship.** "If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand" (Mark 3:25)
- 3) **We must forgive if we are to avoid becoming bitter.** "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many" (Hebrews 12:15; see also Ephesians 4:31)

Have you ever noticed how talking to a person who frowns a lot will make you frown? That being around someone who is "high strung" will make you more tense? That someone else complaining a lot can ruin an otherwise good day? Our bitterness also "rubs off" on others when we don't forgive.

We must stay alert and on guard against this tendency, or we can become ensnared by it. Then anger and bitterness will eat away at our joy and peace, and we slowly fade away, not just from other Christians, but from the Lord Himself.

God's Has Forgiven Us Much

We were in bondage to sin, only and always doing evil in God's sight.

Genesis 6:5

The LORD saw how great _____ wickedness on the earth had become, and that _____ inclination of the _____ of his heart was _____ evil _____ the time.

This speaks of the whole human race (including you) outside of Christ. When we look at man's heart rather than his actions, he is **only** and always evil in God's sight. That seems like such a harsh reality – but it's the truth! So always remember: You once led a life of sin and evil and are no better than anyone else.

We were justified before God by grace through faith, not by good works.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For it is by _____ you have been saved, through _____ and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God -not by _____ so that no one can boast.

God justified us and forgave our past sins solely on the basis of our faith in Jesus Christ and the repentance this faith produces. And he did this "while we were still sinners" (Rom. 5:8)! Now, if the all-powerful Creator freely forgave you, **who are you to demand more from another man by setting conditions for him to be forgiven?**

We were redeemed from a life of sin through the death of Jesus Christ.

Titus 2:14

Who _____ himself for _____ to _____ from all wickedness and to _____ for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Christ died in our place to redeem us from the power of sin. The problem is unforgiving Christians often act as though they **were** the only one Christ died for when they refuse to forgive others. But the fact is Jesus Christ died for **many** sinners, not just you. So in effect, a Christian denies the redemptive power of the cross when he refuses to forgive another believer in Jesus Christ.

We are being sanctified by the Holy Spirit more and more with time.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

May God himself, the God of peace, _____ you _____ and _____. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All of us who are Christians are in the process of being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. This means neither you nor anyone else is perfect. **Now if other Christians are not perfect, why are you so surprised when they let you down?** And if you are not perfect, then how can you act as though you were better than they are by refusing to forgive them? You see, recalling our past sin, God's forgiveness, and our present imperfection helps to give us perspective when we need to forgive others.

It is Absolutely Necessary for Us to Forgive

The fact that the Bible requires us to forgive others should be ample reason to do so if we are truly disciples of Jesus Christ. In addition, the fact that our Christian unity and fellowship is hindered by our unforgiveness should be a further motivation to forgive. But the issue runs deeper than this. **If you do not forgive, then God will not forgive you!**

If you do not forgive, then you will not be forgiven.

Matthew 6:14

"For if you _____ men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will _____."

Matthew 6:15

"But if you _____ men their sins, your Father will _____ sins."

You see, the forgiveness of our sins depends on our forgiving others.

Read the parable in Matthew 18:21-35. This illustrates why God will not forgive someone who is unforgiving to others. A modern example would be a rich landlord who goes bankrupt and is released from his debt to a bank only to kick a poor widow out of her apartment because she was ten dollars short on last month's rent. Such a warped man should be "tortured" for his hypocrisy and double standard (Matt. 18:34). "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart" (Matt. 18:35).

This **does not** mean our salvation depends on how we forgive any more than our salvation depends on our good works. It means genuine faith in Jesus Christ and a forgiving heart go hand-in-hand. Just as faith produces good works, so also faith in Christ's death produces a willingness to forgive. How can you persist in unforgiveness when you realize how much you have been forgiven? How can you fail to forgive one of Christ's people once you understand the great price He has paid for them? And if you are still unforgiving after all this, God will see you are "tortured" until you see your own inconsistency (Matt. 18:34-35).

You will be judged by the way you judge others.

Matthew 7:1-2

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you _____, you will be _____, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Luke 6:37

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not _____, and you will not be _____. Forgive and you will be forgiven." (See also James 2:12-13.)

Again, we see if we are judgmental and condemn others, we will be condemned ourselves. I want to point out, however, that we are prohibited from judging other **people**, not from judging their **actions**. "The spiritual man makes judgments about all **things**, but he **himself** is not subject to any man's judgment" (1 Corinthians 2:15). We are to always

When is it Necessary to Forgive Others?

Who should take the initiative to seek forgiveness? The person who is offended or the one who did the offending? The answer is **both** are responsible to take the steps necessary to make things right. Either one should seek out the other when he is aware of the problem. Ideally (but not necessarily), they will meet "half way", both open to reconciliation.

Matthew 5:23-24

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something _____, leave the gift there in front of the altar. _____ and be reconciled to your brother; _____ come and offer your gift.

Here we should notice three important things:

- 1) The **offending** person must seek out the reconciliation.
- 2) He must **go** and actively seek out the reconciliation.
- 3) Reconciliation is a **priority** because it is an act of obedience. And obedience is an act of worshipping God.

Matthew 18:15

If your brother _____ against you, _____ and show him his fault, _____ the two of you.

- 1) The **offended** person must seek out the reconciliation.
- 2) He must **go** and actively seek out the reconciliation.
- 3) People should initially seek reconciliation **privately**.

Both of these passages deal with sins among **brothers** (fellow Christians). Both illuminate the same underlying principles: forgiveness is a priority, both parties bear responsibility, and both must be willing to take the initiative.

Forgiveness, then, is paramount among believers. Don't ever say another Christian should know better than to do such and such. Haven't you ever done wrong? And don't ever wait for him to come to you. **Whoever** recognizes a problem exists should seek the other out.

When are you required to forgive someone else?

We are **always** to forgive. We must forgive, to be obedient to Jesus, and to release ourselves from even the possibility of bitterness.

However, we must realize that even though we offer forgiveness, this does not automatically guarantee that reconciliation will follow. Even though reconciliation is our goal, there are situations where we must separate ourselves from those who prove themselves toxic in our lives. The Bible goes so far as to warn us to guard ourselves against some influences.

Proverbs 22:24-25

Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one _____, ²⁵ or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared.

1 Corinthians 5:11

But now I am writing to you that you _____ associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. **Do not even eat with such people.**

We may face a situation where we have offended someone and we have asked for forgiveness and sought reconciliation, yet the other person will refuse to forgive us or associate with us. We cannot control another person's heart. We must leave them to God. For our part, we must endeavor to "live at peace with everyone."

Romans 12:18

If it is possible, as far as it _____ on _____, live at peace with everyone.

How To Seek Reconciliation

You are required to seek reconciliation with another Christian who has sinned against you. But how should you go about doing this? Jesus gave us very clear and simple instructions in Matthew 18:15-20.

Matthew 18:15

If your brother _____ against _____ . . .

Ask: Was this a **wrong** against **me**? If you are just irritated at how someone "looked at you," forget about it and let it go. Let "love cover it." (1 Peter 4:8) And if the problem is between two other people, leave it alone. It is none of your business.

Go and _____ his fault . . .

Often the other person does not even realize they have done anything wrong. Go in humility and explain to him what the problem is. Usually they will change their behavior once they see its harm.

_____ between the _____ of you . . .

The initial steps of reconciliation should always be private. Never "gang up" on someone and never tell other people about the offense before you have confronted the person responsible. Do it in secret.

If he listens to you, you have _____ over.

Drop the matter without ever bringing it up again. Keep no record of past wrongs (I Corinthians 13:5).

Matthew 18:16

But if he will not listen, take _____ or _____ along so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

Stubborn people should be confronted a second time and witnesses should go along to stress the urgency of repenting and reconciliation.

Matthew 18:17

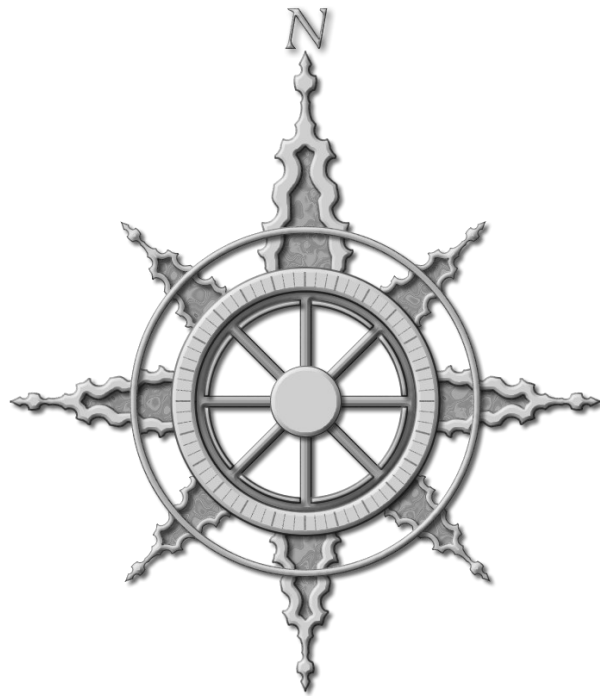
If he refuses to listen to them, _____ to the _____; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

The third step is to bring the matter before the elders who govern the local church so they can confront the offender. Anyone who still refuses to repent at this point should be "excommunicated" (which means to put out of fellowship) for his stubbornness.

Continue to read Matthew 18:18-20. Often these verses are pulled out of context. What they **really** mean is whenever a group of Christians determine to discipline one of their own according to biblical principles, the Father and Jesus Christ **enforce** that discipline from heaven. The intent of all this is to bring the offender to repentance so he can be forgiven and restored to fellowship in his church (see II Corinthians 2:7-11).

Always forgive each other, "bearing with one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2). Yes, it is difficult to do, but it must be done. In so doing, we not only "keep unity of the Spirit" (Ephesians 4:3) but sometimes strengthen it. Some kinds of rubber are "vulcanized" when they are heated. This means a chemical reaction takes place making new molecular bonds which can no longer be broken by heat. In other words, once the rubber melts and hardens, it can never again be melted down. Our bonds with other Christians can also be "hardened" when we handle strained relationships biblically. Several good friends of mine are people who once offended me!

Love Like Jesus



The Impossible made Possible?

In order to love like Jesus, we must understand one simple truth: **We cannot live the Christian life on our own.**

After we are born-again, we start our journey in the Kingdom of God and our relationship with Jesus. All of us reach that point where we realize that we are doing something wrong.

Of course, all of us can say that we want to be like Jesus, to love like Jesus. He inspires us and we eagerly desire to display generosity, forgiveness and compassion. But no matter how hard we try, we fail. Our human nature gets in our way. Our human nature is selfish. Selfishness is the antithesis of the love of God. God SO loved the world that He GAVE. And He gave in such a way that the gift(s) can never be repaid.

Jesus was human too, but he was also God incarnate. He was able to see his creation, including people, in a way that we cannot. He personified love.

1 John 4:16

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God _____ love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

You and I, created men and women, are not love. We can love, but not perfectly. We see other's faults and stubbornness. We remember offenses and tend to have a hard time with forgiveness. We struggle with allowing ourselves to be vulnerable to others because we know we will get hurt again and again. We love, and at the same time, we hold back.

John 13:34

A new command I give you: Love one another. _____ I have loved you, _____ you must love one another.

Jesus teaches us to love in the same way that He loved us. How do we do something we are incapa-

ble of doing? Within the pages of the Bible, we seek the answer to this question. How do we love like Jesus?

Mark 10:27

Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; _____ things are _____ with God."

Take a few minutes to read through the following passage. Let yourself absorb the meaning and impact of the words.

John 15:1-10 (ESV)

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

Pay particular attention to the end of verse 5, "Apart from me you can do nothing." We can't

Abide in Him

When we give our lives to Christ, we are no longer our own master. We no longer seek to follow our own way, but to take on the ways of Christ. We can do these things only through the power of the Holy Spirit within us. He guides us to right decisions and gives us the grace to trust in God. When we learn to abide in Christ, He loves others through us. Even if we face the pain of rejection, we endure because Jesus is the vine that sustains us. His love heals our hurts and supplies the strength we need to continue loving.

I love the word “abide.” It means to remain stable or fixed in a state, to continue in a place, to stay, to remain, to live with. When we see a selfless Christian who can love like Jesus, we realize that this person is abiding in Christ. What would be too difficult on our own, we can do through abiding in Him. We abide in Him by reading His Word, praying to Him, listening for His voice, through the encouragement of fellowship with other believers. This is why we encourage you to continue to practice the “Habits of Hope” – because this is the way our trust in God is built.

Our Christian life is a process of growth. Abiding in Christ, we learn to know Him, trust Him and love Him more and more. We reach out to others. We love them. The more we abide in Christ, the more we will grow in compassion for others.

John 15:5

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you _____ in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:9

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now _____ in my love.

John 15:13

Greater love has no one than this: to _____ one’s _____ for one’s friends.

Jesus, himself, showed us this “greater love.” He showed it by leaving his heavenly throne to take on human form. He showed it by being a perfect example while he walked this earth, in spite of all the earthly temptations he faced. He showed it by suffering and giving up his life on the cross. He “laid down his life.”

Philippians 2:5-8

In your relationships with one another, have the _____ mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he _____ himself _____ by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

Jesus healed the sick, fed the poor, ministered to the brokenhearted, cast out evil spirits, brought sight to the blind, and gave hope to the hopeless, and much more! His message was radical. Prostitutes, beggars and kings were all equal recipients of love. God could do no less, He IS love.

“Laying down your life” may mean that you give up your own convenience, or your own expectations, or your own enjoyment to serve another person.

Philippians 2:1-4

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the _____, _____, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you

More Like Christ

God does not force us to love Him. Love has to be willingly given. It cannot be programmed into us or forced out of us. WE have to choose it. God works in us as we submit to Him, or choose Him and His ways.

Philippians 2:13

. . . for it is _____ who _____ in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

In worship, we are reminded of God's greatness, his mercy, and his desire to do good in our lives. We are reminded that we can trust Him and depend upon Him.

Through prayer, we acknowledge that we depend on God and ask Him for the help we need-- needs such as food, intervention, and change.

Philippians 4:6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by _____ and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Through studying the Bible, we read and consider the works and words of God. Jesus studied scripture and used its words to resist temptation.

Matthew 4:4

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every _____ that comes from the mouth of God.'"

In the church, we interact with other people who are on the same journey with us. We learn from interacting with one another about how to express love, and we grow in appreciation for people who have talents and abilities different from our own. Jesus created the church, not just to preach the gospel, but to help us grow, because that is also a part of His work and purpose.

1 John 2:6

Whoever claims to _____ in him must live _____ Jesus did.

By serving, helping others, we behave the way Jesus behaved. We learn by experience that we get more satisfaction from serving than through selfishness. Involving ourselves in the work of God is the most satisfying thing of all, because it has eternal value.

Every single day, we have opportunities to learn to be like Jesus. We face opportunities to be patient, to be considerate, to help others, to pray. At work, at school, at home, in the marketplace, the Word of God has something to say about how we should live and even the attitudes we should take.

We often wish the difficulties of life would just stay away. But Jesus warned us that we would have problems:

John 16:33

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you _____ . But take heart! I have overcome the world.

God uses our difficulties as opportunities for us to learn. Even Jesus had to face troubles. If Jesus had to learn through suffering, we can do the same.

Hebrews 5:8

Son though he was, he _____ obedience from what he _____ .

We will face problems in life whether we follow Jesus or not. Our choice is not whether we have problems, but whether or not we learn from those problems. Will we choose to react to them the way Jesus would? Or will we become bitter and seek revenge when someone harms us? We learn more about love when we love people who are difficult to love. We learn more about forgiveness when people sin against us. Our character is shaped more during difficult times, because they give us a

Love is . . .

From reading the book of 1 Corinthians, we can surmise that the church in Corinth was having some issues and needed some instruction on a few things. After a long discourse about Spiritual Gifts, the Apostle Paul says something very interesting at the very end of chapter 12, “. . . and yet I will show you **the most excellent way.**”

Let’s continue on with what he had to say in the next chapter of 1 Corinthians:

The Most Excellent Way

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am _____.
³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain _____.

Please take a few moments to ponder these very important words. Paul is teaching them (and us) that without love – we are nothing but noise, and we gain nothing. Everything else pales in importance to this one great thing. Let’s continue with how Paul describes love in the next several verses:

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Now, take another few moments, and substitute your name for the word “love” in these verses. “Karen is patient, Karen is kind. Karen does not

envy, does not boast, is not proud . . . etc.”

Wow— this is a good way to check ourselves to see how we are doing. If we’re honest with ourselves, we will admit that we fall far short of these standards for love.

1 Corinthians 13:8-13

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. ¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But **the greatest of these is love.**

Childish things are appropriate for children, and spiritual gifts are appropriate for our time. But there will come a day when these gifts will cease. Paul is not saying that if we are mature we don’t need spiritual gifts. He is saying that if we are mature, we will not *overemphasize* spiritual gifts at the expense of love.

The three great pursuits of the Christian life are not miracles, power, and gifts. They are faith, hope and love. Though the gifts are precious, and given by the Holy Spirit to this day, they were never meant to be the focus or goal of our Christian lives. Instead, we pursue **faith, hope, and love.**

More Than a Feeling

We see, in 1 Corinthians 13 (Called “the love chapter”), that love is described by action words. Paul is not writing about how love feels, he is writing about how it can be done in action. True love is always demonstrated in action.

Make Every Effort

2 Peter 1:3-4

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

The Apostle Peter teaches us that God has given us everything we need to live a godly life—*through* our knowledge of Him. That means that we learn to be godly by learning to know God. The more we know Him the more we will want to be like Him. And so, Peter continues by encouraging us to practice:

2 Peter 1:5-9

For this very reason, _____ every _____ to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

Peter presents us with a list of qualities to put into practice.

- Faith
- Goodness
- Knowledge
- Self-control
- Perseverance

- Godliness
- Mutual affection
- Love

Notice that he separates “mutual affection” from “love” – indicating that they are two different things. Like Paul, Peter is emphasizing that love is not just a feeling of affection. And so, we are to *add* love *to* mutual affection. He says if we *increase* our growth in these qualities, we will be effective and productive in following the Lord. He warns us that if we do not pursue them, we will be short-sighted, even blind! And we will “forget” things.

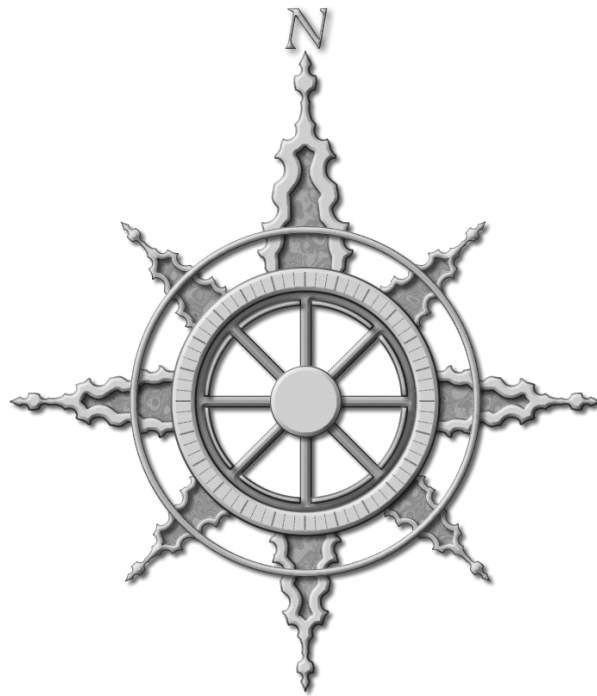
Again, this is a passage that we can use to check ourselves. Ask yourself, “How am I doing with faith? With goodness, etc.” Examine this list and you may be able to perceive the very quality that the Lord is increasing in you at this very moment. This is such a comforting and encouraging thing to do—realizing that the Lord is continuing His work in us.

2 Peter 1:10-12

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, _____ to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, ¹¹ and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. ¹² So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.

Again, Peter exhorts us to make effort. Practicing these qualities will help us to stay on track, and help us to keep from stumbling. In verse 12, he mentions that he always reminds the people of these things. This is something we should do as well—remind one another of these things, and encourage one another to keep on loving like Jesus.

Building Relationships



The Risks & Rewards of Relationships

As these truths about what God has already accomplished for us become clearer in our thinking, we grow in awareness of our true freedom in Christ and desire to express this freedom and security in the way we approach relationships.

Instead of one-upmanship, or climbing some kind of relational ladder, we can take pleasure in putting others first.

Our identification with Christ leads us to imitate Christ. Paul invites us to do this in the book of Philippians:

Philippians 2:3-4

Do nothing out of _____ ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others _____ yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

The apostle then used the servanthood of Jesus as the model for the mindset that we as his servants should embrace in our service to others.

Philippians 2:5-8

In _____ relationships with one another, have the same _____ as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very _____ of a _____, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

But it is one thing to exalt the virtues of being a servant and another to be treated as a servant. Living that way requires an understanding of our identification with Jesus Christ. We will be ministering compassion to those who may misunderstand us or even disrespect us.

We will often need to remind ourselves of the truth that our performance and our acceptance by other people has nothing to do with our dignity and value, since this is determined by God and not by the world.

When we suffer rejection and indifference, the pain will be real, but it need not destroy us. We have made the radical decision to look to God and his resources alone for our true and unchanging identity and worth.

If we had to choose one word to summarize the theme of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, that word would be “relationships.” We have seen that God is a community of being we call “The Trinity.” The three persons of the Godhead enjoy perfect mutual love.

We have also seen that God created us in his image as relational beings whose ultimate source of fullness and enjoyment should have been found in fellowship and intimacy with God.

Through his loving initiative, God has overcome the alienation and separation caused by human sin by sending his Son into the world to pay for our guilt and to give us his life.

The restoration of our vertical relationship with God that was made possible through Christ’s atonement becomes the basis for the restoration of righteous horizontal relationships with others.

In Scripture, righteousness is a relational concept, since it refers to good, just, and loving associations with God and others.

As children of God through faith in Christ, we are called to a lifestyle of growing others-centeredness and diminishing self-centeredness as Christ increases and we decrease.

Let's Start at the Very Beginning

Be Friendly!

Proverbs 18:24 (KJV)

A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly . . .

Now, we would think that this principle would be obvious! But unfortunately, people don't often "see themselves" very well, and we find them walking around sad, sullen, morose and/or angry. And they wonder why it is so difficult to make friends! The fact is - these types of attitudes do not attract people. If you want to make friends, you must be friendly!

Haggai 1:7

This is what the LORD Almighty says:
"Give _____
_____ to your ways."

STOP. Take some time right now - think about your own "ways." Ask the Lord to show you anything in your life that could block your ability to be friendly toward others. Do not rush this - ask the question and sit and listen for the Lord to respond. Perhaps take a day or so to seek the Lord while pondering this issue. Be aware that He may want to reveal things to you. If that happens, be sure to obey Him and respond to what He shows you. This is an issue that can have a huge impact upon your life - AND the lives of others.

Become a good listener

Proverbs 1:5

. . . let the wise _____ and _____ to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance—

Recognize a basic human need - Everyone wants to be heard and understood. Acknowledge this need in yourself - and then recognize it in others. As we learn to value other people above ourselves, this is one of the first areas to consider - learning to become a good listener. By develop-

ing your listening skills, you will be a person who will be able to truly interact with others, making them feel very special because you value what they have to say.

The first step toward becoming a good listener is to simply close your lips. Stop talking! Make a priority to learn the other person's stories instead of telling your own stories. If you do this, you will be amazed at the people who are drawn to you because they feel valued by you.

Ecclesiastes 5:3

. . . many words mark the speech of a _____.

There is an art to what we call conversation. Think of it as bouncing a ball back and forth with others. The person speaking is holding the ball. The ball is bounced to another person who will be speaking. If you are holding the ball too often or too long, you are talking too much. Be aware of and sensitive to those around you. Honestly, it's amazing how much our use of speech is related to our level of selfishness.

Proverbs 17:27-28

The one who has knowledge uses words with _____, and whoever has understanding is even-tempered.

²⁸ Even fools are thought wise if they keep _____, and discerning if they hold their tongues.

Ask Questions

Again, this relates to listening. When you hear another person's stories and begin to ask questions, you let them know that you truly want to understand what they are saying. We repeat back to them what we have heard to make sure we understand them well. When others sense that you are making a sincere attempt to know and understand them, they tend to open up and share more. This deepens relationships and puts you in the category of someone who is open, relatable

Relationship Building Tools

Watch for visual cues

We tend to remember and appreciate the people who ask us if everything is okay, even if we haven't told them that anything is wrong. This tells us they are paying attention to us, and we all want that.

Body language, facial expression, tonal expression. Notice when words don't match expression.

Remember important things about others

Their name! Work on this. Things that are important to them. You will not be able to remember everything, but if you remember their name and perhaps one important fact, you will be able to ask about this item the next time you see them.

Some people recognize the value of this to the point that they keep a written record of facts about people they are likely to come into contact with – the name of the spouse and children, pets, hobbies, etc. This may seem like an extreme thing to do. But look at how much it tells about a person's desire to consider others!

Manage your Own Emotions

Regardless of how we are feeling, we need to be able to put our feelings aside temporarily so we can fully listen and engage others.

If you are going through a time when you are experiencing strong emotions that keep you from being fully present with another person, it's better to be open and share it rather than pretend to listen. Most likely, the other person will appreciate your transparency. But let this be the exception rather than the rule. We all go through crisis times, but if our life is in a continual state of crisis, something is wrong.

Be Transparent

Many people try to appear as if they are perfect. They don't discuss failures, they hide their shortcomings and they avoid speaking about anything

that might embarrass them.

But this is not reality. It's a façade, a mask. The truth is – you are not perfect, and neither is anyone else. And we all KNOW this. We are all only too human. When we hide ourselves behind this façade, we only make ourselves cold and unrelatable. We make it hard for other to connect with us.

Share when the Time is Right

Ecclesiastes 3:7

(There is) . . . a _____ to be quiet and a time to speak.

We all know people who tell us their whole life story in the first five minutes of meeting us, totally oblivious to the fact that we have no interest in hearing it. If we want to build relationships with others we need to pace ourselves and share when it's *appropriate* and at a level that is consistent with the *depth* of the relationship.

Empathize!

Good relationship-builders show they are sharing the feelings of the other by mirroring the emotions of the person speaking. Sharing excitement, joy, sorrow, frustration, and disappointment helps connect you to others.

Romans 12:15

Rejoice _____ those who rejoice;
mourn _____ those who mourn.

This is a very simple practice! If someone is happy, be happy with them. If they are sorrowful, be sorrowful with them. The key word here is "with." When you relate to them emotionally, you show you are with them, they are not alone, someone understands!

When appropriate, share a situation from your own experience to show that you can relate to the other's experience. But be careful not to get to the point that you are overshadowing or competing with their experience. This requires empa-

Relationship Building Principles

Be Accountable for Yourself

This means taking responsibility for your words and actions. Those who are mindful are careful and attend to what they say, and they don't let their own negative emotions impact the people around them.

Build Trust

Make sure you are trustworthy. Trust is the foundation of every good relationship. Trust is something that is given, it is earned. It is an honor to be given someone's trust, and we should not take it lightly.

When friends and family members can trust you, a powerful bond is formed. They will be able to communicate with you more effectively. We all should be careful about who we give our trust. Determine in your heart that you will be a person that others may safely trust in.

Cultivate Mutual Respect (Honor)

Respect is something that is given. When you give respect to others, you let them know that you value their input and ideas, and they can value yours. You can treat others honorably whether you agree with them or not, or whether you like them or not! If you practice a respectful, honoring attitude toward everyone at all times, your life and your relationships will improve greatly.

Romans 13:7

Give to everyone what you owe them: . . .
. if respect, then _____ ;
if honor, then _____.

Welcome Diversity

When others offer different opinions, take the time to consider what they have to say. Discuss differences without becoming argumentative. You can agree to disagree. Being friendly with

those who are unlike you does not mean that you accept or condone all of their lifestyle choices. If you cannot build relationships with them, you will not even have the chance to tell them about Jesus!

1 Corinthians 9:22

To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by _____ possible
_____ I might save some.

Make Effort

Consider devoting a part of each day to build relationships, even if it's just 20 minutes! Send someone a card, call them on the telephone, send them an encouraging text, post replies on social media, or go out for coffee with a friend.

Face to face is best! Don't settle for impersonal, on-line efforts. These little relational touches help maintain a good relationship, especially if they're face-to-face.

Show Appreciation

Say, "Thank you!" whenever someone helps you or shows you kindness. Everyone wants to feel appreciated. Be sincere, don't fake it!

Be Positive

No one wants to be around a person who is negative. NO ONE! Negativity is a drain on the emotional energy of others. If you feel that people are avoiding you, check your negativity level. Negativity is unattractive and boring. Positivity is attractive and contagious!

Practice being positive — saying cheerful, encouraging things — being grateful and offering praise to God, etc. You will be amazed at how much better you feel and how much your relationship skills will improve.

Relationship Building Principles

Manage Your Boundaries

We all need to maintain good boundaries in our relationships. If we don't we can "wear out our welcome."

Proverbs 25:17

Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house— _____ of you, and they will hate you.

Make sure that you set and manage your own boundaries thoughtfully. We all want to have friends. But we should not monopolize one another's time, energies, or encroach upon another's priority relationships.

Avoid Gossip

It is simply too easy to become involved in gossip. But the Bible says a LOT against it. It ruins trust, friendships and reputations. Our advice? Don't do it and don't listen to it.

Proverbs 16:28

A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends.

A person who gossips will quickly gain a bad reputation. People will not share if they don't trust. Gossips are not given trust. Don't let that happen to you.

Think ahead and come up with a plan for what you will do the next time you are in a situation where gossip is involved. You could say, "I don't think we should be talking about this." or, "I don't want to talk about this." and walk away.

Proverbs 26:20

Without wood a fire goes out; without a gossip a quarrel _____

_____.

Difficult Relationships

Occasionally, you may have someone in your life that you simply do not prefer. Perhaps you have seen a bad side of their character, or you have a hard time relating to them for some reason. It is important to take care of any offense on your part, so you are walking in forgiveness toward them.

Romans 12:17-18

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.¹⁸ If it is possible, as _____ as it _____ on _____, live at peace with everyone.

Accept that not everyone will be your best friend, and there is no need for you to *make*

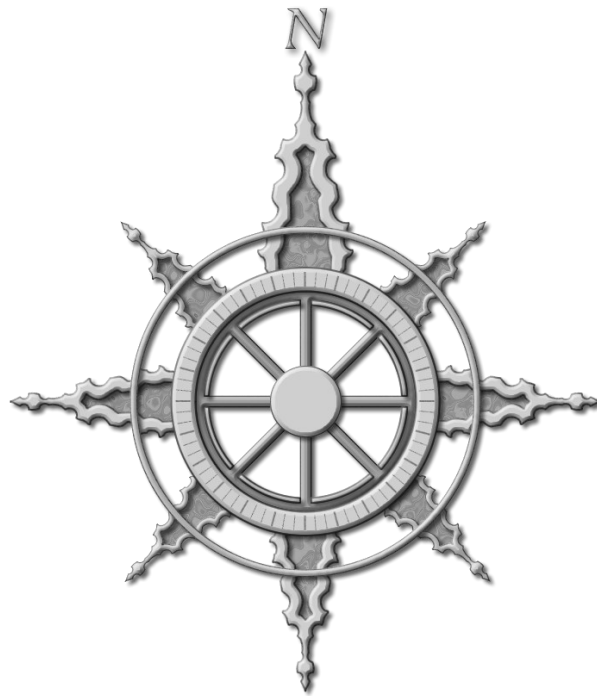
"How can two walk together unless they agree?"

Amos 3:3

them your best friend. You make the effort. If it is not reciprocated, just let it go.

However, even with difficult people you can cultivate peaceful, cordial relationships. You can make effort to get to know the person better, gaining more understanding about what makes them the way they are. Instead of putting energy into your differences, focus on finding things that you have in common.

Learning to Give



A High Calling

All Christians are called to give of themselves, to serve. This is not a minor calling. It is to come out of a fundamental heart attitude, which is promoted in Christianity.

Galatians 5:13

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, _____ one another humbly in _____.

Jesus Christ showed himself as the **model** servant. We follow His example by giving as He gave, loving as He loves. We want to live our lives in such a way that we **benefit other people**.

Mark 10:42

You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles _____ it _____ them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.

The world sees greatness in power and superiority. But Jesus taught a different point of view.

Mark 10:43-44

Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your _____ and whoever wants to be first must be _____ of all.

To be great in the kingdom of God means to be a humble servant, helping others in need.

Mark 10:45

For even the _____ of _____ did not come to be served, but to serve, and to _____ as a ransom for many.

Jesus served others, including us, to the point of giving up His life for us.

John 13:14

Now that I, your _____ and _____, have washed your

feet, you should wash one another's feet.

In the days when Jesus walked the earth, people wore sandals and walked along rocky, dusty roads. Washing the feet of guests was a task performed by the lowest of servants. Jesus did this as simply one example of serving others in humility. Today, "foot washing" has been turned into a type of ceremony. But Jesus, by his example, is showing us the **heart attitude** behind the act.

John 13:15

I have set you an _____ that you should do as I have done for you.

Christ is our **model** for being a servant.

John 13:16

I tell you the truth, no _____ is _____ than his _____, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

No one has ever been greater than the Lord Jesus, God incarnate. And yet, He gave of himself, serving others in humble, practical, meaningful ways.

Philippians 2:3-4

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility _____ others _____ yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

We can be very simple or very creative. For example: there was a woman who went to visit a friend who had newborn twins. While she was visiting, she cleaned her friend's kitchen for her. What a thoughtful, considerate thing to do!

So, you see, this does not have to be complicated. It doesn't need to have special recognition, or a glorified name – "The Kitchen Cleaning Ministry." It is simply one person showing enough love and consideration to do an act of kindness for someone else. Let's all decide here and now that

Good Works

Christian service has several elements to it:

- We serve **because** Jesus Christ was a servant, and we follow His example.
- We serve **in humility** putting the needs of others before our own needs.
- A life of service means **hard work**.
- We work in the strength **given** by God rather than in our own strength.
- It is Jesus Christ Himself we serve *as* we serve other people.

Many people see "work" as a dirty word to be avoided at all costs So they seek power over other people to do the work *for* them. But Jesus condemns this attitude, teaching, "whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant."

In the church, some people regard work as being contrary to faith. We are **saved** by grace through faith and not by good works. However, we are "created in Christ Jesus to **do** good works." Good works are not the **means** of salvation, but they are the **purpose** and result of salvation. (Ephesians 2:8-10, Matthew 5:16).

Acts 26:20

I preached that they should repent and turn to God and _____ their repentance by their deeds.

I love the word "demonstrate" here, because there *should be* some kind of outward demonstration that our lives have changed – we have come into a different kingdom and have a different King. We, ourselves, are different, changed. The way we live, give and serve are a demonstration of our genuine faith and repentance.

I Thessalonians 1:3

We continually remember before our God and Father your _____ produced by faith, your _____ prompted by love, and your _____ inspired by hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we truly believe that God is who He claims to be, and enter into a relationship with Him, our genuine faith will create in us a desire to please and obey Him, which results in doing good, serving, and giving.

James 2:17

In the same way, faith _____, if it is not accompanied by action _____.

James 2:18

But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds and I will _____ by my deeds."

A fire is not started by ashes, but who ever heard of a fire without producing ashes? A baby is not born because he cries, but who ever heard of a living baby that never cried? So also, no one is ever saved by good works, but the idea of being "in Christ" without growing in Him and doing good works is absurd. So faith inevitably produces good works.

Since all Christians are called to serve and to work, Jesus Christ gave the church five kinds of leaders "to prepare God's people for works of service" (Ephesians 4:11-12).

Get used to the idea of work! If there was not something which Jesus Christ wanted you to accomplish in this life, then there would be no reason for you to be here instead of in heaven with Him. He has a plan for you, to make you useful to His kingdom and for the world. When you discover what God's plan and purpose for you, it will be the BEST thing you could ever do, and you will love doing it.

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to _____ you and not to harm you, plans to give

Body Ministry

The way things ought to be!

Paul the apostle often likened the unity and diversity within the church to the human body. Body ministry is when **each member** of the church **contributes** to the good of the whole and is himself benefited by the whole by serving in his or her God-ordained, Christ-directed, Spirit-enabled role. It is what we are equipped to do! Right after Paul described the nature and purpose of the five-fold equipping ministry, he wrote:

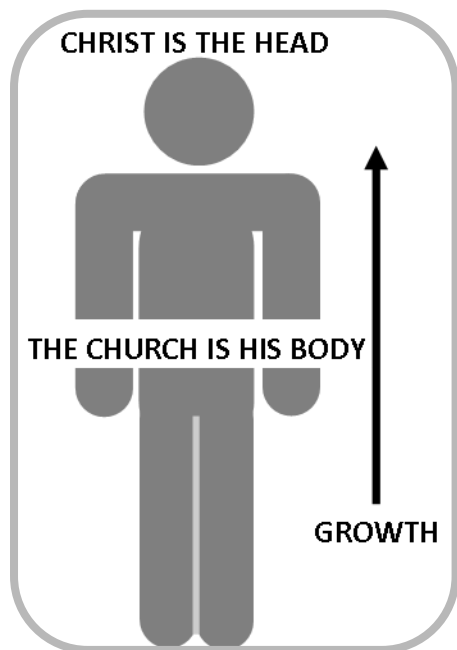
Ephesians 4:16

From Him the whole _____
joined and held together by every support-
ing ligament, _____ and
_____ itself up in love, as
_____ does its work.

"From him." Jesus Christ is the head of the church. He founded, rules, directs, sustains, protects and empowers the church with its spiritual gifts. (Colossians 1:18)

"The whole body." The universal church is Christ's body. Each part is unique in its function, yet is united together in body and receives its guidance from the head, Jesus Christ.

"Joined and held together by every supporting



ligament." Because we are all "in Christ" and united under Him as our head, we are all united together as a church. We have unity "in Christ."

"Grows and builds itself up in love." Both our growth through evangelism and the ministry that takes place within the church results from the church's labor of love. We cannot build ourselves up apart from Christ (John 15:5). Nor does Christ necessarily build His church directly. He builds it through Christians who are submitted to Him and who are empowered by Him through spiritual gifts.

"As each part does its work." The **whole** church is built as **each Christian** works. Everyone must work. But everyone is just a part of the larger whole. We must do our own part, not someone else's. And again, what we do is work. It is not necessarily easy.

You see, we all need and depend on each other. There is a world of difference between working toward the same goal and working **together** toward the same goal.

One woman prayed to the Lord to show her what part she was in His Body. He revealed to her that He had made her to be a shoulder. From that, she was able to perceive many things, for example: 1) She was not the head, but she could help support the head, and the head could even lean on her. 2) She could carry heavy weight. 3) She could be used to push and support (encourage). It helped her to understand her function and purpose in the body and helped her to avoid becoming involved in things that did not "fit" her purpose.

Hearing this woman's testimony, a man started to pray that God would reveal his part in the body. God showed him that he was a rib. He described it this way, "You don't hear much from me, but I'm in here protecting the heart." Isn't that beautiful?

God has promised to give us wisdom when we ask Him for it. We encourage you to ask Him!

Your Part

You are a part of the body of Christ. Strictly speaking, the body of Christ is the **universal** church of all believers. But just as your body is made up of several limbs, muscles and organs, so also the universal church is made up of many local churches (and in our case, the local church is comprised of many small groups). Even within these smaller units, there is unity because all are joined together along with a variety of functions.

Let's examine I Corinthians 12:1-31 which describes body ministry.

I Corinthians 12:4

There are _____ kinds of gifts but the _____ Spirit.

Some of these spiritual gifts are listed in verses 7-10.

I Corinthians 12:11

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as _____.

The Spirit, not man, gives spiritual gifts to each Christian. We don't pick our own spiritual gift!

I Corinthians 12:12

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its _____ parts form _____ body, so it is with Christ.

Though we are different we are one in Christ because we are all joined together (see vs.13).

I Corinthians 12:16

And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason _____ to be _____ of the body.

We are **really** part of the body whether or not we feel our abilities are worthwhile. But inactive parts of the body do not help anyone. If you are only a spectator, you will eventually become a critic of

whatever happens. As an active part, you will help everyone.

I Corinthians 12:17

If the _____ body were an _____, where would the sense of _____ be?

For the church to work at all, we need to be different! And each person's tasks are equally **necessary** because they are **unique**. By the way, small groups are designed to benefit and utilize every member in a way that no congregation can ever do.

I Corinthians 12:21

The eye _____ say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head _____ say to the feet, 'I don't need you.'

No Christian has **the** ministry or **the** spiritual gift. Every one of us is equally important to the life of the whole.

I Corinthians 12:25

So that there should be _____ in the body, but that its parts should have _____ for each other.

We need an attitude of teamwork, not rugged individualism.

I Corinthians 12:26

If _____ part suffers, _____ part suffers with it; if _____ part is honored, _____ part rejoices with it.

The success of the whole depends on the success of each part. We may not realize we suffer without the contribution of certain individuals. But if we knew what we were missing by other Christians not contributing their gifts, we would see how

Spiritual Gifts

We are all called to be servants who work together in body ministry. What we do with and for other people in body ministry depends on our own spiritual gifts. **A spiritual gift is any ability or power given to a believer by God in order to accomplish some purpose of God in and for the church.** Let's break down this definition so you will understand it better.

Any ability or power: On this page is a chart showing various spiritual gifts listed in the Bible. These are all abilities given to individual Christians by God. But we want to emphasize a spiritual gift is "**any**" ability or power. The lists are simply *examples* of spiritual gifts and are not necessarily exhaustive of every kind of gift you may have. Moreover, you cannot press all these gifts into precisely the same mold. Some are "natural" in the sense that they are human abilities we can exercise at our will such as serving and teaching. Some are "natural" abilities with supernatural results such as prayer and evangelism. (We can pray and witness whenever we want, but only God can answer prayer or save a soul). And some are supernatural because they only happen spontaneously as God directs, like prophecy and gifts of healing.

Given by God: Spiritual gifts are given not earned and developed not learned. You cannot teach someone how to **have** a spiritual gift although you can teach them how to better **use** their gifts. You either have a spiritual gift or you don't.

Which does something: There is no such thing as a gift which has no tangible fruit. Nor is there is such a thing as tangible fruit without a gift. If God has gifted you in a particular way, you will see lasting and meaningful results from exercising

your gifts Gifted evangelism will gather not scatter. Teaching will teach, not confuse.

In and beyond the church: All spiritual gifts benefit the church either by winning the lost or building the saved. But we can also use spiritual gifts to minister to those outside the church. The ultimate purpose of this is to win them to Christ. If we comfort and help the lost with no intention of leading them to Christ, we are only postponing their agony and wasting our effort.

What are the good works which were prepared in advance for you to do? Quite simply, they are the works you were designed to do by exercising your spiritual gifts. Should a doctor spend his time painting while an artist cuts into people? Of course not! And just as a person works at what he has been trained to do, so should you work at what God has gifted you to do.

The worst enemy of the best is the merely good. **If we are content to do the naturally obvious instead of the divinely ordained, we will only have a minimal and temporary impact on those around us.**

I Peter 4:10-11

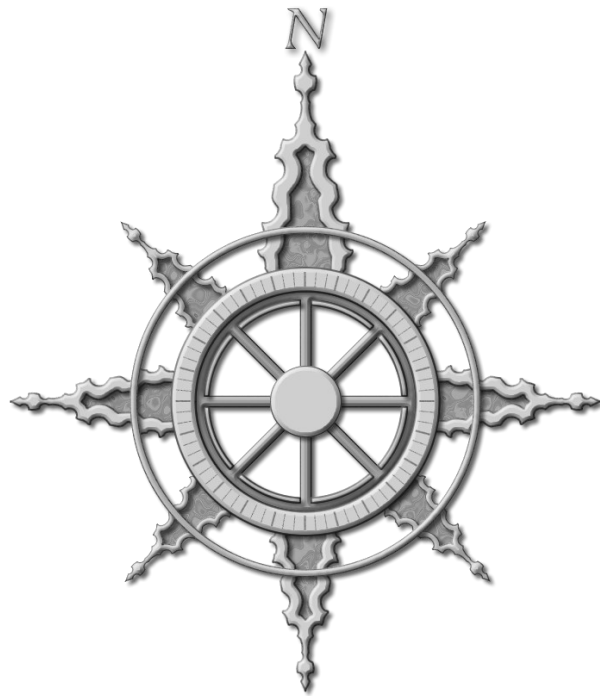
Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

VARIOUS GIFTINGS			
Romans 12:6-8	I Corinthians 12:7-10	I Corinthians 12:28	Ephesians 4:11
Prophecy	Message of Wisdom	Apostle	Apostle
Serving	Message of Knowledge	Prophet	Prophet
Teaching	Faith	Teachers	Evangelist
Encouragement	Gifts of Healing	Miracles	Pastor
Giving	Miraculous Powers	Gifts of Healing	Teacher
Leading	Prophecy	Helping	
Mercy	Discerning of Spirits	Guidance	
	Tongues	Tongues	
	Interpretation of Tongues		



Discipleship Essentials

A Heart of Worship



What is Christian Worship?

We worship the Lord only.

Matthew 4:10

Jesus said to him, "Away from me Satan!
For it is written: '_____ the
Lord your God, and _____ him
_____.'"

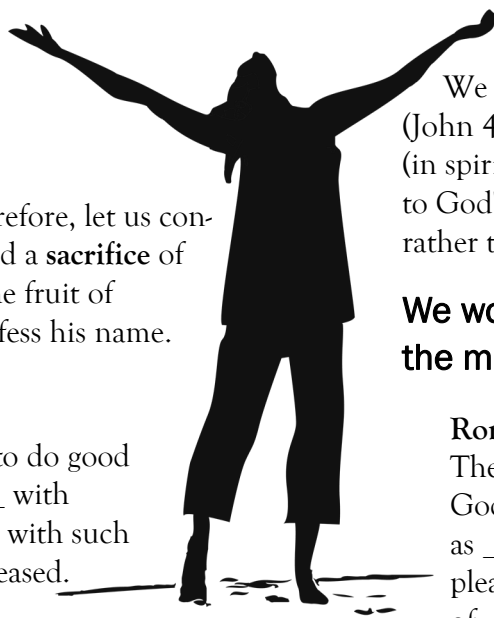
Here, it is obvious we only worship God. We can esteem nothing as above or equal to God whether it be our family, friends, money, belongings, life, or jobs. But this verse also shows worship is more than singing. Worship also involves serving God. Like prayer, worship is a much broader concept than many people think. **Worship is any Christian action, word or thought intended to glorify God.** This may be by singing, giving or by our lifestyle.

Hebrews 13:15

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a **sacrifice** of _____ ~ the fruit of _____ that confess his name.

Hebrews 13: 16

And do not forget to do good and to _____ with _____, for with such **sacrifices** God is pleased.



We worship the Lord because He is worthy.

Revelation 4:11

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

We worship God because of who He is and what He has done, not to try to manipulate Him to do something for us. He is worthy because He is holy (Rev. 4:8), because He made us (Rev. 4:11), and because He saved us (Rev. 5:9). Whether He ever does anything else for us, we must honor Him always. Indeed, as His creatures we are obligated to worship our Creator.

We worship the Lord His way.

Matthew 15:8-9

These people honor me with their lips, but their _____ are far from me. They worship me in _____; their teachings are but rules taught _____.

We must worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Our worship must be from the heart (in spirit) not hypocritical. It must also conform to God's ways of worship (in truth) in the Bible rather than to man's ways.

We worship God by giving to others with the motive of glorifying God.

Romans 12:1

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your _____ as _____ **sacrifices**, holy and pleasing to God ~ this is your spiritual act of worship.

Our entire lives should worship God.

We Worship God by Singing

The most familiar form of worship is singing praises to God with other believers in a congregation. But we shouldn't limit our worship to gatherings. We can also worship God in small groups, by ourselves at home, in our cars or at work. Neither do we need to limit songs of praise to hymns found in hymnals. God does not expect our worship to be somber, instead it should be a time of celebration before Him as the songs of praise found in Psalms and Revelation.

Worship should be joyful and jubilant.

Psalm 33:1

Sing _____ to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him.

Psalm 100:2

Worship the LORD with _____; come before him with _____ songs.

Have a good time – Celebrate in worship!

Psalm 100:4

Enter his gates with _____ and his courts with praise; give _____ to him and praise his name.

A great way to enter God's presence during worship is to sing songs of gratitude for what He has already done for us.

Psalm 100:5

For the LORD is _____ and his _____ endures forever; his _____ continues through all generations.

Once again, we see our reason for praising God is what He IS.

Worship can include musical instruments

Psalm 33:2

Praise the LORD with the _____ make music to him on the ten-stringed _____.

We do not need to limit instrumental worship to pipe organs. Any and every instrument is useful.

Psalm 150:3

Praise him with the sounding of the _____, praise him with the _____ and _____.

Psalm 150:4

Praise him with _____ and dancing, praise him with the _____ and _____.

Psalm 150:5

Praise him with the clash of _____, praise him with resounding _____.

Worship can be spontaneous or prepared.

Psalm 33:3

Sing to him a _____; play _____ and shout for joy.

Those who lead congregational worship must be skilled in music, so preparation and practice are important. However, we may also sing a "new song" – spontaneously praising God because of something He has done for us or stirred up within us.

Psalm 40:3

He put a _____ in my mouth, a _____ of _____ to our God.

We Worship God with Our Attitudes & Actions

Not only do we worship by what we sing but also by what we do. There is no need to be rigid and stiff. Our God is wonderful. He is **exciting!** We can express this to Him with our "body-language" and attitude, as well as with our verbal language.

We can clap our hands as we worship.

How many times have you applauded a good performance at a theater or concert? How often have you clapped for a decisive play during a football game? Have you noticed how an audience claps in approval of something a politician says during a speech? Just as we clap our hands to praise a job well done and to show approval among men, how much more shall we applaud the saving work of Jesus Christ and agree with the truth found within Him?



Psalm 47:1-2

_____ your _____
all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy. How awesome is the LORD Most High.

We can bow down and kneel as we worship.

By bowing or kneeling before God we display our submission, dependence and devotion to Him as our Lord and Master. It shows our attitude of respect and honor.

Psalm 95:6-7

Come, let us _____ down in worship, let us _____ before the LORD our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.

Psalm 138:2

I will _____ toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word.

We can lift up our hands as we worship.

Raising our hands also expresses something to God. Criminals surrender to the police by raising their hands. Before they are able to talk, children often lift their hands up to parents when they want to be picked up. So also we are expressing our surrender to the Lord's will and seeking Him to lift us up into His presence as we lift our hands in worship.

Psalm 134:2

_____ up your _____ in the sanctuary and praise the LORD.

Psalm 141:2

May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the _____ up of my _____ be like the evening sacrifice.

Spontaneity under control

While we do not need to stand still during worship, neither should we be disruptive. Paul wrote "everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way" (I Corinthians 14:40). We should not make a show out of our worship—it's not about us! When our actions distract other people and draw their attention away from God, we are going too far in our self-expression. But short of distracting other people and intentionally drawing attention to yourself, you are free to express yourself in many spontaneous ways before your God as you rejoice and celebrate before Him.

We Worship God by How We Give

Proverbs 3:9

_____ the LORD with your wealth,
with the first fruits of all your crops.

So we worship God with our possessions

Giving to others is a form of worship, *if* this giving is intended to glorify God. Besides simple obedience to the will of God (which itself glorifies God), generous giving expresses several things which honor the Lord.

Giving draws others into worship.

When we give to those in genuine need, they will be thankful to God. Our giving can influence others to worship God. Our goal should be to glorify God (who provides all things) rather than to receive praise for our giving. Giving should usually be done in secret.

Matthew 5:16

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see **your good deeds** and _____ your Father in heaven.

Notice it is your good *deeds* they see, not you doing them. We should never seek to draw attention to ourselves.

Matthew 6:3

But when you give to the needy, do not let your _____ know what your _____ is doing.

Giving in secret helps ensure that God will receive the gratitude. Also, the one receiving will not feel like he or she “owes” something to you.

Giving shows your heart

Wherever your interests truly lie, you will invest your time and money. If you love your home or car, you will spend money to keep them fixed up. If you enjoy a hobby, you will put money into it. If you love your kids, you will pay for their food when they are hungry, clothes when they are cold and medicine when they are sick. Should the kingdom of God be any different? If your heart is really in the kingdom of God, you will give to the church to see it expand through evangelism and discipleship.

Matthew 6:21

For where your _____ is,
there your _____ will be also.

Your money and your interests go hand in hand.

Matthew 15:8

These people honor me with their
_____ but their _____ are
far from me.

God is interested in our hearts, not in lip service. He wants us to give to show our devotion.

Giving expresses your dependence on God.

God gives us the ability to make money (Deut. 8:18). As Creator, everything is His anyway. (Colossians 1: 16). By giving to **other people** we exhibit a dependence on God rather than the things we have. We show God that does not need anything from us like people do.

Acts 17:25

And he is not served by human hands, as if he _____ anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and _____ else.

We Worship God by How we Live

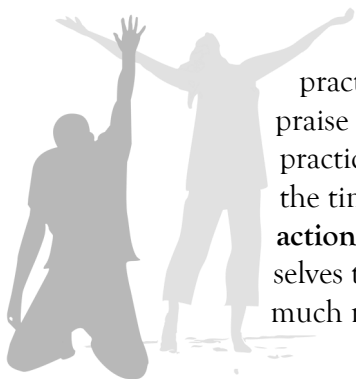
Worship is any Christian action, word or thought intended to glorify God. It is more than an occasional song of praise. It is more than an occasional generous gift. Worship should be a continual attitude toward God, a lifestyle of bringing glory to God by our continual obedience to Him. Look at what Paul the apostle said in Romans 12:1.

Romans 12:1

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your _____ as _____ sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God ~ this is your spiritual act of worship.

You see, we should be living sacrifices to God and make our whole life glorifying to Him by what we think, say and do. If we reject an evil thought or resist the temptation to sin because we want to please God, then in so doing we are worshiping God. If we speak the truth of the gospel to an unbeliever, not just because we care for the unbeliever, but because we seek to exalt God's word, then we are worshiping. If we endeavor to do an excellent job at work so our God will be held in high esteem among our peers and bosses, then we are worshiping. **There is not one single legitimate activity of man under the sun which can not and should not be an act of worship for a Christian.**

Have you ever had difficulty "entering in" during a time of worship? If we have not been worshipful during the week, spending 167 hours of the week never considering the greatness of God, we will have difficulty stirring up any sense of awe or wonder for one hour during a church meeting.



Now it may not be practical to sing songs of praise all the time. But it *is* practical to worship God all the time in our **thoughts and actions**. As we commit ourselves to this, we will bring much more glory to our Mak-

er and find it easier to praise Him with sincerity and exuberance.

Read Psalm 24:3-6 which addresses this very problem.

Psalm 24:3

Who may _____ the hill of the LORD? Who may _____ in his holy place?

At the time, this spoke of coming into the temple of God. But figuratively it is asking who may come into the presence of God at all. The answer to this question comes in the very next verse:

Psalm 24:4

He who has _____ and a _____ who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.

You see, it is the one with "clean hands" (who does good) and "pure heart" (who thinks pure thoughts) who may come into God's presence. Both are ongoing, daily activities.

Psalm 24:5

He will receive _____ from the LORD and vindication from God his Savior.

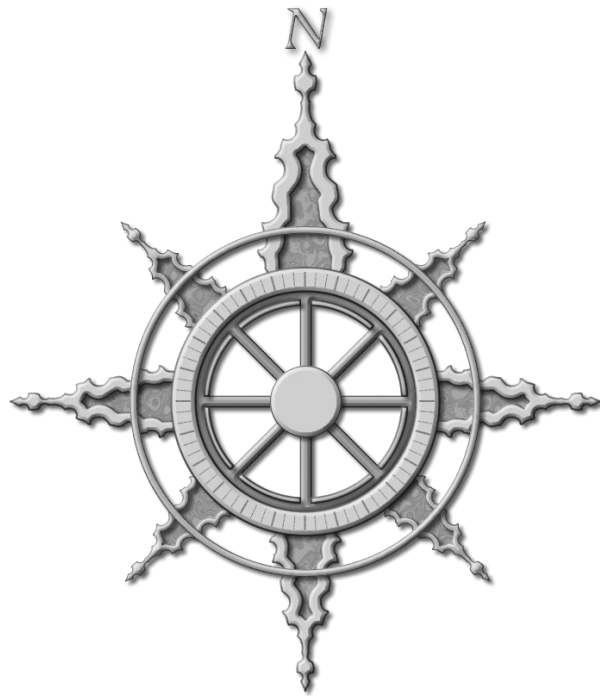
Psalm 24:6

Such is the _____ of those who seek him, who seek your face, O God of Jacob.

Is this how you live *your* life?

As Christians, we "are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (I Pet. 2:9). Let's live up to this calling and honor God in everything we think, say and do!

Fellowship



Fellowship is Sharing Something in Common

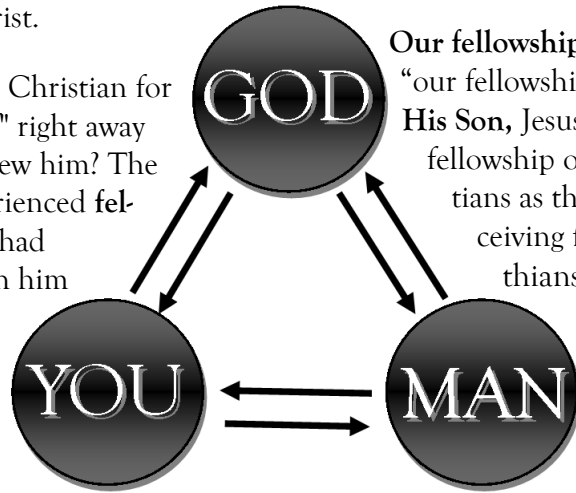
1 John 1:3

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that _____ may have fellowship with us. And _____ fellowship is _____ the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

participate in the same event or task.

Christian fellowship involves all four dimensions of sharing possessions, traits, experiences and work.

Have you ever met another Christian for the first time and "hit it off" right away even though you hardly knew him? The reason is because you experienced **fellowship**. You immediately had something in common with him because you were both Christians.



Our fellowship is with God. As John said, "our fellowship is **with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ**" (1 John 1:3). Christian fellowship only occurs among true Christians as they are united in Christ and receiving from the Holy Spirit (II Corinthians 13:14).

Our fellowship is with men. On the other hand, fellowship is not with God alone. John wrote, "so that you also may have fellowship **with us**" (1

John 1:3). Fellowship is simultaneously with other believers and with God (see Acts 2:42-47).

Ephesians 4:4-6

There is **one** body and **one** Spirit ~ just as you were called to **one** hope when you were called ~ **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism; **one** God and Father of **all**, who is over **all** and through **all** and in **all**.

Our fellowship is of God. It is because we are in Christ and draw spiritual wisdom and gifts from God through the Holy Spirit that Christians have similar traits, common experiences and are called to the same tasks.

That's a lot to have in common.

"**Sharing in common**" is what the Greek word for "**fellowship**" means. There are several ways this can happen.

- One type of fellowship is when you give or share a material possession with someone. In this sense children "fellowship" when they share toys.
- Another type is when you share the same trait or characteristic with someone. Two men are in "fellowship" if they have they same parents, color of hair, or age.
- Still another kind of fellowship is to experience the same thing together such as hunting or a movie.
- Finally, it is fellowship when two or more people

Our fellowship is of men. It is among other Christian men and women we use our spiritual gifts, share common experiences and discover similar traits which are all received from God.

Our fellowship is for others. One purpose for fellowship among God and His people is evangelism. "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us" (1 John 1:3).

Our fellowship is for us. Another purpose for fellowship is for our own benefit. After describing fellowship with God and man, John wrote, "We write this to make our joy complete" (1 John 1:4).



Communion is a Model for Fellowship

Fellowship is the joint participation and experiences of a community or group of Christians as they are united to one another in Christ by the Spirit. The Greek word for fellowship is also translated as "communion" in the context of the Lord's Supper. So one might correctly suspect that celebrating the Lord's Supper is a good example of Christian fellowship.

Communion means sharing in common:

I Corinthians 10:17

Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all _____ of the _____.

During a time of communion, we all share the bread and the cup together.

Our communion is sharing with God:

I Corinthians 10:16

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a _____ in the _____ of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a _____ in the _____ of Christ?

The bread and cup represent the body and blood of Jesus. So as we partake of these elements, we participate (communion) in and with Jesus Christ who is present by the Holy Spirit.

Our communion is sharing with men:

I Corinthians 11:33

So, then, my brothers, when you come _____ to eat, wait for _____.

We do not take communion alone. Nor do we have communion with God only. True communion is when men and women in Christ share Christ together.

Our communion is sharing of God:

I Corinthians 11:24

And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my _____, which is for you; do this in _____ of me.'

What we share with other Christians in communion are the elements which represent Christ and the remembrance of what Christ has done for us all by dying on the cross.

Our communion is sharing of men:

I Corinthians 11:29

For anyone who eats and drinks without _____ the _____ of the _____ eats and drinks judgment on himself.

Because Christians are one body with Christ as their head, we not only share in Christ but also share in each other.

Our communion is for others:

I Corinthians 11:26

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you _____ the _____ until he comes.

As believers take communion, they are a witness to the gospel of Christ to each other and to any unbelievers who may be present.



Our communion is for us:

Often, believers taking communion are renewed and healed by the experience.

One Another

What do Christians have in common?

We have talked about the "instant fellowship" Christians can have just because of their common Lord and faith. We have also discussed the ordinance of communion as an excellent example of Christian fellowship. But there is **much, much more** to true fellowship than having similar beliefs and an occasional ceremony with other believers. God wants those in Christ to share with **Christ** and with **one another** every dimension of the Christian life. As we take a look at the following Scriptures, please notice they command us to do specific things with and for **one another**. In order to fulfill these commands, we must have reciprocal relationships. We must live beyond ourselves.

Galatians 5:13

Do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, _____ **one another** in love.

All Christians are free to attend to the practical needs of other believers and assist them in any way within their ability.

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you _____ and _____ **one another** with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

We do not read or study the Bible just so we can know and obey it, but also so we can instruct others.

Hebrews 3:13

But _____ **one another** daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

As we face the trials and temptations of life, it is easy to lose heart. So we need to encourage each other. "Encourage" means to urge someone to

change their attitude or action. It may be to comfort or cheer them up (attitude) or it may be to get them to reject sin and obey the Lord (action).

Hebrews 10:24

And let us consider how we may _____ **one another** on toward _____ and _____.

We continually need others to stir us up so we will eagerly pursue our calling in God to love people and to do good works in Christ (Ephesians 2:10).

Hebrews 10:25

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us _____ **one another** – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

We must meet!

James 5:16

Therefore _____ your _____ to **each other** and _____ for **each other** so that you may be healed.

There is a time to expose our sin to the light of day by confessing it to other people, who will continue to love and encourage us. We must also lift each other up in prayer.

I John 1:7

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have _____ with **one another**, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

I John 4:11

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to _____ **one another**.

Biblical love is not an emotional feeling although it often does produce emotions. It is a willful decision to seek the welfare of someone else which brings about practical action (John 3:16, James 2:16).

Small Groups

Fellowship Happens Mainly in Small Groups

We are to serve, teach, encourage, spur, confess our sins, pray for and love **one another**. Obviously to do this, we must first gather together.

Hebrews 10:25

Let us not give up _____
_____ as some are in
the habit of doing, but let us encourage
one another ~ and all the more as you see
the Day approaching.

But we must also all come together able to give something and willing to receive something. We cannot do anything to or for **one another** unless everyone participates.

I Corinthians 14:26

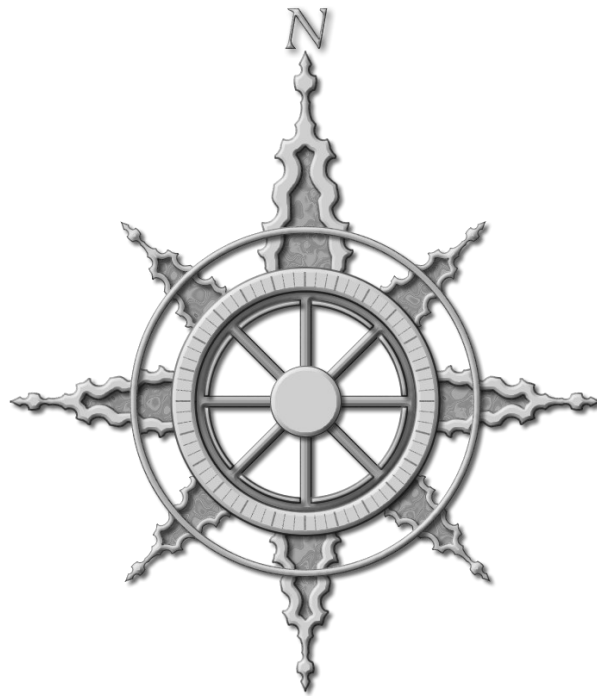
What shall we say, brothers? When you
_____,
_____ has a hymn, or a
word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue
or an interpretation. All of these must be
done for the strengthening of the church.

The problem is, this cannot be done effectively or practically in a large congregation. If you have a couple hundred people together in one place, there is no way each one can contribute something unless you want the meeting to go on forever! And although the one or two men leading the meeting can do some teaching, encouraging and praying for the whole congregation, there is little or no ministry that takes place to the **individual** in his own situation and addressing his own **unique** problems.

The small group, however, is tailored specifically to allow genuine fellowship to occur with **one another**. Each segment of the meeting is designed for a certain type of fellowship within the "Christian community."

- 1) The **equipping time** at the beginning of the meeting breaks the group up for one-on-one discipleship. Each person has an opportunity to learn something from someone else and to teach something to someone else (2 Tim. 2:2). Thus, every person can **teach and admonish one another** at his or her own level of understanding and at his or her own pace.
- 2) The **edification time** brings the group of six to fifteen Christians together with God through worship and with each other through spiritual gifts and prayer to address the personal needs of each member. Since the group is small, everyone can participate and everyone can be **prayed for, encouraged, served and loved**.
- 3) **The vision is shared** at the end of the meeting for several reasons. We continually need to be reminded the reasons our church and small groups exist are to develop "community" (fellowship), to witness to unbelievers and to disciple believers. By placing this vision before the group at the end of the meeting, we end with the "big picture" in view instead of our own problems. By always keeping the vision in sight, we **spur one another on toward love and good deeds**.
- 4) So, you see, small groups foster genuine fellowship when we share with both God and man, share of both God and man, for our own benefit and for the benefit of unbelievers outside our fellowship who we witness to. **The small group meeting is definitely the most important meeting and ministry of our church.** It must be your priority above any other church "program".

Tithes & Offerings



What Biblical Tithing Is

What exactly is a tithe? Let's take a close look at the scripture, the basis for all we believe. We start with one verse from the book of Malachi, and we will emphasize and reinforce it as we continue:

Malachi 3:10a

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. . .

It's a Command

Notice ~ **God is speaking** through the prophet Malachi here. This is a **command** from the Lord to tithe. The first thing we need to realize is that a tithe is *God's* requirement. It is something He demands from us. It is **not just a suggestion**.

It belongs to the Lord

Deuteronomy 14:22

Be _____ to set aside a tenth of _____ that your fields produce each year. (see also Leviticus 27:30).

We tithe on everything

"Bring the **whole** tithe." A tithe is a set percentage of everything we earn or produce. We do not determine the percentage ourselves, nor do we withhold anything we earn from being counted in the percentage.

Deuteronomy 14:22

Be sure to set aside a tenth of _____ that your fields produce each year. (see also Leviticus 27:30)

"Bring the whole **tithe**." The word "tithe" means "one tenth". So it is clear that the whole tithe is ten percent of everything we earn or produce through "all our increase," including wages/salary, investments earnings, gifts, garden harvest, etc.

Your "Storehouse"

"Bring the whole tithe **into the storehouse**, that there may be food **in my house**." Obviously, we do not give money directly to God who needs nothing (Acts 17:25). We give our tithes to the local church where we are members. Would you eat at

McDonald's and pay Pizza Hut? Of course not. Neither should you receive shepherding care and equipping at one church and give your tithe to another. The purpose of the tithe is to pay salaries, to maintain the building and grounds, to provide for lights and heat, and to fund the various ministries of the church.

GOD'S PROMISE!

Malachi 3:10b

. . . **Test me in this,**" says the LORD Almighty, "**and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.**"

God does not specify what *kind* of blessings He will pour out on us as we tithe. Surely He will provide for our needs as He promises in Matthew 6:25-34. Perhaps He will bless us with relationships or responsibilities in the church as we prove ourselves faithful (Luke 16:11). Maybe He will arouse in us contentment with what we have (1 Tim. 6:6). He may even bless us with monetary wealth.

So a tithe is God's requirement of one tenth on everything you earn or produce to support the work of the Lord.

It is not the church's job to beg you for money so bills can be paid. It is the job of your leaders to teach you what God says. Then it becomes your responsibility. Obedience bring blessings. Disobedience brings something else.

Malachi 3:8-9

Will a mere mortal _____ God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, "How are we robbing you?" In tithes and offerings.

⁹ You are under a _____—your whole nation—because you are robbing me.

We certainly do not want to be under a curse, do we? Especially when God asks us to simply trust him so he can pour out blessing upon us. Try it!

Why We Give to God's Work

Why do you suppose God commands us to tithe? One reason is that our giving can bring glory to God as a form of worship. But obviously, God has need of nothing, and we cannot hand Him a check or bundle of cash directly. God has determined that we should give to others, and He specifically wants us to give to His work being done by the local church. It is His way of seeing to it that each local church is supported in proportion to the size of its congregation.

Tithes support those dedicated to the Lord's work.

In the Old Testament, the Levites were the people devoted to the priestly duties. They did not own or work large tracts of land because they were busy doing God's work. Yet the rest of the Israelites gave ten percent of what they produced to support the Levites. Today, those on a local church's staff earn their living in ministry and are paid out of the tithes and offerings given to the church by its members (I Corinthians 9:13-14).

Numbers 18:21

I give to the Levites _____ the _____ in Israel as their inheritance in return for the _____ they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting.

Numbers 18:23

They will receive _____ among the Israelites.

Numbers 18:24

Instead, I give to the Levites as their inheritance the _____ that the Israelites present as an offering to the LORD.

Your tithe does not belong to you.

Perhaps you think ten percent of your wages is too much. Did you realize **all of your wages** and

all of your possessions really belong to God? He created everything, including you and what you have. He is the one that enables you to make a living. He is the one who provides for all of your needs.

Leviticus 27:30

A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, _____ to the LORD; it is _____ to the LORD.

"Holy" means set apart or dedicated. So your tithe is God's possession, not yours. And if you withhold tithes, you are robbing God (Malachi 3:8).

Deuteronomy 8:18

But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who _____ you the _____ to produce wealth.

The only reason you earn money at all is because God sustains you and blesses you and gives you the ability to do things so you can earn something from it.

Colossians 1:16

For by him all things were _____: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created _____ him and _____ him.

God made, owns and uses absolutely everything.

I Timothy 6:17

God ... richly _____ us with _____ for our enjoyment.

God has given us everything we have and allows us to enjoy it. We should gladly give back a mere tenth!

Tithing is a Practice For Today

Some people think tithing is an Old Testament requirement no longer binding on Christians. However, this is often an excuse not to tithe rather than a genuine conviction. The moral and practical (not ceremonial) laws of the Old Testament are still binding on us (see Colossians 2:16-17). It's just they are not necessary for salvation. Can we murder today because murder was condemned in the Old Testament? How about stealing or adultery? In the same way, tithing is just as valid today as it was before Christianity was instituted by Christ's death for our sins.

Tithing existed *before* God gave Moses the law.

The fact is, tithing did not begin with Mosaic Law. Tithing was instituted long before the Ten Commandments and the rest of the Mosaic code. (Genesis records history before Moses was born).

Genesis 14:18

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was _____ of God Most High. And he _____ Abram.

Genesis 14:20

Then Abram gave him a _____ of _____.

Genesis 28:22

Jacob vowed to God, "of _____ that you give me I will _____ a _____."

Tithing was continued when God gave Moses the Law.

Tithing is not simply man's invention or tradition. It is God's idea and He confirmed the need for tithing when He gave Moses the various detailed laws that accompanied the Ten Commandments. (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuter-

onomy contain the laws God gave to Moses.)

Leviticus 27:30

A _____ of _____ from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.

Numbers 18:21

I give to the Levites _____ the _____ in Israel as their inheritance in return for the _____ they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting.

Deuteronomy 14:22

Be sure to set aside a _____ of _____ that your fields produce each year.

Tithing was confirmed by Jesus Christ when He came.

The need to support the work of the Lord is just as real today as it was in the Old Testament. So when Jesus came, He did not set aside tithing. Instead, He confirmed we should still tithe. As He said:

Matthew 23:23

Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a _____ of your spices - mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law - justice, mercy and faithfulness. You _____ practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.

So Jesus, Himself, in the New Testament, confirmed—we should still tithe, but not ignore other important things.

Overcoming a Reluctance to Tithe

"I just can't do it!" Perhaps you don't feel like you are able to tithe. Maybe ten percent seems like a lot of money. Maybe ten percent means the difference between making ends meet and falling behind in your bills. Should you still tithe to your local church? Absolutely! Let's review the facts in two scriptures:

Malachi 3:10

Bring the _____ tithe _____ the _____; that there may be food in _____.
"Test me in this," says the LORD, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much _____ that you will not have room enough for it."

- 1) Here God **commands** us to tithe 10% on all our income.
- 2) God's purpose is to provide for ministry in His house.
- 3) If we do tithe, God **promises** to bless us abundantly.

Matthew 6:33

But seek _____ his kingdom and his righteousness, and all _____ will be given to you as well.

- 1) Jesus **commands** us to seek the kingdom before our needs.
- 2) If we do, we are **promised** the food we need (verse 25).
- 3) If we do, we are **promised** clothes we need (verse 28).

Now if you are reluctant to begin tithing, I suggest there are several possible reasons for this reluctance. **Perhaps you do not know what tithing is.** While this is entirely possible, I trust this chapter has sufficiently explained to you what tithing is

and the need to tithe in obedience to God and to support the work of the Lord.

Perhaps you do not trust God to provide for your personal needs. If so, then you should pray God will give you faith that He will honor His promise to provide for your daily needs. If you are worried you will not be able to make ends meet, then pray God will help you overcome your concern. You might also want to consider Parkinson's Law, which says, "What we spend tends to meet or exceed the money we have." If you have \$50.00 in your pocket, you will probably spend it. But if you put \$10.00 in your pocket and \$40.00 in the bank, then you will be more likely to spend the \$10.00 and save the rest. The essential point is most people could make do with ten percent less of their income even without any further provision by God. God does and will provide!

Perhaps you are simply unwilling to give up part of your income. You might know you could live on ten percent less but do not want to. That television, fishing reel or new dress is too appealing. If this is your case, then a change of priorities is needed to enable you to put the kingdom of God before your personal desires. One person shared, "My own experience has shown me tithing is a tremendous way to break the grip of greed on one's heart. I was very greedy before I got saved and struggled with greed afterwards. When I read about tithing I knew it would put this problem behind me and I just went ahead did it. To this day, I have been content with my standard of living. This really was great gain!" (1 Tim. 6:6)

J. Randall Gladden of Lord & Gladden Wealth Advisers, LLC was once counseling a young couple to tithe in order to help them overcome their financial difficulties. They asked, "How can this work?" He replied, "I don't know. We have our math, and God has His math!" It works because God makes it work! That's all there is to it. We either trust him, or we don't.

Ask God now to help you trust Him and to put the kingdom of God first.

What God Really Wants from You

You do not **need** to limit your giving to tithing. You **must** give ten percent to your local church. But, at your own discretion and as the Lord leads you, you may give offerings beyond your tithe to whatever worthy cause you choose. As you give, be sure to give willingly (II Corinthians 8:12), generously (II Corinthians 9:6), cheerfully (II Corinthians 9:7) and secretly (Matt. 6:1-4). To give secretly does not necessarily mean anonymously to your church. Matthew 6:1-4 addresses giving secretly to the needy. You should neither boast about your giving in public nor should a needy person feel indebted to you. Hence the secrecy. But if you itemize your deductions on your tax return, you can deduct what you give to your church. In such cases it is not a violation of Matthew 6:1-4 to sign your name on the envelope or check. It is simply good stewardship because this will allow you to deduct it from your taxable income and keep more for yourself and the ministry.

You **must not** limit your giving to money. Some feel if they give to their local church they have fulfilled their obligation to the Lord. It is true -- money is a practical necessity to carry on God's work. But it is false that God or the church is primarily interested in your money.

You and your talents are needed more than your money!

With Paul the apostle we can say,

II Corinthians 12:14

... what I want is not your possessions but _____.

Where you invest your time and money is an outward indication of where your heart is. The church needs **you** to help it fulfill the Great commission. Therefore, your tithe is a sign of your commitment to your church's role in fulfilling that commission.

Matthew 6:21

For where your treasure is, there your _____ will be also.

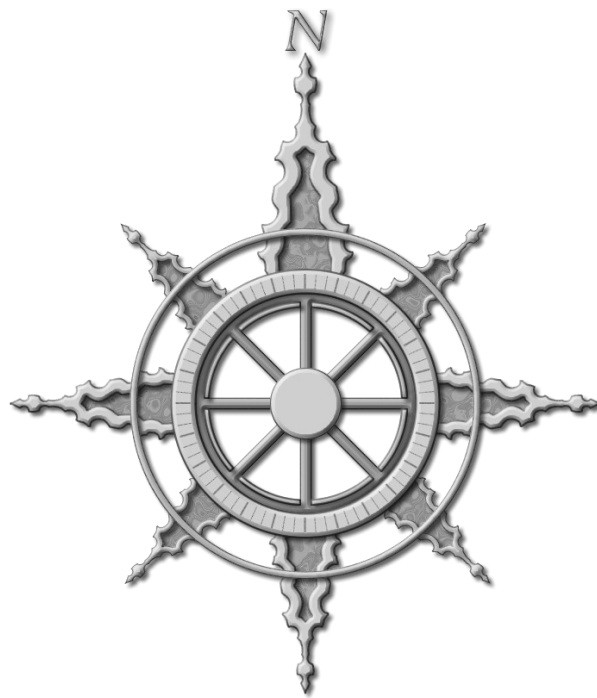
Are you willing to tithe to your local church? I hope so, because I hope your heart is committed to the kingdom of God and the spreading of God's kingdom through the work of your local church.

Our relationship to God:

We have examined our relationship with God through prayer, worship and giving. Perhaps you have noticed there is quite a bit of overlap between these three things. All three are a matter of obedience to God. All three are a matter of personal sacrifice for God's sake. Some communication is both prayer and worship if it is directed to God for His glory. Some giving is worship if it is done for God's glory.



Submission



Christ Gave Us Leadership

Hebrews 13:17

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

The church is Jesus Christ's treasured possession. He is the church's Master because He created those in the church (Colossians 1:16-18) and because He purchased them from a life of sin with His blood on the cross (Acts 20:28). Since He owns and cherishes the church, He also takes care of it. One way in which He takes care of the church is through several kinds of church leaders. Hebrews 13:17 is a good starting point to see what your responsibility is to such leaders.

"Obey your leaders." First of all, you must obey the leaders of your local church. It is true the United States is a free country. We have personal freedoms and rights with respect to other men which cannot be **taken away** by other men. But membership in a local church is voluntary, and with such membership comes the responsibility to obey its leaders. You did not have a choice which country you were born in, so the country should not tell you how you must think and act. But you chose to join your local church. Hopefully, you examined the beliefs and structure of the church before joining. While you are in it, you must respect the basic beliefs and practices of your church.

"Submit to **their authority**." On the one hand, church leaders have authority which must be obeyed. But remember, all you must submit to is **their authority**, not to their every whim. Each

type of church leader has a certain sphere of influence given to him by the Lord. Within that sphere, you must defer to their decisions. But **outside** their realm of authority you have no duty to obey them at all.

"They **keep watch** over you." Church leaders are not "over you" for their own glory or gain. They are **placed** "over you" by Jesus Christ for your own good and growth. They watch over you like a shepherd guards a flock of sheep to protect you from hazards you may not be aware of.

"As those who **must give an account**." Remember every church leader will someday have to give Jesus Christ a face-to-face accounting of how he conducted himself in and for the church which he serves. They also are held accountable to biblical standards by other leaders.

"Obey them so that their **work** will be a **joy**, not a **burden**." Also remember, the various forms of church leadership are not places of status but of labor. The men who hold church offices are willing and hard workers, sacrificing their own time, effort, aspirations and careers for the sake of Jesus Christ and His people. Disobedience makes their work more difficult and "that would be of **no benefit to you**." Cooperate with your leaders.

We will look at three types of leaders Christ gave the local church:

- 1) **Fivefold ministers** who equip and train God's people for ministry.
- 2) **Elders** who govern a local church and shepherd God's flock of people.
- 3) **Those dedicated to your service** are also worthy of your submission.

Obey

You have an inescapable duty to learn from and obey your leaders!

But all authority ultimately belongs to Jesus Christ your Lord (Matt. 28:18-20). Any authority leaders may have is derived from this higher authority and has definite limits (Matthew 8:9); they are "men who must give an account" (Hebrews 13:17). Elders get their authority from Christ through the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28). Leaders get their authority from the elders. Later, we will examine the limitations on leaders due to their spheres of authority. But there is also a limit on the **kind** of authority they have.

Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account." The Greek word translated here as "obey" means a special kind of obedience. Let's look at how this word is used in several other Bible verses to see what it means:

Acts 13:43

(Paul and Barnabas) Talked with them and _____ them to continue in the grace of God.

Acts 18:4

Every Sabbath he (Paul) reasoned in the synagogue, trying to _____ Jews and Greeks.

Acts 19:8

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing _____ about the kingdom of God.

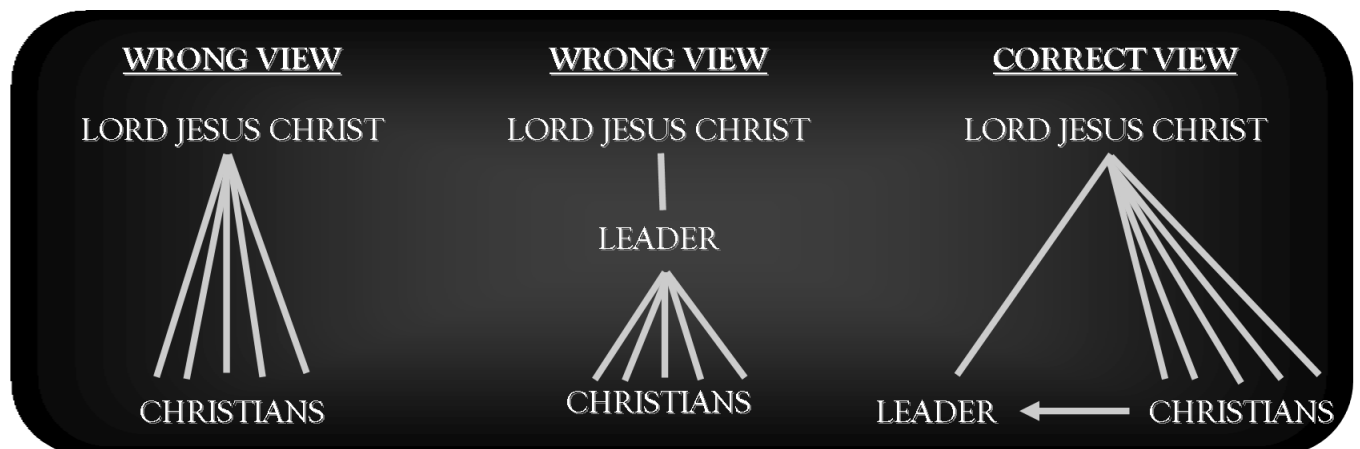
Galatians 5:10

I am _____ in the Lord that you will take no other view.

The Greek word for "obey" in Hebrews 13:17 means obedience as a result of **confidence** in and **persuasion** by the leader. You should not obey any man out of blind faith or fear of punishment. **Only God Himself deserves such absolute allegiance.** But since church leaders derive their authority from God, you must obey them so far as you are convinced that what they require is biblical (2 Timothy 3:10-14).

You must obey your leaders (Hebrews 13:17). It is a wrong view of authority to see Christians as without any leadership other than Jesus Christ. Yet there is only one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus (1 Tim.2:5). So it is wrong to see church leaders as standing between Jesus and God's people.

A proper view of authority **recognizes** the leaders God has placed in the church, Christians must follow this leadership as they are convinced the leaders are following Christ within the limits of their God-given authority (see Acts 17:11, I Corinthians 11:1).



Christ Gave the Five-Fold Ministry to Equip Us

Paul explained the "fivefold ministry" in Ephesians 4:8-16 as follows:

Ephesians 4:7

But to each one of us grace has been given as _____ apportioned it.

It is the Lord Jesus Christ, and Him alone who can and does give men the grace to lead His church. **It is not up to a majority vote who will govern the church.**

Ephesians 4:8

This is why it says: "When he _____ on high, he led captives in his train and gave _____ to men."

Christ gave the church certain gifts which, in verse 11, are listed as five ministry gifts or leaders. Notice He gave them when He **ascended into heaven**. So when we talk about apostles and prophets in the church we **are not** talking about the original twelve apostles of Christ nor Old Testament prophets **before** Christ ascended. We are talking about today!

Ephesians 4:11

It was he (Christ) who gave some to be _____, some to be _____, some to be _____, and some to be _____ and _____.

These are five specific ministries Jesus Christ determined should lead His church. We call this the "fivefold ministry." While there is some overlap, we could describe each as follows:

- 1) APOSTLES are **growth-oriented** seeking to plant churches.
- 2) PROPHETS are **God-oriented** seeking to hear from the Lord.
- 3) EVANGELISTS are **unbeliever-oriented** seeking to win souls.

4) PASTORS are **life-oriented** seeking our spiritual growth.

5) TEACHERS are **truth-oriented** seeking to explain the Bible.

Ephesians 4:12

To _____ God's _____ for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

The purpose of each fivefold minister is not to do all the work but **to equip and train all Christians like you to do the work of the ministry**. For instance, an evangelist does not only preach the gospel, he also trains Christians in a church to preach the gospel. And a teacher does not only teach doctrine, he provides the methods and materials so Christians are trained to teach in small groups and one-on-one.

Ephesians 4:13

Until we all reach _____ in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

All five ministries are to exist and function until the whole church is **ONE** (unified) in its beliefs about, and understanding of, Jesus Christ and until every Christian is perfected in being like Christ.

Ephesians 4:16

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, _____ and _____ itself up in love, as _____

_____.

The purpose of the fivefold ministry is to train the church to build itself up through the evangelism and ministry of **every** member. This can only happen if **everyone** submits to this training and is faithful in doing his or her share of work.

Elders Govern Local Churches

Jesus Christ has given the church men in the five-fold ministry who are called to equip and train everyone for Christian service. He has also, through the Holy Spirit, called certain men in each local church to govern the affairs of the church. These men are elders of the church (also called "overseers;" (compare Acts 20:17 with 20:28 and Titus 1:5-6 with Titus 1:7).

Elders keep watch over God's church:

Acts 20:28

Keep _____ over yourselves and all the flock of which the _____ has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

Here Paul was speaking to the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20:17). The Holy Spirit appointed these elders to protect the believers against "wolves" from outside the church (Acts 20:29) as well as those inside the church who might distort the truth for their own gain (Acts 20:30; Titus 1:9). Of course, the church is still Christ's possession. The elders are simply under-shepherds of the Great Shepherd (see I Peter 5:1-5).

Elders govern the local church:

1 Timothy 5:17

The elders who _____ the _____ of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

This literally means elders **govern** or **rule** the church. They make the decisions concerning policies, priorities, the particular church's strategy for ministry and so on. Now there might be several ways a church works to the Great commission. But it will be successful only if everyone is work-

ing **together**. It is, therefore, important to follow the elders' methods even if other ways might work.

It's similar to a military unit. You might be able to engage the enemy in several ways, but you will only win if you all engage them with the same strategy. If each soldier follows his own orders, the army will collapse in defeat!

Elders are examples to the flock:

I Peter 5:1

To the elders among you, I appeal as a _____.

I Peter 5:2

Be shepherds of _____ that is under your care, serving as overseers ~ not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be.

I Peter 5:3

Not _____ it over those entrusted to you, but _____ to the flock.

Since elders serve as examples for the rest of the church, they must fulfill several important character qualifications before they may be ordained (1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9). Note also Peter the apostle appealed to the elders as a "fellow elder".

Elders are worthy of respect:

1 Timothy 5:17

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are _____ of double _____, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

Small Group Leaders

Those “Devoted to Service”

In addition to the fivefold ministry and the elders, we have others approved by the elders to serve small groups as leaders. These men and women guide the small group meetings within the guidelines set by the elders. Although they are not ordained as such, these individuals deserve your respect and submission simply because of their hard work and service within the church.

I Corinthians 16:15-16

You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have _____ themselves to the _____ of the _____. I urge you, brothers, to _____ to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it.

Spheres of Authority:

Each kind of church leader has a limited sphere of authority. No one can tell you how to live, eat, dress, work, relax, manage your home or spend your time and money **except as such things are directly addressed in the Bible.** (Indeed, in these

cases it doesn't matter whether a person is a leader or not. If the Bible commands something, we must obey it.) Yet within each church leader's God-given area of authority, you must obey him. These spheres of authority are illustrated and explained below.

Take the time to get to know your leaders, especially your small group leader. The more you know them, the more you will trust them. You also need to be reading and studying God's word. The better you know the Bible, the more willing you will be to follow biblically-minded leaders.

Now the local church itself is governed by the elders who decide its methods, ministries, policies and priorities. Those who are the fivefold ministers equip the entire congregation through messages given from the pulpit at congregational meetings of the local church.

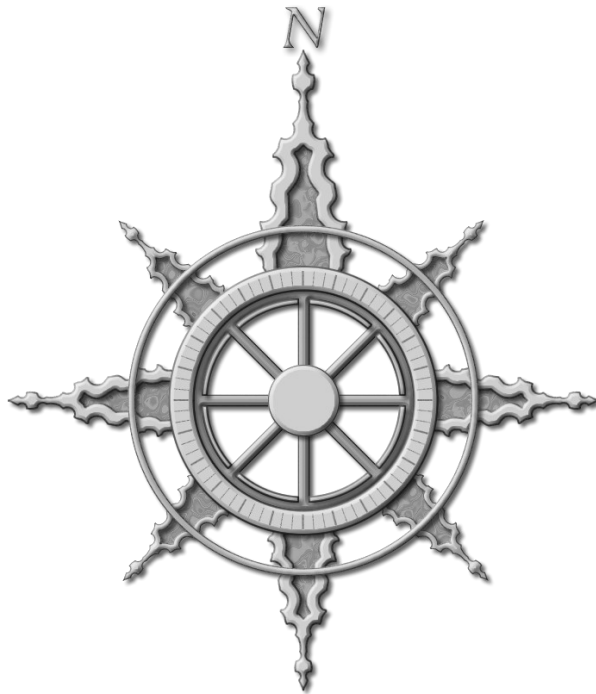
The local church is made up of small groups guided by each group's leaders. The equipping methods and materials used within small groups for discipleship are determined and provided by the church's fivefold minister(s).





Our Enemy

The Devil Himself



The Devil — a Real, Personal Being

We have examined the relationships every Christian has with God, his church leaders, and with other Christians. Now it is time to face up to another relationship we have – with the devil. This is not a friendly relationship but one of hostility and opposition. The devil hates us and opposes us. We are called to hate him and oppose him.

1 Peter 5:8

Be alert and of sober mind. Your _____ the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to _____ .

1 Peter 5:9

_____ him standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

We need to know the devil exists, what he is, and the methods he uses against us if we are going to be prepared to resist him. And resist him we must! We know from 1 Peter 5:8-9 he is the avowed enemy of God and the church. He prowls around secretly, looking for someone like you to devour. We are commanded to resist him. His attacks are widespread through the whole church and cannot be ignored. But **how** can we resist him?

First Line of Defense—Awareness

First, we need to know Satan is a personal being. He is not simply a world-wide force, influence, or tendency to do wrong. He is not the essence of evil in all men. He is not a mythical figure invented on the pages of the Bible. He is a real, personal spirit who actively seeks your de-

struction. There is no motivation to defend yourself when you see a villain pointing a weapon at you through a movie screen or television set.

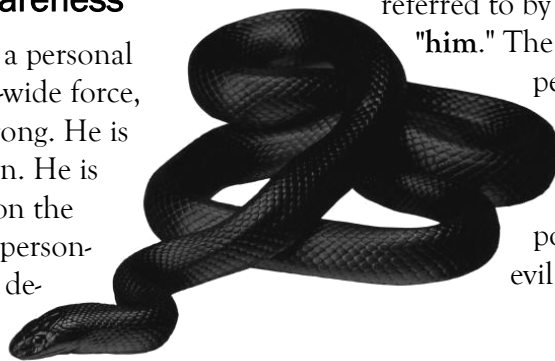
But if you saw a real criminal ready to pull the trigger of a loaded gun, you would take decisive steps to defend yourself! Likewise, our response to the devil is determined by our recognition of his real existence.

John 8:44

You belong to your _____ the devil, and you want to carry out your father's _____. He was a _____ from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in _____. When he lies, he _____ his native language, for he is a _____ and the father of lies.

Here in John 8:44 Jesus Christ says several things about the devil which show he is a personal being. The devil is the **father** of those people opposed to God (Acts 13:10) like God is the Father of Christians. Only if we deny the personality of God can we consistently deny the personality of the devil if they are both fathers. The devil has **desires**—meaning he has a personal will to do some things and not others (Ephesians 6:11). The devil takes active, willful steps as a **murderer** and a **liar** which can only be done by a person. The devil is referred to by personal pronouns like

"him." The devil **speaks** and is heard as a person (Matt. 4:3). Nowhere does the Bible depict the devil as a mere force or influence while everywhere it portrays him as a real, personal, evil being. So watch out for him!



The Devil is Known by Several Names

Revelation 12:9

The great _____ was hurled down ~ that ancient _____ called the _____ or _____, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

Here our enemy is identified by four names or descriptions (see also Rev. 20:2).

"Dragon" speaks of his considerable power and ruthlessness.

Revelation 13:2

The **dragon** gave the beast his _____ and his throne and great authority.

Just as a dragon would be a powerful foe in a fight, so also the devil is a powerful enemy of mankind. He often gives this power to his human subjects in order to ruthlessly persecute Christians (Rev. 13:7). Never underestimate the devil's power. He is the "strong man" only Jesus Christ can bind (Mark 3:27).

"Serpent" refers to his cunning deceptiveness.

II Corinthians 11:3

But I am afraid that just as Eve was _____ by the **serpent's** _____, your minds may somehow be _____ from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

Both here and in the account of Adam's fall (Gen. 3:1-6), the devil is depicted as a serpent because he was acting deceitfully. He casts doubt, twists the truth (Gen. 3:1) and outright lies (Gen. 3:4) to keep us from fulfilling God's will. Only through Jesus Christ (John 14:6) and God's word (John 17:17) can we be assured of the truth and recognize deception.

"Devil" literally means an accuser or slanderer.

Revelation 12:10

For the _____ of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

The word "devil" literally means "accuser" or one who slanders. The devil is constantly blaming Christians for both real and contrived sins both before God (Job 1:6-12, Zec. 3:1-2) and even before other people. Jesus Christ is the one who speaks in our defense (1 John 2:1), so we have nothing to worry about where the devil accuses us before God. Yet we must be on our guard not to let him falsely accuse other Christians before us.

"Satan" is a name which means the adversary or opponent.

Mark 1:13

... he (Jesus) was in the desert forty days, being _____ by Satan.

"Satan" literally means "adversary" or opponent". He is the one who is **against** us. He is always posturing himself to gain an advantage over us and to spring a trap upon us (I Peter 5:8). One of the ways he opposes us and God's will is through temptation (see also Acts 5:3 and I Corinthians 7:5).

Each name is connected with one of Satan's schemes which we will study later. He is the **dragon** who persecutes. He is the **serpent** who deceives. He is the devil who accuses. He is **Satan**, the adversary who tempts us.

The Devil Had a Beginning and Will Have an End

Where did the devil come from?

Isaiah 14:11-15 and Ezekiel 28:11-19 are widely interpreted as descriptions of Satan's fall as an angel from goodness into evil. While there is some debate whether these prophecies can legitimately be applied to Satan rather than earthly kings, it seems clear enough Satan was a created angel who rebelled against God.

- 1) Only God is eternal, and everything else that exists has been created by God (John 1:3). Therefore, Satan must be a created being.
- 2) God only creates good things (Gen. 1:31) and does not cause evil to occur (James 1:13-15). Therefore, Satan was originally created good.
- 3) Satan is presently opposed to God. Therefore, he must have rebelled against God at some point in time and fell into evil (see 1 Tim. 3:6).
- 4) Satan caused many angels to fall with him when he rebelled (Matt. 25:41, II Peter 2:4, Jude 6, Rev. 12:9). Presumably, demons are these fallen angels. So it is probable that Satan was himself an angel as well.
- 5) The serpent (Satan) was the one who deceived Eve in the garden and plunged mankind into sin (Genesis 3:1-6). Therefore, Satan's creation and fall had to be before the creation of the earth and mankind.

Where is the devil going?

The devil is a defeated enemy. When Christ died on the cross he overcame the power Satan had over us (Acts 10:38, Hebrews 2:14) because He paid the price for our sins, reconciling us to God. When Jesus Christ returns, Satan will be bound for a thousand years and then thrown into the lake of fire (hell) forever, never to cause trouble again.

Colossians 2:15

Having disarmed the _____ and _____ he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

"Powers and authorities" refer to spiritual beings like Satan and demonic spirits. They are already defeated!

1 John 3:8

The reason the Son of God appeared was to _____ the devil's _____.

Nothing the devil does against us has any permanent effects if we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 20:2

He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and _____ him for a _____ years.

Revelation 20:10

And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the _____ of _____, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be _____ day and night for ever and ever.

Satan will pay for all of his wickedness.

What does this mean to you?

The fact that Satan had a beginning and will have an end shows he has limitations. Only God is all-powerful, present everywhere, and all-knowing. And Satan is not God! So for all of his power Satan is not all-powerful and cannot **make** a believer do anything. For all of his mobility, he cannot be **every place** at the same time. For all of his knowledge, Satan is not all-knowing and does not **always** know your thoughts. So in Christ you are able to resist the devil.

The Devil Schemes Against Us

The devil has specific methods of bringing ruin to mankind. Paul wrote, "We are not unaware of his schemes." (II Corinthians 2:11). This implies, first of all, that Satan's schemes are **knowable** and **recognizable**. We can detect his work for what it is because God has warned us about it in the Bible. Secondly, Satan's schemes are **not innumerable**. There are not so many kinds of attacks that they are beyond our comprehension. In fact, Satan's schemes may all be reduced to only a few kinds of attack. Finally, they are **not original**. If we are aware of his schemes, then he cannot surprise us with something entirely new. There may be a new twist here or there, but basically the things Satan does now are the same things he has always done. Satan's recognizable, limited, unoriginal schemes include:

Possession: Satan overpowers and controls the lives of some unbelievers.

Mark 9:17

Teacher, I brought you my son, who is _____ by a _____ that has robbed him of his speech.

Deception: Satan lies and twists the truth to lead mankind astray.

II Corinthians 11:3

But I am afraid that just as Eve was _____ by the **serpent's** _____, your minds may somehow be _____ from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

Temptation: Satan entices and lures Christians to disobey God's will.

I Thessalonians 3:5

I was afraid that in some way the _____ might have _____ you and our efforts might have been useless.

Persecution: Satan uses his power to bodily afflict and kill Christians.

II Timothy 3:12

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be _____.
(Remember Rev. 13:2-7)

Accusation: Satan blames and slanders Christians before both God and men.

Revelation 12:10

For the _____ of our brothers, who _____ them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

Now Satan **never** possesses Christians because demon possession is a power he only has over unbelievers. "The One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (1 John 4:4). And Satan **generally** does not tempt, persecute, or accuse unbelievers which are devices reserved for Christians. Unbelievers "rush into sin" and need little temptation (Isaiah 59:7). Satan has no desire to divide his household by persecuting those who already belong to him (Mark 3:23-26). And God's law accuses unbelievers without any help from Satan (John 5:45). So deception is the one **universal** scheme the devil uses against each and every human being.

Indeed, it is through deception that the devil lures an unsuspecting person into occult practices which may lead to possession, he tempts a person to sin, he leads one man to persecute another, and he accuses one man to another. He is the father of lies, and deception is the fountainhead or essence of all of his schemes against mankind (John 8:44).

The Devil Can & Must be Resisted

In the Bible, Christians are commanded to actively resist the devil:

Ephesians 6:11

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take _____ against the devil's schemes.

In Christ, Christians are empowered with the necessary means to oppose the devil.

James 4:7

Submit yourselves, then, to God. _____ the _____, and he will flee from you.

In principle, this is simple. If we are submitted to God's will, then Satan must flee from us as we stand against him. But apart from God's will, we are powerless against the devil, victory is only in Christ!

I Peter 5:8

Be _____ and _____. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

We must lead disciplined and discerning lives if we are to be prepared for and detect Satan's attacks on us.

I Peter 5:9

_____, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

These commands show we must resist the devil. And James 4:7 shows we are able to resist him if we resist him from the right posture: a posture of submission to God. But **how** do Christians like you and me resist the devil? Now that you have completed this chapter on the devil himself, you

know three things about him which are important steps to resisting him.

You know he exists; this *motivates* your resistance.

Just as you react to a real threat and not to a fictional one, simply knowing Satan is a real person out to get you is the first step to standing up to him. Many people do not believe the devil exists. Such people do not even have a clue they are deceived because they do not know the deceiver exists.

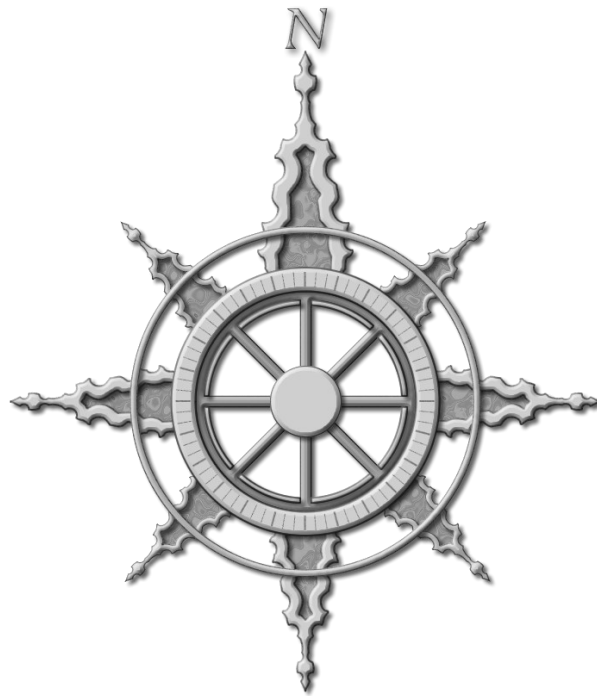
You know he is limited; this *enables* your resistance.

By knowing Satan is created and not the Creator, you can be confident that you are under God's protection, you cannot be touched by the devil. Satan is not all-powerful. If you are a Christian, you can not truly say, "the devil **made** me do it." And he is **looking** for someone to devour (I Pet. 5:8) because he cannot devour just anyone, but only those who are vulnerable. Satan is not present everywhere, so he cannot bother every Christian all the time. We have times of relief, though we must always be ready for him.

You know his schemes; this *informs* your resistance.

All of Satan's methods may be classified within a few unoriginal categories and these may be boiled down, in essence, to deception. By knowing ahead of time the kinds of things to expect, you may be prepared to frustrate his attacks. And armed with God's word, you can be sure of the truth and avoid being deceived. This awareness of Satan's schemes is such a critical dimension to resisting him that the next chapter will be devoted entirely to it. The chapter after that will focus on the position we have in Christ and the advantage this gives us over the enemy. "Because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (1 John 4:4).

The Devil's Schemes



Deception

The devil is the father of all lies

James 4:7

Submit yourselves, then, to God.

_____ the devil, and he will flee from you.

Deception is a perversion or contradiction of the truth. As the father of lies (John 8:44) and the first liar (Gen. 3:1-6), the devil is the master of deception, bent on leading people astray from the truth of God.

The devil deceives all unbelievers.

II Corinthians 4:4

The god of this age has _____ the minds of unbelievers, so that they _____ the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

In a sense, Satan wins souls by default. A person does not need to "sell his soul" to him. The only way to be saved is through faith in Jesus Christ. So Satan is not concerned with what someone believes in, as long as it is not Jesus Christ (Colossians.2:4-8).

The devil deceives some believers.

II Corinthians 11:3

But I am afraid that just as Eve was _____ by the serpent's _____ your minds may somehow be _____ from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

Paul wrote this to Christians (II Cor 1:1) sincerely devoted to Christ (II Cor 11:3). Don't think because you are saved you can't be deceived! Eve was upright (Gen 1:31) when she was deceived (1 Tim 2:14). Some people will even "abandon the faith to follow deceiving spirits" (1 Tim 4:1).

II Corinthians 11:14

And no wonder, for Satan himself _____ as an angel of _____.

Satan does not announce himself as a liar or declare what he says as a lie. He clothes his words with half-truths.

II Corinthians 11:15

It is not surprising, then, if _____ servants masquerade as servants of _____.

Don't agree with something or someone because it sounds good but because it is biblical.

The devil's deception can take on several forms, not just blatant lies.

Genesis 3:1

"Did God _____ say?"

- He casts **doubt** upon the truth.

Genesis 3:4

"You will _____ surely die."

- He does **contradict** the truth.

Genesis 3:5

"Your eyes will be _____."

- He tells us **part** of the truth.

Genesis 3:5

"You will be _____."

- He says what we **want** to hear.

How can you avoid being deceived?

Clearly the word of God is the truth (John 17:17). The truth of God's word is unfolded to us and error exposed through our relationships with God, leaders and Christians. "You have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth" (1 John 2:20). God will guide you in truth directly as you read His word. Elders are appointed to guard against distortion of the truth (Acts 20:28-30, Titus 1:9). So listen to your elders. And we are commanded to "Encourage one another daily . . . so that none of you will be hardened by sin's deceitfulness" (Hebrews 3:13). So stay in fellowship with other Christians.

Temptation

The devil entices us to do evil

Temptation is an enticement or seduction to sin. And the devil is the great tempter (I Thess. 3:5). Let's see what temptation is in James 1:13-15.

James 1:13

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, _____ he _____ anyone.

God never tempts us to evil although He does test us. Temptation intends failure; testing intends success.

James 1:14

But each one is tempted when, by his _____ he is dragged away and enticed.

We can only be lured into sin if, in our hearts, we want to sin. (You can only swear with a "four letter word" if you know it in your heart.)

James 1:15

Then, after _____ has conceived, it gives birth to _____; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Here we see that being tempted is not necessarily itself a sin.

You see, Satan cannot make you do what you do not want to do. He can only take advantage of an existing evil desire in your heart. And to tempt you to sin he will depend on **deception**. Maybe he will deceive you by making sin seem appealing to you as he did with Eve (Gen. 3:6). In fact, God only wills what is good for us, but Satan will tell us otherwise (Genesis 3:5). Perhaps he will try to

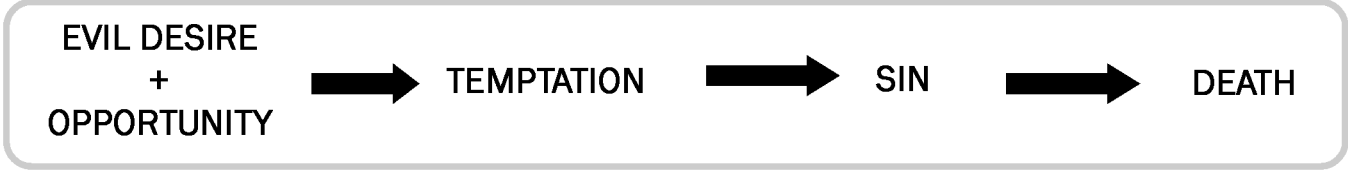
deceive you by justifying the sin (I Corinthians 6:9-10). "God doesn't care if you . . ." "It's not really that bad to . . ." "It's not your fault . . ." "It's your right to . . ." All these are lies from the devil if they advocate sin. Possibly Satan will deceive you into thinking God will not forgive you after you have sinned (1 John 1:8-2:1).

There are basically three forms of temptation.

These are described in 1 John 2:16 and correspond to each of Christ's temptations by Satan. "The cravings of sinful man" are bodily desires for gluttony, intoxication and sex (Matt.4:1-4). "The lust of the eyes" are greedy desires for things like money and power (Matt. 4:8-11). "The boasting of what he has and does" is pride about our status or abilities (Matt. 4:5-7). Since such temptations depend on deception, Jesus repelled them by the word of God (Matt. 4:4,7,10).

How can you avoid or resist temptation? Examine the diagram below and recognize the stages in the development of temptation. Knowing these things can help you to see where it can be prevented.

You must have both the desire **and** the opportunity to sin before temptation can lead you into sin. You can avoid the desire through prayer. "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation" (Matt. 26:41). "For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians. 2:13). You can avoid the opportunity by avoiding enticing situations (I Corinthians 7:5). If you do find yourself being tempted, you do not need to give in. "And God is faithful, he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (I Corinthians 10:13; see also Hebrews 4:16). God will always give you the strength to withstand temptation if you submit to Him.



Persecution

The devil attacks us physically

Persecution is an undeserved external attack. The devil is a murderer (John 8:44) who seeks to persecute believers either to discourage them from serving God or to kill them so they cannot continue to serve God. His aims are to "steal, kill and destroy" (John 10:10). And his sights are on you.

II Timothy 3:12

In fact, _____ who wants to live a _____ life in Christ Jesus will be _____.

Persecution should be expected if you follow Christ. It goes with the territory.

Most people think of persecution as torturing and killing someone. While this is the most extreme form of persecution, there is much more to it than this. Persecution is **any** undeserved attack upon us. It may be in the form of an insult or ridicule. It may mean discrimination such as loss of a job or losing friends. It might be a spiritual attack from Satan that causes sickness. And, yes, it might involve imprisonment, physical torture or even death. So just because you are still alive does not mean you have not been persecuted in some way and have never lived a godly life.

Most persecution comes from the devil through other people. Cain belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother (1 John 3:12). The devil prompted Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus (John 13:2). The dragon will give his power to the beast (antichrist) in order to make war against the saints (Rev. 13:7). "In fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God" (John 16:2). We see again persecution depends on deception. If he cannot deceive or tempt Christians, he may resort to deceiving someone else to persecute them.

How should we respond to persecution? It is often frustrating because there seems to be nothing we can do about it. But, in fact, there is always something we can do in response to persecution. Look at what Jesus said:

Matthew 5:11

_____ are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you

_____.

Matthew 5:12

_____ and be glad, because _____ is your _____ in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

If they persecuted Jesus Christ, they will persecute His followers (John 15:20). Persecution indicates you are effectively serving the Lord (1 Peter 4:14-16).

Matthew 5:44

But I tell you : _____ your enemies and _____ for those who persecute you.

Satan would love us to stoop to the level of those who hurt or persecute us. Don't let him win! Instead, always return good for evil (Rom. 12:14-21).

Matthew 10:23

When you are persecuted in one place, _____ to another.

There is nothing wrong with this as long as we do not flee our duties. Jesus and Paul fled (John 8:59, Acts 9:23-25).

Matthew 10:28

Do not be _____ of those who kill the _____ but _____ kill the _____. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

You have eternal life in Christ which cannot be taken away (Romans 8:38-39). The worst that can happen is you may die and go to be with Christ (Philippians 1:23).

Accusation

The devil accuses, blames and slanders

Accusation is **blaming us for something we did or didn't do**. The devil continually denounces us for sin before God, but our Lord defends us.

Revelation 12:10

For the _____ of our brothers, who _____ them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

This may be for sins we really committed, or for things Satan wrongly charges us with by twisting reality and the truth.

I John 2:1

But if anybody _____ we have one who speaks to the Father in our _____ ~ Jesus Christ, the righteous One.

It is God who justifies (Romans 8:33). It is Jesus Christ who intercedes for us (Romans 8:34). Satan's charges are futile.

As long as we confess our sin and repent (1 John 1:9-10), we do not need to worry about the devil's accusations before God (1 John 2:1). It is much more dangerous when the devil accuses a Christian before other people, because people often react without the full story, unlike God who knows everything when He judges (Hebrews 4:13). Nehemiah was falsely accused of rebellion (Ezra 4:6-13). Daniel was falsely accused of disobedience (Daniel 6:4-24). Jesus was falsely accused of threatening to destroy the temple (Matt. 26:59-61). Paul was falsely accused of desecrating the temple (Acts 21:27-29). Once again, we see Satan's accusation depends on **deception** because he must deceive unsuspecting people into believing a Christian has done wrong when he really did not.

The devil's goal in false accusation is division. He knows a divided house cannot stand or be effective, so he seeks to divide the church ~ one Christian against another; one church against another ~ on "drummed up" or exaggerated charges. I won-

der how many friends have been separated and how many churches have been split because they failed to recognize Satan's handiwork. His strategy is to divide and conquer.

Mark 3:24-25

If a kingdom is _____ against _____, that kingdom _____ stand. If a house is _____ against _____ that house _____ stand.

Division brings catastrophe.

How can we expose and respond to false accusations?

It is easy to see when we have been falsely accused. But what **we** need to do is be on guard to discern when **others** are being falsely accused.

Proverbs 18:17

The first to present his case _____ right, till _____ comes forward and _____ him.

Never react to a charge until you hear the other side, preferably first-hand.

1 Timothy 5:19

Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by _____ or _____ witnesses.

Act on proof, not hearsay. One witness might maliciously lie (Deut. 19:18-19).

Ephesians 4:26-27

In your anger do not _____: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the _____ a _____.

If the charges are true, be ready to forgive (Matt. 18:15-17). Satan would love to outwit you and use unforgiveness as an opening to attack you (II Corinthians 2:10-11).

Possession

The devil controls some unbelievers

Possession is the total control or ownership of something. Possession is when a demon or evil spirit controls a person's life or an aspect of his life (Luke 4:33). Such demon possession can happen in unbelievers today even as it did in the early church (Acts 4:16, 8:7, 16:18, 19:12). And the devil is the "prince of demons" (Mark 3:22).

But Jesus Christ disarmed and triumphed over Satan and demons by the cross (Colossians 2:15). So we who are in Christ have victory over demonic spirits and **cannot** be possessed.

Evil spirits cannot dwell with the Holy Spirit.

Demon possession means an evil spirit lives inside a person. For example, an evil spirit **came out** of a man at Christ's command (Mark 1:23-27). The legion of demons **came out** of another man and **entered** a herd of pigs (Mark 5:11-13). And Jesus commanded a spirit to **come out** and never **enter** again (Mark 9:25-26). But the Holy Spirit dwells within Christians:

Romans 8:9

You, however, are _____ not by the sinful nature but by the _____, if the Spirit of God _____ you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ

Can a demon live with the Holy Spirit?

Demons cannot separate us from the love of God.

Romans 8:38-39

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither _____ nor _____, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

Evil spirits cannot overcome the Holy Spirit within you.

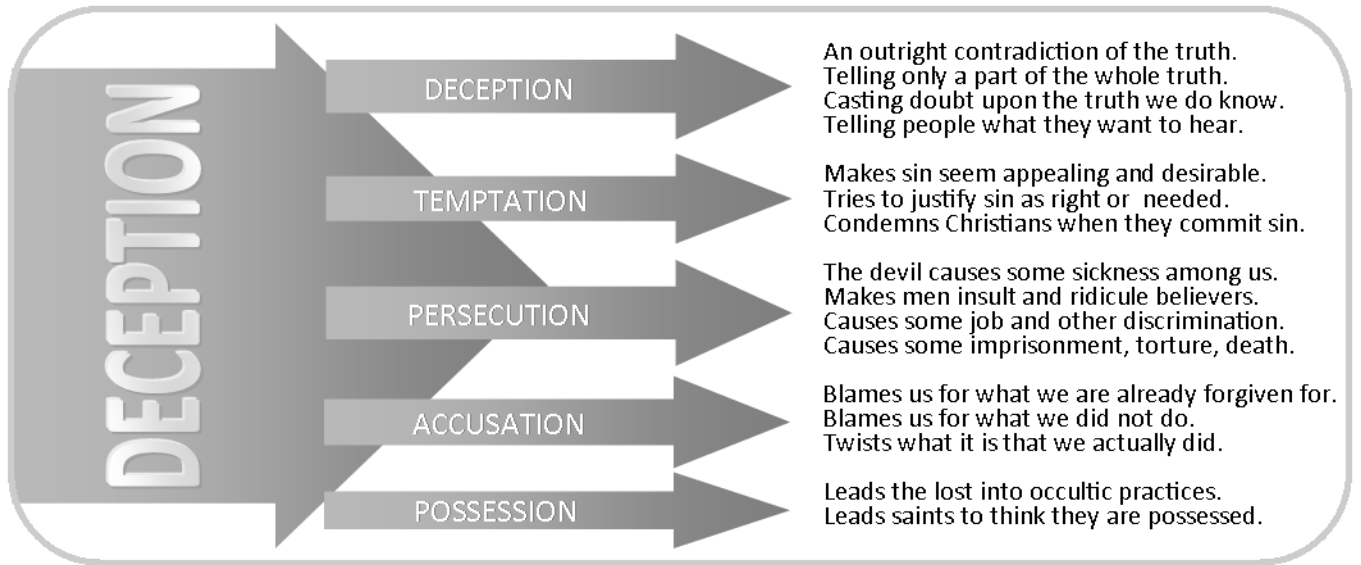
I John 4:4

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome _____, because the one who is _____ is greater than the one who is _____ the _____.

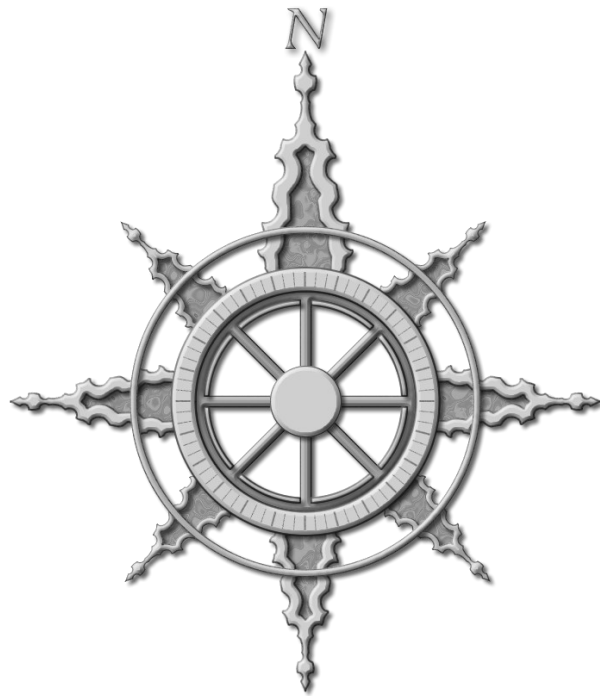
"Them" refers to spirits (verses 1-3). The devil deceives, tempts, persecutes and accuses Christians. But these are all external influences, not internal controls. It is impossible for a demon to dwell with the Holy Spirit (II Corinthians 6:15). It is impossible for a demon to separate us from God. It is impossible for a demon to force us to do something against our will. To say Christians can be possessed is a **deception**. Satan wants you to believe you can't help sinning because you are possessed, when in fact you are free from sin (Romans 6:1-11) and cannot be possessed. If a Christian is deceived in this way, then he may not even try to resist a temptation in his life. "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires" (Romans 6:12).

The enemy is crafty, but you have the victory in Christ. If you know the truth, you cannot be deceived. If you are led by the Holy Spirit, you will not succumb to temptation. If you are persecuted because of Christ, you are blessed. If you are accused by the devil, you are defended by Christ. If you belong to Christ, you cannot be possessed by the devil.

The following table illustrates how the devil's schemes break down into only five kinds of schemes which ultimately depend upon deception.



Resisting our Enemy



Only In Christ Can You Resist the Devil

The first step to resisting the devil is recognizing the fact that he exists. The second step is to understand his schemes so you know what to expect (chapter 12). Yet if all a person is armed with is the knowledge of Satan's existence and his schemes, then this will (or should) produce fear not confidence. For apart from submission to Jesus Christ as your Lord and the power he has over the devil, you are utterly helpless against the enemy (Acts 19:13-16).

1 John 4:4

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the One who is _____ is greater than the one who is in the world.

James 4:7

Submit yourselves, then, to God.
_____ the devil, and he will flee from you.

In this chapter we will examine our position **in Christ** relative to the devil. We will spend most of our time in the book of Ephesians because in this epistle Paul tells us both about being "in Christ" and about the "armor of God".

Ephesians 1:3

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with _____ spiritual blessing **in Christ**.

Any spiritual blessing we have is had because we are in Christ. Only in Christ are we blessed with power to resist Satan.

Ephesians 1:7

In him we have _____ through his blood, forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

Jesus Christ's death redeemed us from or bought us out of slavery to sin. This means **in Christ** we are also freed from Satan's power (Hebrews 2:14-15).

Ephesians 1:19

Paul prayed we would know God's . . .
" _____
_____ for us who
_____. That power is like the
working of His mighty strength."

Only believers who are **in Christ** have access to God's power because only they have the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1:21

Far above all _____ and
_____, power and
dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the _____
age but also in the one to come.

Christ has all power and authority, even over Satan here and now.

Ephesians 1:22

And God placed _____ things
_____ his _____ and
appointed him to be head over
_____ for the church.

Ephesians 1:23

Which is _____ the
fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Do you get the picture? All things are subject to Christ under His feet. So **in Christ** we have authority over Satan and the World. But apart from Christ we are helpless against Satan and the world. (See 1 John 5:5)

Stand Firm

The devil can be resisted

You can only resist the devil from the position of being in Jesus Christ. Only in Him do we have the power and authority to take our stand against the enemy. But power and authority must be **exercised**. They are not effective if they lie dormant. Therefore we must **confront** the devil with what we have in Christ. We must **actively** resist him not with just any weapons, but with the weapons Jesus Christ has **armed** us with.

Suppose you were a police officer who was about to apprehend a dangerous criminal. You would have the **power** to apprehend him since you are armed with a gun. You would have the **authority** to arrest him since you wear a badge and uniform. But to arrest him, you must draw your gun, show your badge, and confront him. A criminal will not be impressed by a high caliber, fully automatic weapon you have left in your police cruiser. Nor is he likely to respond well if you are wearing plain clothes and have not identified yourself as a police officer. Nor still will he surrender if you draw your gun, display your badge and uniform, but never say, "Halt! You're under arrest!" You may well be a policeman, but chasing a criminal while you are unarmed is very, very dangerous.

In the same way, we have power and authority over Satan, but this is only effective if we use it. That's why Paul wrote:

Ephesians 6:10

Finally, be strong _____ the _____ and in _____ mighty power.

Again, only in Christ's power can we resist the devil.

Ephesians 6:11

Put on the full armor of God so that you can _____, against the devil's schemes.

In Christ, Christians are empowered with the necessary means to oppose the devil. But we must actively "put on" this armor and use it.

Ephesians 6:12

For our struggle is not against _____ and _____, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the _____ of _____ in the heavenly realms.

Our conflict is not with other men but with Satan and his demonic spirits. When we fight among ourselves and refuse to forgive one another, we are divided and Satan is pleased.

Ephesians 6:13

Therefore put on the _____ of _____, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Notice this armor must be **put on** before battle. It is too late to put on armor as we are under attack. Notice also the armor is **full**. If we put on all seven pieces, then we are protected completely. But if we leave out something, we have an "Achilles heel" and are vulnerable to attack. The armor is **of God**. That is, God supplies it to us. If we take it and use it, then we will be **able** to stand against the enemy when under attack.

Girded by the truth we will not be **deceived**. Armored by righteousness we will not be **tempted**. Ready with the gospel we can free prisoners from **possession**, shielded by faith we withstand **accusation**. And armed with the word and prayer we can go on the **offensive** against Satan's kingdom.

The Full Armor of God

Read Ephesians 6:14-18 which describes the full armor of God. You will see we are fully supplied to stand against the devil's schemes.

Ephesians 6:14

Stand firm then, with the _____ of _____ buckled around your waist.

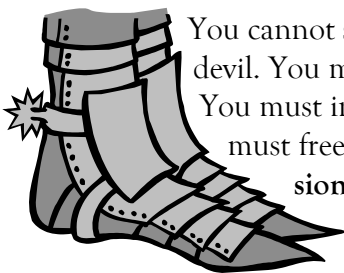
Just as you put on a belt before battle, you must surround yourself with the truth before Satan's attacks to protect yourself from his **deception**. Jesus fended off Satan's attacks with the truth of Scripture (Matt. 4:1-11). But we can only do this if we know the truth ahead of time.

With the _____ of _____ in place.

A breastplate protects the heart from physical attacks. Righteousness protects it from spiritual **temptation**. You are tempted by what is in your heart (Mark 7:21, Jas. 1:14). If your heart is right, you can withstand temptation. So count yourself dead to sin (Rom. 6:1-11) and commit yourself to righteousness (Rom. 6:15-23) before the enemy tempts you.

Ephesians 6:15

And with your feet fitted with the _____ that comes from the _____ of _____.



You cannot stand still against the devil. You must take the offensive. You must invade his territory. You must free those in his **possession**. You must go (Matt. 28:19). And you do this through preaching the gospel (Luke 4:18, Rom. 1:16, 2 Tim. 4:2). "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news" (Rom. 10:15)!

Ephesians 6:16

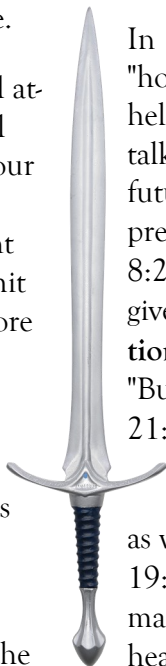
In addition to all this, take up the _____ of _____,

with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Arrows represent false testimony (Prov. 25:18, Jer. 9:8) and by faith we repel the arrows of **accusation**. We believe we are not condemned (Rom. 8:1). We believe we are forgiven (1 John 1:9). Our faith compels us to forgive our brothers (see above, pages 41-42; II Corinthians 2:10-11).

Ephesians 6:17

Take the _____ of _____ and the _____ of the _____, which is the word of God.



In 1Thess. 5:8 Paul says the "hope of salvation" is our helmet. So Paul is probably talking about our hope for future resurrection not our present righteousness (Rom. 8:23-25). Hope for eternal life and resurrection gives strength to endure (I Thess. 1:3) **persecution** (Hebrews 11:35). Satan may seek to kill you. "But not a hair on your head will perish" (Luke 21:18).



The truth of the Bible is an offensive weapon as well as defensive. It is like a sword (Rev. 1:16, 19:21) because it penetrates into the soul of a man and judges the thoughts and attitudes of his heart (Hebrews 4:12). The word explains the gospel and wins souls from Satan to God (Acts 26:18).

Ephesians 6:18

And _____ in the _____ on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

The last of our gear is prayer in the Spirit (I Corinthians 14:14-16) according to God's will (Romans 8:26-27) which builds faith (Jude 20) and brings God's help.

The Armor of God Clothes Us With Christ

We must put on the armor of God to resist the devil. But, a new Christian is no less armored than a mature Christian. The full armor of God is available to each and every believer in Jesus Christ at all times because to put on the armor of God is to be clothed with Jesus Christ.

The Belt of Truth

Jesus Christ is the truth and protects us from the devil's deception.

John 14:6

Jesus answered, "_____ the way and _____ and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."



The Breastplate of Righteousness

Jesus Christ is our righteousness and protects us from being overtaken by temptation.

I Corinthians 1:30

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God- that is, our

_____,
_____ and
_____."

The Gospel of Peace

Jesus Christ is our peace. He is the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6), He gives us peace (John 14:27), both with God (Rom. 5:1) and with Christians:

Ephesians 2:14

For he himself _____
_____, who has made the two one

and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.



The Shield of Faith

Jesus Christ is the source, author and perfecter of our faith in Him.

Hebrews 12:2

Let us fix our eyes on _____, the author and perfecter of _____, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Helmet of Salvation

Jesus Christ is our salvation and the source of hope in resurrection.

I Thessalonians 4:14

We believe that Jesus died and rose again and _____ that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep _____.

The Sword of the Spirit/The Word of God

Jesus Christ is the Word of God who empowers us to oppose the enemy.

John 1:1 & 14

In the beginning was _____, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... The Word _____ and made his dwelling among us. (See also Rev. 19:13).

You Have Power & Authority Over the Devil

Why do you suppose the devil is your enemy instead of your master? Why do you suppose he spends so much time deceiving, tempting, persecuting and accusing Christians? Do you think he does this simply for enjoyment? Or maybe, just maybe, do you think he does this because you are a **threat** to him? You, a threat? That's right. You stand in Satan's way.

As a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you and the knowledge of the truth. The Holy Spirit and the truth are the two weapons Satan cannot withstand. If you are a disciple, then you are committed to making disciples which means you are prepared to **use** these weapons. That makes you dangerous to him.

You are armed and dangerous.

You know your position in Christ from *Discovering our Foundations*. You have the ability to share your testimony (tell your story) and present the Gospel to people who don't know Christ yet. Hopefully, you are committed to obedience to Jesus Christ, particularly in fulfilling the Great Commission now that you are nearing completion of *Discovering Kingdom Relationships*.

You are armored and secure.

If you are girded by the truth you will not be deceived. Armored by righteousness you can endure temptation. Ready with the gospel you can free prisoners from possession. Shielded by faith you can withstand accusation. All this is supplied by God as you are clothed with Jesus Christ. So, "no weapon that is forged against you will prevail" (Isa. 54:17). You are indeed a threat to the devil in God's armor.

The devil is on the run

Jesus Christ has already defeated the devil (Colossians 2:15), and it is only a matter of time before Satan meets his demise.

Revelation 12:9

The great dragon was _____
_____ ~ that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was _____
to the earth, and his angels with him.

Revelation 12:12

Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because _____ that his _____
is _____.

You see, Satan is not furiously attacking the people of God because he has the upper hand. He is on the rampage because he has been routed. Like a wounded animal, he is fierce. Like a cornered animal, he attacks that which he fears. He knows there is no chance for him. He knows he is defeated. But he is in the process of doing as much damage as possible before his own destruction. It is true we must respect Satan's power enough to submit to Jesus Christ and put on the armor of God. But it is false that Christians should fear Satan. "Because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

So how can you most effectively oppose the devil? **Make disciples.** This is what Satan wants to stop. This is why he attacks Christians day and night. This is also what pleases God and why He has furnished us with the full armor of God. Evangelism and discipleship is the true battle ground of spiritual warfare. So if you want to return Satan's attacks and have Jesus with you (Matt. 28:20), then "Go and make disciples" (Matt. 28:19).

TEST

Discovering Discipleship

Name: _____

Score: _____
1.5 Points each

INSTRUCTIONS: Circle the correct answer in each of the following multiple choice questions. THIS IS AN OPEN-BOOK TEST

1. The Kingdom of God is
 - a. The church building
 - b. Wherever God's will is done
 - c. Israel
 - d. The Sinai Peninsula
2. A fool is
 - a. A person who lacks judgment.
 - b. A person who lacks sense.
 - c. A silly or stupid person.
 - d. All of the above.
3. It is through the _____ that disciples are made.
 - a. Home
 - b. Marketplace
 - c. Church
 - d. School
4. Obedience is not an easy thing to learn. It means
 - a. I don't always get my own way.
 - b. Acting in a way that lines up with God's character and teaching.
 - c. Making choices that are pleasing to the Lord.
 - d. All of the above.
5. The Biblical doctrine of grace
 - a. Degrades and humbles us.
 - b. Raises us up to be proud of ourselves.
 - c. Shows us how inadequate we are.
 - d. None of the above.
6. The heart always provides for
 - a. Everything we need.
 - b. The things it values.
 - c. Repentance.
 - d. Security.
7. Christian Character is
 - a. Knowing the Word of God (the Bible).
 - b. The life of God living in and through you.
 - c. Having the talent to do certain things.
 - d. Determined by how often we attend church services.
8. True character starts
 - a. From within and expands outward.
 - b. From will power.
 - c. By prayer & fasting.
 - d. By behavior modification.
9. The "Habits of Hope" do not include:
 - a. Learning to give.
 - b. Building relationships.
 - c. Winning arguments.
 - d. Feasting on the Word.
10. The Bible is not just any book, it
 - a. Teaches us.
 - b. Corrects us.
 - c. Trains us.
 - d. All of the above.

11. How do we know that the Word of God is sweet?
- Through much study.
 - Through “tasting” it.
 - Through fasting & prayer.
 - By ignoring it.
12. When we pray, we must
- Kneel down.
 - Stand up.
 - Lie down.
 - There is no ordained stance for prayer.
13. Our motivation should be
- To have the Lord please us.
 - To God God’s blessing.
 - To please the Lord.
 - To rejoice in our ability to speak well.
14. When we confess our sins, we are
- Trying to win God’s love.
 - Trying to get God to do something for us.
 - Coming into agreement with God.
 - Making excuses for our behavior.
15. Paul wrote to the Ephesian church, warning them about
- Satan.
 - Unforgiveness.
 - Frowning.
 - Troubles to come.
16. When it comes to love, the message of Jesus was _____.
- Normal.
 - Easy.
 - Flowing.
 - Radical.
17. If we had to choose one word to summarize the theme of the Bible, it would be:
- Relationships
 - Trinity
 - Teamwork
 - Commonality
18. A life of service means:
- Easy living.
 - Honor & glory.
 - Hard work.
 - Pleasing others.
19. The worst enemy of the best is
- The merely good.
 - The divinely ordained.
 - The ordinary.
 - The worst.
20. Our lives should glorify God by (
- What we think
 - What we say.
 - What we do.
 - All of the above.
21. To help us pursue our calling in God, we continually need others to
- Leave us alone so we can concentrate.
 - Stir us up and encourage us.
 - Follow us around to make sure we don’t err.
 - None of the above.
22. Your tithe belongs to
- You.
 - The church.
 - God.
 - All of the above.
23. Leaders in the church are to:
- Make your decisions for you.
 - Be a Lord over you.
 - Keep watch over you to protect you.
 - Disregard Biblical principles.
24. Satan is
- The dragon who persecutes.
 - The serpent who deceives.
 - The devil who accuses.
 - All of the above.

25. You can avoid being deceived by the devil

- a. By knowing the Word of God.
- b. By allowing yourself to be guided by a trusted Elder.
- c. By being in fellowship with other Christians.
- d. By all of the above.

26. Satan attacks the people of God because

- a. He has the upper hand.
- b. He thinks he will win in the end.
- c. He knows there is no chance for him.
- d. None of the above.

INSTRUCTIONS: Circle the correct answer (T for true, F for false) in the following true or false questions:

27. T F You make your own decision about which church you should belong to.

28. T F The local church is a group of believers in Jesus Christ working together.

29. T F When we think about the people of the world, we should judge them according to what we think is right.

30. T F There is a difference between being a believer and being a disciple.

31. T F God has called us to live our lives separated and alone.

32. T F When you want to get to know someone, the first thing to do is spend time with him.

33. T F God often contradicts His Word.

34. T F Loving others correctly means that we define ourselves by the standards of our friends and family.

35. T F The more we embrace what the scriptures say about us, the more stable we will be.

36. T F Jesus was well-treated by everyone.

37. T F When we are no longer enslaved to peoples' opinions of us, we are free to love and serve them.

38. T F If we value the world as first priority, we will miss the joy of knowing God and the joys of this life.

39. T F Part of Christian character formation is a life-long process of sinning less.

40. T F We deceive ourselves when we think we can be the master of our own soul.

41. T F We are the chief agents of our own character formation.

42. T F Information equals transformation.

43. T F We should cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

44. T F The Apostle Paul said that everything good lived in him.

45. T F Christians are entitled to bring vengeance to their enemies.

46. T F There are consequences when we violate our character.

47. T F The people we spend time with have no effect upon us.

48. T F God's word shows us our wrongs so we can live in guilt & shame.

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 49. | T | F | Eating correctly can make us more godly. | 56. | T | F | We worship the Lord in our own way. |
| 50. | T | F | When we pray, what matters most is the humble position of our body. | 57. | T | F | The small group is tailored specifically to allow genuine fellowship to occur with one another. |
| 51. | T | F | When Pontius Pilate washed his hands before the crowd, he was symbolically declaring that he was innocent (free of guilt). | 58. | T | F | In the Kingdom of God, the only thing you can give is your money. |
| 52. | T | F | If we continue to act as if we have done no wrong, this pleases God and helps Him to work in us. | 59. | T | F | It is a wrong view of authority to see Christians as without any leadership other than Jesus Christ. |
| 53. | T | F | It is healthy to serve God all by yourself. | 61. | T | F | The devil is merely a mythical being who is used as a metaphor for the evil in the world. |
| 54. | T | F | “Laying down your life” means that you live by your own convenience and enjoyment. | 62. | T | F | Even believers can be deceived by the devil. |
| 55. | T | F | We are called to a life of diminishing self-centeredness. | 63. | T | F | Christians should fear Satan. |

When you have completed your test, tear it out of the book and turn it in to the church office or to your Home Group Leader.

If you score 80% or above you will receive a certificate of achievement.

