

Leadership Series

Making Disciples who Live and Love Like Jesus



Heart of a Leader



Hope Christian Fellowship

“Making Disciples who Live and Love Like Jesus”

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Features of This Workbook

Unlike most of our curriculum, this module was not designed for self-study. This module is designed for mentorship.

So, go ahead and complete the lessons on your own, but get together with a leader/mentor to complete the process. Discuss issues and areas of weakness and strength with your mentor. Deepen your relationship with that person.

Your mentor may be able to discern things that you do are not able to see yourself. This should be a special time together, deepening your relationship and helping you to continue your growth in God.

We do not “arrive” at leadership and consider our growth to be complete. Leaders never stop growing – never.

May God continue to bless your journey as you yield yourself to Him.

Be an Initiator

Lesson One: Heart of a Leader

Are you one who sits around and waits for the phone to ring or do you pick up the phone and initiate the conversation?

If you are going to be a leader, you must be the initiator.

Look at some of the terms that are associated with leadership and you'll see it begins to describe itself. "Lead," "take charge," "command," "guidance," "authority," "direction," etc. It's clear that leadership is not passive, but aggressive in its desire to accomplish its purpose.

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus was passing the baton of leadership from himself to the disciples and his command was aggressive. It was one that we are to initiate. "Go and make disciples." That is the command to you and I today.

Let's look at some other scriptures that show the same type of pattern

Genesis 1:1
In the beginning _____
_____ the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:26
Then God said, "_____
_____ man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the

livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

II Chronicles 7:14

If my people, who are called by my name, will _____ themselves and pray and _____ and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Matthew 4:19

"_____, _____ me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

Matthew 7:7-12

"_____ and it will be given to you; _____ and you will find; _____ and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹ "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 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 good gifts to those who ask him! ¹² So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this

sums up the Law and the Prophets.

II Timothy 2:1-2

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.² And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses _____ to reliable men who will also be qualified to _____.

Mark 16:15

He said to them, “ _____ into all the world and _____ the good news to all creation.

Acts 14:21-22

They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch,²² _____ the disciples and _____ them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.

We see here that these scriptures describe the initiation of God to man, man to God, and man to one another. Take some time now and reflect on these scriptures.

Reflection time:

What are the different ways God initiated to man?

What are some different ways that man is to initiate to God?

What are some of the ways we are to initiate toward each other?

One of the biggest problems in leadership is finding people who will take the initiative to lead. At times, in the past, we have catered to people's needs to keep them as leaders. This was a big mistake.

Can you imagine how long a person would stay on their job if every time they were supposed to attend

a meeting or an appointment the boss had to call the person to “remind” them — or plead with them to be there?

Jesus showed us an example of how to handle people who want to be leaders. We find this in the sto-

ry of the Rich Young Ruler.

Matthew 19:16-22

Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what _____ must I do to get eternal life?" ¹⁷ "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only _____ is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments." ¹⁸ "Which ones?" the man inquired. Jesus replied, "'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, ¹⁹ honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.'" ²⁰ "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?" ²¹ Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." ²² When the young man heard this, he _____, because he had great wealth.

Here was a man with a strong initiative to be with Jesus, in fact, we see him being very aggressive in his approach — nothing wrong so far. Next we see him appealing to Jesus for the qualifications of discipleship. Initiative is about motive. Jesus tests the motives of the man when He tells him to go and sell all that he had. At this, the young man's attitude changed from one of anticipation to sadness because he had much, we're told. His heart was tied to those things more than to Jesus. But,

wait a minute, I thought you said that story showed us how to handle people who want to be leaders — ???

Did you see Jesus running after him saying, "Wait a minute, maybe I was too hard on you?" Do you see Jesus saying, "Maybe we will lower the standards so you can fit in." NO! Jesus did not lower any standards or chase after the young man — so why should we? Jesus wasn't cold or callous toward the young man, but he didn't compromise either.

So what does this teach us?

- To be available — Jesus was open to receive others.
- To be a good listener — Jesus heard what the young man wanted from God.
- To use the Bible as our standard — Let God's word be the standard of leadership.
- To release people to their own conclusions. — We must let the Holy Spirit lead and direct their steps, not our desire for them.

These may sound too simple, but if you follow them, you will allow the Holy Spirit to "weed your garden" for you.

APPLICATION TIME

Which one of these four areas do you struggle with the most?

Which one of these have you grown in the most?

What is your plan to practice being an initiator?

Willingness to Change

Lesson Two: Heart of a Leader

In nature we have a great witness of what God is doing in our lives. Every time there is a seasonal change it should inspire us to allow the Spirit of God to bring change to our lives. Without the Holy Spirit's influence, we will grow spiritually hard, wither up and die. A yielded attitude toward change is essential if we are to grow and become mature in our Christianity.

Romans 12:1-3

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to _____ your _____ as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with _____, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

In the King James version of II Corinthians, chapter three, verse eighteen, we read, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory

to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

In the Old Testament, two structures were built by the direction of the Lord. Both of these were the center of worship for the nation of Israel. One was the tabernacle and the other was the temple. The scriptures give us a unique insight on how these structures were built.

Exodus 35:5

From _____ you _____, take an offering for the LORD. Everyone who is _____ is to bring to the LORD an offering of gold, silver and bronze; . . .

Exodus 35:21-22

. . . and everyone who was _____ and whose heart moved him came and brought an _____ to the LORD for the work on the Tent of Meeting, for all its _____, and for the sacred garments. All who were willing, men and women alike, came and brought gold jewelry of all kinds: brooches, earrings, rings and ornaments. They all presented their gold as a wave offering to the LORD.

Exodus 35:26-29

And all the women who were

_____ and had the
_____ spun the goat hair. The
leaders brought onyx stones and other
gems to be mounted on the ephod and
breastpiece. They also brought spices and
olive oil for the light and for the anoint-
ing oil and for the fragrant incense. All
the Israelite men and women who were
_____ brought to the LORD
_____ offerings for all the
_____ the LORD through Moses had
commanded them to do.

In these scriptures we see the heart of God's will
revealed. He is always willing to provide, to a peo-
ple whose hearts were willing. Like then, God is
building His Holy Temple today through a willing
people — a people whose heart is broken of want-
ing our own way. We, instead yield to His way.

Isaiah 66:1-2

This is what the LORD says: "Heaven is
my throne, and the earth is my footstool.

Where is the house you will build for
me? Where will my resting place be? Has
not my hand made all these things, and
so they came into being?" declares the
LORD. "This is the one I esteem: he who
is _____ and _____
_____, and trembles at my
word.

I Chronicles 28:9

"And you, my son Solomon,
acknowledge the God of your father, and
serve him with

_____ and with a
_____, for the
LORD searches every heart and under-
stands every motive behind the thoughts.
If you seek him, he will be found by you;
but if you forsake him, he will reject you
forever. . . "

God doesn't change — We do!

Reflection time:

How is change needed in a Christian's life?

In Romans 12:3, Paul encouraged us all not to
think of ourselves more highly than we ought to,
but to think soberly (to exercise self-control in
your thinking). Don't give yourself over to decep-
tion or fantasy. Paul never wants us to confuse
ourselves with God. He is our Creator & Master.
We are the created — servants. He is changeless,
we are ever being changed.

I Samuel 15:29

He who is the Glory of Israel _____
_____ lie or _____ his mind;
for he is not a man, that he should
change his mind."

Malachi 3:6

"I the LORD _____
_____. So you, O descendants
of Jacob, are not destroyed.

To help us understand this further, let's think of a
sculptor who is forming a statue but his subject is
always changing. If God himself is our subject
(who our life is being modeled after) he must be
changeless for us to ever hope to become like
Him! Another example: Can you imagine a sailor
without a compass at sea, trying to determine his
position if the North Star is always moving?

Thank God that He does not change. If He did, we could never count on His promises or His word!

At the same time, when we stop allowing the Holy Spirit to change us we become useless to God and His purpose for us in the church.

When we become stiff necked and unwilling to change we bring the resistance of God upon ourselves.

James 4:6b
"God opposes the proud but gives _____ to the _____."

Ezekiel 3:7
But the house of Israel is _____
_____ to listen to you because they are _____ to listen to me, for the whole house of Israel is hardened and obstinate.
This story in scripture reveals the heart that God wants us to have.

Matt 21:29-31a
" _____, ' he answered, but later he changed his mind and _____. "Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ' _____, sir,' but he

_____ go. "Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered.

The Bible gives us clear direction for leadership in the church.

I Peter 5:1-4

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be

_____ of God's flock that is under your care, serving as _____-not because you must, but because you are _____, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to _____; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

So, in conclusion, the Bible gives clear direction that we are to be a people of change. As leaders, we must always be open in our heart for the Lord's moving in our life. If WE stop and allow ourselves to become stagnant, our followers will do the same. Thank God for trials that lead to change!

Application time

Why is God changeless?

What area do you struggle most with change?

What happens when we stop allowing the Holy Spirit to change us? What happens to our followers?

What does this teach us?

A Servant's Heart

Lesson Three: Heart of a Leader

In the days when an ice cream cone cost much less, a 10-year-old boy entered a hotel coffee shop and sat at a table. A waitress put a glass of water in front of him. "How much is an ice cream sundae?" the boy asked. She answered, "Fifty cents."

The little boy pulled his hand out of his pocket and studied a number of coins in it. "How much is a dish of plain ice cream?" he inquired. Some people were now waiting for a table and the waitress was a bit impatient. "Thirty-five cents," she said brusquely. The little boy again counted the coins. "I'll have the plain ice cream," he said.

The waitress brought the ice cream, put the bill on the table and walked away. The boy finished the ice cream, paid the cashier, and departed.

When the waitress came back, she began wiping down the table and then swallowed hard at what she saw. There, placed neatly beside the empty dish, were two nickels and five pennies – her tip.

Positional leadership vs. servant leadership.

Are you a servant? This is a question of most vital importance when considering leadership in the body of Christ. We have a tendency to think that leaders are of a "lofty position," that they're greater or better than others. But Jesus taught us that leaders are to be servants.

Mark 9:33-35

... on the way they had argued about _____ was the _____.
Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the _____ of all."

Matthew 20:28

"... just as the Son of Man (Jesus) did _____ come to _____,
but to serve, and to _____ his _____ as a ransom for many."

It takes a deliberate decision on our part to become a servant of all. It doesn't just automatically happen. We are born into this world with a self-consciousness. Often, a person doesn't realize how much of his behavior is the result of that self-consciousness. Pride is its first by-product.

Self-consciousness & pride. Have you ever walked into a room and felt that everybody was looking at you? Many people think that kind of self-consciousness is caused by a lack of self-esteem. But think of it this way – why would you think you are important enough for everybody to be staring at you? So, self-consciousness and pride are very closely related.

Pride enhances all our problems. Our ego says, "I must be right all the time." The opposite of pride is naturally understood to be humility. A person cannot feel or act superior to others and be a leader in the body of Christ. Evidence of this problem is seen when a person talks "down" or "up" to people, but may have trouble talking "to" a person.

Acts 10:34

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not

A person cannot show favoritism (thinking one person is better than another person) and be a leader in the body of Christ. Evidence of this is seen when a person treats some people better than others. The bank president should not be seen as better than a girl who waits on tables at a local restaurant. They are both sinners in need of a Savior. And after their salvation, they both need to grow in God. One is not better than the other based upon their position in life.

And you, should you become a leader, will not be better than anyone else by virtue of your leadership position. Neither should you treat leaders better than those who are not in leadership. We are all equal in the sight of God, even though we may function in differing roles. No one person is more valuable than another.

I Peter 5:2-3

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not _____ it _____ those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

Romans 12:16

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be _____ to _____ with people of _____. Do not be conceited.

You see, God knows us so intimately that he knows the thoughts and inclinations of our heart. He knows our motives. He looks at our heart! He knows who is serving him out of a pure heart and who is putting on the appearance of serving him to obtain a position.

I Chronicles 28:9

"And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD

_____ every _____ and understands every _____ behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever.

John 12:26

Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My _____ will _____ the one who _____ me.

God works with people who humble themselves. He is actually delighted with them! But He opposes the proud. I don't know about you, but I certainly don't want God to oppose me!

Psalm 25:9

He _____ the humble in what is right and _____ them his way.

Psalm 147:6

The LORD _____ the humble but casts the wicked to the ground.

I Peter 5:5

Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you,

_____ with _____ toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

In this next verse, the word humble is used as a verb. The sentence is set up as an imperative, meaning that it is not just a suggestion.

James 4:10
Humble _____ before
the Lord, and he will lift you up.

God is saying, "Hey YOU!!! You humble yourself. And THEN I will lift you up." Humbling ourselves is something that we must DO. It's not a passive thing. When you notice pride rearing up its ugly head, it takes effort to take control over that attitude and remind yourself that you're no better than anybody else. If we don't discipline ourselves in this way, God has a way of getting our attention.

II Samuel 22:28
You save the humble, but your eyes are
on the haughty to bring them low.

God has a way of blocking promotion on our behalf if our attitude is haughty or prideful. Why do you think He does this? He does it to protect us from ourselves and also to protect the rest of the flock from a hard leader. Think about it. Have you ever been under the authority of a prideful person? Did you enjoy it?

On the other hand, God has nothing but blessing for the person who humbles himself.

II Chronicles 34:27
Because your heart was
_____ and you hum-
bled yourself before God....,and because
you humbled yourself before me..... I
have _____ You, declares the
LORD.

Matthew 11:29-30

Take my yoke upon you and learn from
me, for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find _____ for your
souls. For my yoke is _____ and my
burden is _____."

Ephesians 4:2

Be _____ humble and
gentle; be patient, bearing with one an-
other in love.

A servant's perspective. Most of us believe in our-
selves. Some of us believe in ourselves only. Many
of us are like that fellow who began telling God he
could do anything God could do. He bragged,
"God, I can even make a man out of dirt just like
you made Adam out of dirt." God said, "Okay,
show me." the man reached down and scooped up
a handful of dirt and God said, "No, no, no, you
gotta use your own dirt!"

That puts things into perspective, doesn't it?
We're reminded that everything in the world was
made by God. He has everything in his hands.

Psalms 75:6-7

_____ from the east or the west or
from the desert _____ a
man. But it is _____ who judges: He
brings one down, _____
another.

I Samuel 2:7

The LORD sends poverty and wealth;
_____ humbles and _____ exalts.

Proverbs 18:12

Before his downfall a man's heart is
proud, but _____ comes
_____.

Reflection Time

Who places you in your position of leadership? Is it your pastor? Or your elder?

What types of things can block or hinder our promotion in God?

Many times people think, “If I just meet all the requirements and keep my nose clean, I’ll make it into leadership.” They may wonder why another person is raised up and they are not. They may even struggle with resentment over it. It is pride that makes us resent another person’s position. Before God, humility comes before honor. We must trust God. We must humble ourselves before Him and trust him to complete the work he has begun in our lives. When another person is raised up into leadership, we should rejoice in their success and pray for them

Envyng another person’s leadership position can also be avoided when we have a proper perspective of what true Biblical leadership is all about. Leadership is a lot of WORK! Before we enter into a position of leadership, we really need to ask ourselves if we’re willing to do more for the sake of others.

Sometimes, we see a person in leadership and we admire them very much. We even tend to think their “wonderfulness” comes from their position,

so we covet that. It is not wrong to covet good character qualities, but it is wrong to covet a person’s position. In this church, we try to see that a person’s character must be developed first, before we place them in a leadership position. A person doesn’t gain integrity because he or she has been given a position of leadership. Rather, they must prove their integrity before gaining their position.

Something else we must be wary about is the tendency to make our desire for a position of leadership into our god instead of letting God be God. The Bible says that if a person desires to be in leadership, he desires a good thing. So it’s a good thing to desire to lead others. But if you make any other thing your god, even a good thing, it will be a destructive force in your life.

Matthew 6:24

“No one can serve _____.
_____. Either he will hate the
one and love the other, or he will be de-
voted to the one and despise the other.”

Application Time

How is your balance between self-consciousness and self-sufficiency?

What is God’s attitude toward pride?

What is God's attitude toward humility?

What is your plan to practice humility and servanthood?

A Seasoned Overcomer

Lesson Four: Heart of a Leader

Are you fully committed to be what God wants you to be? History tells that as Cortez and his band of followers landed on South America, they discovered rampant disease, cold conditions, and savage natives – all of which threatened their lives. Needless to say, they wanted to get back on the ship and head home as quickly as possible!

Cortez did all he could to motivate the men to share his vision. It wasn't until Cortez had their ships burned that the men caught the vision and realized that there was no turning back. They had to go forward.

Have you burned your ships? Have you decided that, no matter what happens, no matter what the cost, you will serve Christ?

We're going to review Jesus's Parable of the Sower to give you an overview of things that can happen to us in our Christian life and the effects that come from those things.

He (Jesus) taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered be-

cause they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times." Mark 4:2-8

Then, in the same chapter, starting in verse 15, the disciples asked Jesus to explain the parable. We're going to take this passage verse by verse and explore the application to our daily lives.

Mark 4:15

Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, _____ comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.

The moment we decided to serve Christ, we made an enemy of the devil. Satan is always looking for ways to discourage us, destroy our testimony, and get us to turn away from Christ. If you're a leader, he'll be even more motivated to stop you, because you are influencing others. A leader certainly must be able to overcome the traps of the enemy.

Mark 4:16-17

Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When

_____ or persecution
_____ because of the word, they
quickly fall away.

We all have problems, trials, and tribulations we must deal with. Leaders must be able to continue their walk with God, not allowing these things to be a hindrance. Notice it says they have “no root, they last only a short time.” The key to standing firm in the midst of trouble is to have your roots planted deeply in God.

Mark 4:18-19
Still others, like seed sown among
thorns, hear the word; but the
_____ of this life, the
_____ of
wealth and the _____ for
other things come in and choke the
word, making it unfruitful.

This verse is talking about worry, greed, and worldly desires – things that are the lusts of our

sinful nature. A leader must be able to overcome his own evil desires.

Mark 4:20
Others, like seed sown on _____
_____, hear the word, accept it, and
produce a crop—thirty, sixty or even a
hundred times what was sown.”

Our hope for you, whether you’re in leadership or not, is that you become rooted deeply in Christ so that no matter what comes against you, no matter what temptation you face, and no matter how strong the attack of the enemy, you will be able to stand solidly in Christ.

♪ On Christ the solid rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand. ♪

Reflection time:

Why does Satan specifically go after leaders?

How do you, personally, face problems and difficulties in your life?

How have you dealt with worry? How is your desire for wealth or any other worldly desire?

Our Enemy, Satan

If you would look up every verse in the Bible that uses the words, “devil”, and “Satan”, you would be amazed at the tactics he uses to come against us.

- He accuses us. (Zech 3:1)
- He arranges circumstances to discourage us. (Job 1:9-21)
- He deceives us with lies and encourages us to deceive others. (Acts 13:10)
- He discourages marriage. (I Tim 5:14-15)
- He discourages us from forgiving others. (II Cor 2:10-11)
- He does counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders. (II Thess 2:9)
- He encourages us to be prideful and conceited. (I Tim 3:6)
- He encourages us to follow our sinful nature. (John 8:44)
- He encourages us to stray from God’s best. (I Chron 21:1)
- He encourages us to continue in habitual sin. (I John 3:8)
- He gains a foothold in our lives by encouraging us to hold on to our anger. (Eph 4:26)
- He hates us because we belong to Jesus. He’s filled with fury toward us. (Rev 12:12)
- He holds the power of death. (Heb 2:14)
- He masquerades as an angel of light. (II Cor 11:14)
- He mocks and blasphemes God. (I Tim 1:20)
- He persecutes us and tests us. (Rev 2:10)
- He strikes us with disease and torment, and desires our death. (Job 2:1-10)
- He tempts us to abuse our power or authority (Luke 4:3)
- He tempts us to doubt God and His Word. (Luke 8:12)
- He tempts us with our own lack of self-control. (I Cor 7:5)
- He tricks us with false wisdom. (James 3:15)
- He tries to separate us away from Jesus. (Luke 22:31)
- He wants to destroy us. (I Peter 5:8)
- He wants us under his power, not God’s. (Acts 10:38)

Our Christian life is characterized as a war. We are soldiers who battle an enemy every day we live. It’s possible to lose sight of these things when you’re working in the trenches. That’s why it’s important to keep your eyes on the big picture – on the God who loves you and has a plan for your life, to do you good, not to harm you.

Every single soldier must know, before he goes into battle, how the little battle he is to fight fits into the larger picture, and how the success of his fighting will influence the battle as a whole.”

— Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery

As leaders, it’s even more important that we overcome our enemy. We cannot live in constant defeat and remain a positive influence on those around us. Our part of the battle is extremely important, so we can not lose heart.

James 4:7

_____ yourselves, then, to God. _____ the devil, and he will flee from you.

Many people use only the second half of James 4:7 and forget the part about submitting to God. But unless we are submitted to God, we can try resisting Satan all we want and he’ll just run all over us! Obedience to God is our strongest weapon against Satan. When we resist the devil by obeying God, Satan literally runs away from us!

The title of this chapter is “A Seasoned Overcomer.” When you think of a seasoned soldier, you think of a more mature person who has already been through numerous battles. They have faced the enemy and overcome it. Perhaps they get weary, and perhaps they’ve been wounded, but they’re not defeated! And they have that glint in their eye that says, “I’m never going to surrender.”

Trials and Tribulations

When we get saved, it seems like we go through a “honeymoon” period in our relationship with God. Everything is brand new. We are amazed at the love, grace, and mercy of God. After a season, the newness fades away and we settle in to normal everyday Christianity. Then, because we live in a world that has been tainted by sin, we must face problems – trials and tribulations. The difference is that now we face them WITH Christ, whereas before we would have faced them without Him. That makes all the difference in the world!

I Peter 4:12-13

Dear friends, do _____ be
_____ at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

I Peter 1:6-7

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a _____ you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be _____ and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

A leader must have the experience of overcoming afflictions in his or her life. Otherwise, how can he or she help to encourage others who will certainly encounter similar afflictions? Unfortunately, many people think that giving their life to Christ means they will not have any more problems. Then when the problems come, they fall away, and if they are leading others, they will fall away as well! So you can see why we look for a certain level of maturity before we consider someone for a leadership role in our church.

Our Own Sinful Nature

One upscale neighborhood experienced the worst of all possible disasters — a garbage company strike. Bags of garbage mounted up in alleys and along curbsides during the Christmas season sending a stench into the air which quickly became unbearable. Tempers flared and news conferences were quickly called by city officials in an attempt to squelch the tempers and reach a solution.

One fellow was quite the entrepreneur, however. He boxed his garbage, wrapped it in Christmas paper, sat it on the front porch, and chuckled as thieves quietly mounted his porch in the darkness and stole his garbage. He got rid of the stench! Satan’s goal is to leave the elements of sinfulness in our lives and convince us that they can do little harm if we learn to tolerate them. Sin left alone and not dealt with in God’s way creates havoc. Get rid of it!

In the greater Body of Christ, there seem to be two widely different areas of thought on this subject. One extreme teaches that once you become a Christian, you stop sinning. You might make some mistakes, but you just don’t sin anymore! The other extreme teaches that you are nothing but a lowdown dirty miserable sinner and you must do some kind of penance for the slightest error — and you just better be right with God when you die or you’ll burn in hell!

The truth is that you ARE a sinner — but you’ve been redeemed because you’ve accepted Christ’s sacrifice, his payment for sin on your behalf. So now, you’re saved from the penalty of sin, but you still have a sin nature that needs to be overcome.

Now some people take the teaching of grace and think that no matter how they live, they are still righteous in the eyes of God. We must not take God’s grace for granted in this way.

Romans 6:1-2

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We _____; how can we live in it any longer?

Some sins are easy to dispense with, others we have to wrestle with. We'll work on it, and work on it, and keep slipping back into it. It's really frustrating sometimes. Even the Apostle Paul struggled in this way. Look at what he wrote in Romans 7:15

Romans 7:15

I _____ understand what I do.
For what I _____ to do I do _____
do, but what I _____ I _____.

This is where overcoming comes in. It is God HIMSELF who teaches us, who gives us the desire to do right. He gives us the desire, and then we have to work it out in practical ways in our own lives.

Philippians 2:12-13

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed~not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence~continue to _____ your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is _____ who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Sometimes we might look at our lives and how many times we have bad attitudes, or lust, or sin in any number of ways. And we wonder how we'll ever succeed in overcoming our own nature. II Corinthians 2:14 in the New King James version says, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ . . ."

I John 3:6

No one who lives in him _____
_____ sinning. No one who
_____ to sin has either
seen him or known him.

The point is, we don't want to continue to sin.

Good Soil

Parable of the Sower we referred to at the beginning of this lesson shows us that only the seed planted in the good soil came up, grew and produced a crop, a crop that multiplied thirty, sixty, or a hundred times. How can we make sure our hearts are good soil, not rocky, weedy, or shallow?

Think of what happens when a farmer prepares a field to receive seed. First he has to clear the land – getting rid of all the rocks, stumps, and boulders that may inhibit the plow from doing its work. Then he has to plow the field up! Plowing is necessary for two reasons. First, it digs up the ground so that the seed can be planted underneath it. Secondly, it helps the ground to absorb the water it's going to need to help nourish that seed as it grows. If you've ever seen a fallow field, one that's not been plowed or planted for a long time, you'll see that it's become so hardened that even when it rains, the water just runs right off of it. Sometimes our hearts can become hardened just like that, and when the Lord tries to refresh us with some of his Word, we can't even receive it. That's a dangerous place to be in before God. When we get hard-hearted, we need to ask God to plow us up – even if it hurts. In the long run, even the pain of the plow is worth the ministry we receive afterward.

So what does this teach us?

- To seek to root ourselves deeply in God so that we are not shaken when we face various problems.
- That the greatest part of the battle is in submitting ourselves to God. Then He enables us to overcome our enemy.

Application Time

Which one of these areas do you struggle with the most?

Which one of these have you grown in the most?

What is your plan to practice being an overcomer?

Transparency

Lesson Five: Heart of a Leader

When analyzing this definition, several valuable concepts can be drawn from the meaning of the word transparency.

Transparency (trans per' ən sē) *n.*
1 a transparent quality or condition. **2** a positive film or slide having a picture, etc. that can be seen when light shines through it, or that can be shown on a screen with a projector.

Transparency is not a “Bible” word. If you look it up in the Scriptures, you will not find it. However, the quality of being open and transparent about our lives and our characters is definitely a biblical principle. It goes along with the quality of humility — a subject the Bible defines very clearly.

Transparent people are humble people. When the light of the Word of God shines upon them, they are not too proud to admit their shortcomings. When a transparent person sins, or makes a mistake, or offends someone, they are willing to accept the responsibility for their error, willing to apologize, to repent. They are willing to grow and change.

Once, there was a great Christian leader. He was

well-known all over the world and his ministries affected hundreds of thousands of people. He could preach powerfully and was anointed and used by God in miraculous ways. What caused his downfall? He wasn't open and honest about his struggles with even his closest friends. He was tempted by lust. One day, he fell into that temptation, but it turned out OK because nobody knew what he had done. As time went on, he fell into that temptation again and again. He had no prayer support, no friend to encourage him or hold him accountable. After a long time struggling all alone, he fell into that temptation once too often and the mainstream media caught this man with a prostitute. It became headline, 6 o'clock news material. What a tragedy. He had been caught in a trap of sin. He brought worldwide shame and embarrassment to his family, his ministry, and upon the name of Christ. Thousands of people all over the world were shocked, grieved, and disillusioned. All of these things could have been avoided. How? Early, when the temptations first started (or at any point in between), he could have gone to a trusted Christian friend and said, “Hey, I'm really being tempted with lust. Please pray for me.” That friend could have prayed for him, checked up on him, encouraged him, and helped him to avoid the trap altogether!

Now, this just happened to happen in a worldwide ministry, one that would make the headlines and the 6 o'clock news. But these kinds of tragedy

occur on every level of leadership. All of them can be avoided by simply developing close, trustworthy Christian friendships with people who will build you up, encourage you, comfort you, and hold you accountable.

If you're thinking, "That could never happen to me!" that is the wrong attitude to have. The truth is, any one of us can be tempted. Any of us can fall. None of us are so strong and so spiritual that we don't struggle with our own sinful nature. We need one another.

I Corinthians 10:12

So, if you _____ you are standing firm, be _____ that you don't fall!

Hebrews 3:12-13

But _____ one another _____, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Sin is deceitful, and we are all in danger of being hardened by it. When we say that "sin is deceitful," we mean it quite literally. Sin has a way of lying to us, making us believe that we can justify

our actions. Or it lies by minimizing the impact of it, telling us "This one time won't hurt." It encourages us to keep things hidden, so that we can no longer be transparent and open.

On the other side of this coin, there was another man, an elder in a local church who also struggled with lust. He went to his pastor and confessed his struggle. He went to his wife and shared it with her. Both his wife and his pastor loved, accepted, and forgave him. They prayed for him and encouraged him. That man has grown and changed and still walks with God today. Does he still struggle? Yes, but very rarely. He is still open enough to confess when that temptation rears its ugly head. His openness and honesty has become a strength to him.

James 5:16

Therefore _____ your sins to _____ and pray for each other so that you may be healed. . .

I John 1:9

_____ we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and _____ us from all unrighteousness.

Reflection time:

Let's examine our own lives in light of the following characteristics (discuss them with your leader):

Transparent people . . .

- are compassionate; can forgive much because they know how much they have been forgiven.
- have a interdependent spirit; recognize their need for others.
- are humbled by how very much they have to learn.
- are willing to risk getting close to others and take risks of loving intimately.
- accept personal responsibility and can see where they are wrong in a situation.
- receive criticism with a humble, open spirit.
- are concerned with being real; what matters

Closed people . . .

- tend to have a critical, fault-finding spirit; look at others' faults, but aren't very willing to look at their own
- tend to have an independent, self-sufficient spirit.
- tend to feel confident in how much they know.
- tend to keep others at arm's length.
- are quick to blame others
- are unapproachable or defensive when criticized.
- are concerned with being respectable, with what others think, work to protect their

Transparent people (cont'd) . . .

is not what others think but what God knows; are willing to die to their own reputation.

- once broken, don't care who knows or who finds out; are willing to be exposed because they have nothing to lose.
- are quick to admit failure and seek forgiveness when necessary.
- are grieved over the cause, the root of their sin.
- realize they have need of a continual heart attitude of repentance.
- walk in the light.

If leaders cannot be transparent, the people following will tend to think wrongly:

"That guy is so good, I can never measure up to that."

"That guy is so good, I can't even relate to that."

"That guy is so good, and he has such a wonderful relationship with God. I am not so good, therefore I can't have a good relationship with God."

"I've got to hide my shortcomings."

"I've got to try to be like my leader."

"This is all about me and how I can never measure up."

Proverbs 28:13

He who _____ his sins
does not prosper, but whoever confesses
and renounces them finds _____.

So you see, it's just not healthy to hide our shortcomings from one another. Doing so generates the wrong kind of atmosphere in the body of Christ. Not only that, but we're extremely foolish to think that we can hide things from God. And truthfully, people see a lot of our shortcomings whether we try to conceal them or not. It's just better, for us and for others, to be open and honest.

Closed people (cont'd) . . .

own image and reputation.

- want to be sure that no one finds out when they have sinned; their instinct is to cover up.
- have a hard time saying, "I was wrong; will you please forgive me."
- are concerned about the consequences of their sin.
- don't think they have anything to repent of.
- are blind to their true heart condition.

If leaders ARE transparent, people tend to think like this:

"Gee, if he can struggle and still walk with God—so can I!"

"I can relate to him because he struggles just like I do."

"Hey, if he can struggle and be a leader, maybe I can too!"

"If he can be open about his struggles, so can I."

"I want to be more like Jesus."

"This is NOT all about me! It's about God and the difference HE can make in my life."

Jeremiah 16:17

(God speaking) "My eyes are on _____
their ways; they are _____
_____ from me, nor is their sin
concealed from my eyes."

Matthew 10:26

. . . There is nothing
_____ that will not be
disclosed, or _____ that will not
be made known.

Just think about Adam and Eve. After they had sinned, what good did it do for them to try to hide

when God came walking in the garden? None whatsoever. God knew it anyway. What good did it do for them to make up excuses for their disobedience? God saw through all that and held each accountable for their own actions. So we might as well train ourselves to be honest, with ourselves, with God, and with others.

What does this teach us?

- To build relationships with trusted Christian friends.
- To be honest and open about our shortcomings, struggles, and sins.
- To love, accept, and forgive others when they are open about their shortcomings.
- To exhort, encourage, and pray for those who struggle.

Application Time

Which of these areas do you need to work on the most?

Which one of these have you grown in the most?

What is your plan to practice transparency?

Eager to Learn and Grow

Lesson Six: Heart of a Leader

There was a young woman who gave her life to the Lord and started going to church. She began to attend small group meetings and started going through curriculum that was provided. One week she did a lesson on tithing, and she began to tithe. A few weeks later she did a lesson on the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, she sought it and received it. Every time she learned something new, she did her best to put it into practice in her life. When she faced difficulty in her life, she studied what the Bible had to say about it and adjusted her attitudes and actions to whatever the Bible said. The result has been tremendous growth. She is now in a leadership position. She's a woman of great conviction and strength, and a tremendous influence upon anyone who meets her.

Another young woman gave her life to the Lord, she started church and small group the same way. She started tithing when she learned about it, and put into practice everything she learned just like the other woman. However, there came a point in her life where she became angry about some things. Instead of learning how to handle anger from the word of God, she chose to handle it her own way. She allowed that anger and bitterness to stunt her growth. This once glowing and blossoming young woman has turned into a bitter person who has deceived herself into thinking she's a mature Christian. Her influence upon others is not a good one.

Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, _____ to do what is good.

In the previous portion of scripture, we read that it is the grace of God that teaches us to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age. As we look at our present age and the ungodliness that surrounds us on every side, we sometimes wonder if it is possible to be godly. This passage lets us know that it is possible – and that we should be eager for it.

Luke 21:38

... and all the people came _____ in the morning to hear him at the temple.

Seeking God early in the day is a good habit to cultivate. Some people even get up early

(intentionally!) to spend time with God before they start their day. In a study of the word early in the Bible, we find that when things are done early, they have the highest priority. Now, God does not require that we get up early, but it still should be a priority in our lives to seek Him and to become more like Him.

John 4:40

So when the Samaritans came to him (Jesus), they _____ him to stay with them, and he stayed two days.

We can see by the word “urged” that the Samaritans wanted Jesus to stay with them longer than just a few hours. They earnestly desired his presence.

Acts 10:33

So I sent for you _____, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to _____ the Lord has commanded you to tell us."

Again, in Acts 10:33, we see the eagerness of Cornelius's family to talk to Peter, the man of God. They were ready and willing to receive anything the Lord had to say to them.

Acts 17:11

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they _____ the message with great _____ and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

And again here, we see that the Berean people not

only received Paul's message eagerly, but they went even further and studied the scripture for themselves. This shows great passion for the truth. They wanted to know. They wanted to grow. They didn't just accept things at face value, but took the responsibility upon themselves to check up on Paul to make sure he was saying the right things. What a great example! Because of this, they were considered of more noble character than the Thessalonians. It seems as though the Thessalonians were not as eager or motivated to study.

In this church, we try to provide many opportunities and resources for your growth and experience. We hope that everyone will take advantage of them. But we cannot force anyone to do so. It is each person's individual choice how they grow, when they grow, and how much they continue to grow. There are sections of Life Study curriculum, leadership training, and many suggested resources for reading and study. There are opportunities to serve the body of Christ and the community utilizing your individual gifts and talents.

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 you hope and a _____.

We want to encourage you to believe God for your future. He has a plan for your life. He wants to give you vision and purpose. And we want you to attain everything God has for you

Galatians 6:9

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do _____.

Reflection time

What are some of the ways we can pursue growth in God?

How can we pursue growth even when we go through difficult times?

In the Bible, God encourages us to pursue His word, His wisdom, and His character.

II Peter 1:5

... make _____ 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, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.⁸ For if you possess these qualities in

_____, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you see how important it is for us to keep on growing? We do not want to be ineffective and unproductive in knowing Jesus. We want to be full of good fruit, and able to help others in their growth as well.

Proverbs is full of passages about seeking wisdom and the knowledge of God. Verb phrases such as, “turning your ear . . . applying your heart, calling out, crying aloud, looking for, searching for. . .” are used to describe how we are to seek. And wisdom itself is likened to a hidden treasure.

Application Time

Which one of these areas do you struggle with the most?

Proverbs 2:1-5

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 and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, 4 and if 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.

Proverbs 4:5-7

Get wisdom, get understanding; _____ my words or swerve from them.⁶ Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you.⁷ Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.

We can see how important our growth is to God. He is exhorting us to give all we have toward it. We can't afford to take it lightly.

What does this teach us?

- That we are responsible for our growth.
- That we must read and study the Bible.
- That we must never stop growing.

Which one of these have you grown in the most?

Do you have a plan to continue your growth in God? _____

If so, what is it?

Leading your Own Family

Lesson Seven: Heart of a Leader

The Word of God teaches that ALL husbands must love their wives, and ALL parents must train their children. We should all have high standards when it comes to our families. But, once again, leaders are held to a higher standard. We're given a special injunction in the following scripture:

I Timothy 3:4-5
He must _____ his own family well and see that his children _____ him with proper _____. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)

Let's take this verse phrase by phrase and examine it.

Managing the Family Well

What we're really talking about here is government — church government, family government, and self-government. Indeed, the question should be asked, "If a person can't govern his own family, how can he care for God's church?" There are two reasons for this. First, a leader has greater pressure upon his life. There are demands upon his or her life that other people don't have to deal with. If there are cracks in the family foundation, they will only be exacerbated by the pressure of leadership. Secondly, people are watching him or her, as an example to follow in marriage and child

training. If we are too easy in the care and management of our family relationships, others will be lax with theirs as well.

Obedient Children

When it comes to children, we have found that people have a grave misunderstanding of their character and their need for training. If we truly believe what the Bible says, we must accept it's wisdom regarding our children.

Our babies — cute, cuddly, lovable. They smell so good (most of the time)! They look so innocent. But ARE they innocent?

Psalm 51:5

Surely I was sinful at _____, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Proverbs 22:15

Folly is _____ in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.

That cute little bundle of joy — is a natural born SINNER! Does that sound harsh? Perhaps, but it's the truth! Have you ever noticed that you don't have to teach a child to disobey? — or to lie? No, these things come naturally to a child. They are born with their sinful nature. That is why

there is so much teaching in the Bible about training children. We must love them enough to train that nature – not just to obey, but to do it with a proper attitude. This brings us to the next part of the verse. . .

With Proper Respect

Respect? It’s amazing how few people truly treat others with respect. It starts with husbands and wives. Spouses must treat one another with respect, even when they disagree. They are setting an example for their children.

Proverbs 30:17
“The eye that _____ a father,
that _____ obedience to a
mother, will be pecked out by the ravens
of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures. . .”

This seems to indicate how God feels about the insolence of a child toward a parent. We must not only train our children in behavior, but also in attitude. This is extremely important. If you tell your child, for the umpteenth time to go clean

their room, and they finally stomp off to their room to obey you – something is wrong. First, you didn’t back it up when you told them to do it the first time, and now you’re letting that child fly with his attitude. THINK – do you want that child to treat a future employer that way? Or the police? Or a judge? Or their pastor? Or a professor at college? If you allow him to get away with these attitudes with his present authority (you), he will be inclined to try it with other authorities as well.

We must understand that we are raising and training a person who is going to live forever – in one place or the other. How we train them is going to have a profound affect upon how they manage themselves in their life on this earth – and will be a determining factor in their eternal life decisions. We must have a ‘vision’ for our children (not a mold to press them into, but character development). What kind of man or woman do we want our child to grow into? Dedicate them to God. Realize that this little person does not belong to you – he or she belongs to God. God has put this child into your care for a time – and it’s going to seem all too short – so we must take this responsibility seriously.

Reflection time

On a scale of 1 to 10, how are your relationships with your spouse and child(ren)?

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

How are you doing in your management/government of your family?

How is the “respect level” in your family?

Some suggestions:

Praise in public, correct in private. Just think about how you would feel if you were publicly corrected – and how good it feels to be honored publicly. Show appreciation for good behavior and attitudes, privately and publicly. Train yourself to say things like “That was very thoughtful of you, thank you.” “That was a very kind thing to do.” “Great job, honey – I’m proud of you!” Don’t lie, don’t make a fuss; just verbalize your appreciation.

There will be times when you become angry with your spouse. Don’t make it a public affair, yelling at them in the middle of WalMart! Control your emotions until you get to a private place to voice your strongly felt concerns. Correction of children is necessary as well, both corporal and verbal. Punishment is a very humbling, embarrassing thing. Try to do it in a private place. The only time correction should be done in front of others is if the offense warrants it. For instance, a teenage daughter was arguing with her mother in front of her friends. She wanted to go to a party, and the mother wanted more time to consider her answer. The daughter kept berating her and pestering her for an answer. Finally the mother responded, “If you are going to speak to me this way in front of your friends, then I’ll give you your answer in front of your friends. You may NOT go to the party, and you are grounded for a week! If you want to continue with your bad attitude, we can add some more time to the grounding.” That young lady was embarrassing herself and her mother publicly. So the mother had to stand her ground, not allowing her daughter to get away with this kind of public behavior.

Proverbs 29:15

The rod of

_____ imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.

Fathers, it is up to you to back up your wife. Wives, it is your job to back up your husband. Do not allow your children to back-talk, or to backbite your spouse to you. Demand that they treat your spouse with the proper respect, even when they

are angry with them. There are proper ways to voice their opinions, and this is just another area of character and attitude training that needs to be done. We might not agree with everything our president does, but we still treat him with respect because of his office. We must train ourselves and our children to treat our spouse with the same kind of respect because God himself has placed you as parents. This is your “office” in the family.

SHOW respect and courtesy, and EXPECT respect. Parents, YOU are in charge, whether your child believes it or not! God Almighty has put you in charge. Don’t let your child rule over you. He is not old enough or wise enough to make adult choices.

Isaiah 3:4

I will make boys their officials; mere children will _____ them. (God is not happy about this – this is the judgment of God - when children rule over adults.)

Isaiah 3:12

Youths oppress my people, women rule over them. O my people, your _____ lead you _____; they turn you from the path.

We get so caught up in listening to the “guides” of the world, instead of listening to the Word of God. We listen to psychologists, and psychiatrists, and talk-shows, and so-called “experts”, instead of listening to the Lord, who made us in the first place.

Train for wise choices and decisions. When your children make a mistake, don’t ridicule them. Explain why it would have been better to do it another way – teach them the value of evaluating the natural consequences of their actions.

Deal honestly, don’t trick or bribe your child into right behavior. If you resort to trickery or bribery, you are teaching your child the art of manipulation. Simple obedience is much better and much more honest. Example of bribery – “I’ll give you a

cookie if you put on your shoes.” Example of trickery – “The boogie man will get you if you don’t put on your shoes.”

Don’t compare with other children. No two children on the face of the earth will be exactly the same. Instead, praise their differences. “Well, Dave might be an excellent musician, but you are the most kind, generous young man I know.” Also – don’t let your children put others down. Teach them to be humble and kind. Ask them how they’d like it if their friends talked about them that way.

Don’t over-protect or dominate. Let’s face it, we really can’t protect our children from everything. There are certain ages at which children should know how to do certain things. For instance, a 3-year old can be taught to pick up his toys, but he needs to hold your hand when he crosses the street. He is not mature enough to look both ways and watch out for on-coming traffic. However, if you are still making your 12-year-old hold your hand to cross the street, something is wrong. If you don’t train and release him, he will either always be dependent upon you or he will resent you.

Teach a healthy respect for the law. Our society has a very sad disrespect for police officers and the legal system in general. This ought not to be. The Bible teaches us to submit ourselves to the governing authorities, respecting their office even if we don’t like or agree with them.

Spend TIME together. Do things, play games, laugh together – this is precious time. Your children will only be in your home, under your authority for 18-20 years. Let it be a time of good memories, not a horror story.

Realize that children will imitate what they see and hear. So be a good example.

Proverbs 1:8-9

Listen, my son, to your fathers’
_____ and do not
forsake your mother’s
_____. They will be a gar-
land to grace your head and a chain to

adorn your neck.

Get your wisdom from the Word of God.

Proverbs 13:24

He who spares the rod _____
his son, but he who loves him is
_____ to discipline him.

Our society tells us it’s wrong to spank a child. But this scripture clearly states that parents who do not discipline their children actually hate them. Those are pretty strong words. Teaching and admonishing only goes so far. Spanking is another method of training. Once a child understands that it is wrong to lie or disobey, and they lie or disobey again, afflicting some pain to the nether portion of their anatomy is an effective training tool. NOT beating, NOT abusing, not in rage, but an emotionally controlled spanking administered for the GOOD of that child, to train him to do right. The Bible teaches us “in your anger, do not sin.” There is a proper place for anger when your child sins. It’s not wrong to show your anger, they might actually need to see it, but there is a difference between anger and rage. Enraged people tend to lose control. So take care and don’t use a spanking as an opportunity to appease your anger.

Some Biblical Examples of Parenting

Genesis 24:36

My master's wife Sarah has borne him a
son in her old age, and he has given him
_____ he owns.

It’s a parent’ heart to want to give their children everything, as Abraham did. But we must be aware that having everything might not be good for the child. Greed is one of our sinful nature’s characteristics. We need to take care that we don’t allow our children to remain selfish and greedy.

Genesis 37:3-4

Now Israel _____
than any of his other sons, because he
had been born to him in his old age; and
he made a richly ornamented robe for
him. When his brothers saw that their

father loved him more than any of them,
they hated him and could not speak a
kind word to him.

Sometimes a parent's love is not a wise love. It can be an indulgent love, or a love that shows favoritism over another child. We must guard ourselves against such things, because this kind of imbalance can wreak havoc within a family (as we can see in the story of Joseph). If you find yourself feeling more for one child over another, train yourself to behave in a balanced way. You are doing this for the children, not for yourself.

II Samuel 18:29
The king (David) asked, "Is the young
man Absalom _____?"

David's heart for Absalom, in spite of the great evil Absalom had done, was concerned for his welfare. Our children may struggle and fall into sin one day. God does not disown us when we struggle

and fall into sin. Neither should we disown our children. Even the father of the Prodigal son did not reject his son — he merely released him to his own desires, even though it must have broken his heart to do so.

There is no parent on the face of the earth who 'knows it all.' There is always something more we can learn, something we can do better. We have excellent marriage and child-training resources at our church. Take advantage of them. This is all part of the process of training yourself to be godly.

What does this teach us?

- The way we lead our family is reflective of the way we will lead others.
- That discipline is something we do FOR a child, with the right motivation.
- That parental love can sometimes be unwise.
- That we need continual guidance and wisdom from the word of God.

Application Time

Which one of these areas do you struggle with the most?

Which one of these have you grown in the most?

Do you have a plan to continue your growth in leading your family? _____

If so, what is it?

Working With People

Lesson Eight: Heart of a Leader

In the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) we read that Jesus has commanded us to “go into all the world and make disciples.” Fulfilling this call of God involves people. We must have an ability to work with people, to lead people. People are God’s priority. He didn’t send his Son to earth to save the land, or the trees, or anything else in His creation – He sent his son to save people!

In the King James Version of Proverbs 18:24, we read, “If a man would have friends, he must show himself friendly.” Bad attitudes, a negative outlook, and placing tasks in too high a priority will hinder our ability to make friends. After all, how can we influence others if we’re not building some kind of relationship with them?

This may seem like a “no-brainer” to you. However, there are those of us who, if left to ourselves, would avoid people. We function better with tasks and systems. Our motto: Give us a job to do and leave us alone to do it! While this personality trait is great when it comes to getting things accomplished, we must always keep our relationships with people in view. Jesus didn’t say, “Go into all the world and do lots of tasks.”

You act basically as you see yourself. It’s impossible to consistently behave in a manner than is inconsistent with the way you see yourself. Unfortunately, too often, we are so caught up in “seeing ourselves” that we fail to consider others. Jesus

commanded the exact opposite.

Philippians 2:3-4

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider _____ better than yourselves. Each of you should look _____ to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

It’s not wrong to look out for our own interests, but it IS wrong to ONLY look out for our own interests.

Galatians 5:14

The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor _____.”

The story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) illustrates how different people view a person by the way they see themselves.

- Robbers – used people, stole, saw the man as a victim to exploit.
- Priest & Levite – Law-keepers, pure, saw the man as a problem to avoid.
- Good Samaritan – despised, ignored, rejected, saw the man as a person to be loved.

Remember, most people aren’t difficult, they are simply different. It would be the height of arrogance to expect (or hope) that all people would

think like we do – or be like we are. When you begin to understand people, and their differences in appearance, perspective, and lifestyle, they amazingly become less difficult to deal with. Why? Because they have changed? No – it’s because you have gained new insight into who they are and why they do what they do. People are a very interesting subject. God, in his infinite variety has not made two exactly alike!

We are commanded to be kind. It takes a certain amount of effort. We cannot just sit idly by and expect everything to develop properly. Relationships require building.

Romans 12:10

Be _____ to one another in brotherly love. _____ one another above yourselves.

I Corinthians 13:4

Love is _____, love is _____. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind and compassionate to one another, _____ each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Sometimes, we may not feel like being kind and friendly. At times like these, we need to “put on” friendliness, in the same way we put on clothing!

Colossians 3:12-14

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, _____ with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

II Peter 1:5-7

For this very reason, _____ to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

Reflection time

Do you consider yourself a people person or a task oriented person. Why?

How would you evaluate your ability to work with people, even difficult people?

How are you able to show kindness and graciousness, even when you don't really feel like it?

Let's look at several examples of kindness.

Genesis 50:21

So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he _____ them and spoke kindly to them.

Joseph. Even though his brothers had mistreated him and he had suffered because of them for many years, he still reassured them and spoke kindly to them. He didn't repay evil for evil.

Exodus 2:17

Some shepherds came along and drove them away, but Moses got up and came to their _____ and watered their flock.

Moses saw some women being mistreated, and he came to help them. We need to be bold in standing up against mistreatment.

Ruth 2:15-16

As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, "Even if she gathers among the sheaves, _____ her. Rather, pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don't rebuke her."

Ruth's hard work and her love for her mother-in-law was seen by Boaz, so he secretly arranged for her to glean a more high quality and a higher quantity of grain.

Notice how often humility is tied together with kindness.

Proverbs 18:1

An unfriendly man pursues _____ ends; he de-

fies all sound judgment.

This seems to indicate this equation – UN-FRIENDLY = SELFISH. Selfishness leads to unkindness. Watch yourself. Have you ever caught yourself being nasty? It's usually because you want your own way and aren't getting it.

Being puffed up in our knowledge (arrogance) is another hindrance to humility and kindness. For instance, there may be a person on a worship team who is more talented and educated than the other team members. Those team members can enhance one another, musically and spiritually. But if he has an arrogant or superior attitude about it, he will alienate people instead. Just because you know something doesn't mean it has to come out of your mouth.

Romans 12:16

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be _____, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be _____.

I Corinthians 8:2

The man who thinks he knows something does _____ know as he _____ to know.

Another area to consider is that of opinion. We can have opinions on everything and everyone. However it is the height of arrogance to think that your opinion is the only right opinion. And it is a definite hindrance to kindness. Just think of how we act when we think we are RIGHT and somebody DARES to disagree with us!

Proverbs 18:2

A fool finds no pleasure in understanding, but _____ in airing

his own opinions.

It takes a certain maturity level to be able to "agree to disagree" without anger or thinking we're being rejected. There are right times and right places and right persons with whom we can air our opinions, and we need to be discerning about that. Just because we have an opinion doesn't mean we have to air it.

There is an old movie in which a young wife learns that she's going to have a baby. She planned a special dinner and waited for a special moment to tell her husband. Circumstances didn't work out the way she had planned, so her husband found out about the pregnancy from someone else. Her intention had been to surprise and bless him, but he saw it through anger and misjudged her. He accused her of hiding it from him. What the wife had done was not wrong, but the opinion of the husband caused him to judge her harshly, thinking he couldn't trust her. So he packed his bags and went to the train station. He ended up pouring out his heart to an old man at the station, his disappointment and anger at the wife he loved so much. The old man gave him some advice that really hits the heart of it. He said to the young husband, "You may have a point, and you may even be right. But you can get awful lonely being right." The bottom line is — relationships are more important than our need to prove ourselves right.

Galatians 5:22-23

But the _____ of the _____ is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Psalms 141:3

Set a _____ over my _____, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips.

Colossians 4:6

Let your _____ be always full of _____,

_____ with _____, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Matthew 5:13-15

"You are the _____ of the _____. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. "You are the _____ of the _____. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

James 3:2

We _____ in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.

Proverbs 4:23

Above all else, _____, _____, for it is the wellspring of life.

We need to watch what we say and how we say it. Truthfully, we need to guard our hearts, because whatever is in our hearts will eventually come out in our words and actions. The thoughts and motivations of our heart are important to God.

Proverbs 17:27-28

A man of knowledge uses words with _____, and a man of understanding is _____. Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.

Titus 2:7-8

In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show _____, _____ and _____ of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

Matthew 12:34
Out of the overflow of the _____, the mouth _____ . (So guard your heart)

Proverbs 13:3
He who _____ his _____ guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin. Do you guard your lips?

Proverbs 21:23
He who _____ his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from _____. Do you guard what you allow to come out of your mouth?

James 1:26
If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is _____.

If you don't keep a tight rein on your tongue, your religion is worthless? Consider . . .

When you are in a position of leading others, it is important to let God train you in wisdom. The book of Proverbs is especially helpful in this pursuit. Then when people come to us for counsel, we'll have something to share with them. Wise words are sometimes painful, because you have to bring correction to a person in order to get them on the right track.

Job 6:25
How _____ are honest words!

Appropriate words and behavior can also be very pleasing and even bring healing to a person's heart or circumstances.

Proverbs 16:24
Pleasant words are a honey-comb, _____ to the soul and _____ to the bones.

Ecclesiastes 10:12
Words from a wise man's mouth are _____, but a fool is consumed by his own lips.

How sad it is that our society is becoming more and more rude and crude, when the Bible teaches that we should be gracious and kind. We should strive to make our behavior, speech, and even our attitudes an inspiration for others, in a sense, prodding them on to be better people themselves. In the movie, *As Good as it Gets*, Jack Nicholson's character has a line that is one of the highest compliments that can be paid to another human being. He says, "You make me want to be a better man." As leaders, our desire should be to live in such a way that makes other people want to be better Christians.

Ecclesiastes 12:11
The _____ of the _____ are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails - given by one Shepherd.

Philippians 4:5
Let your gentleness be _____ to all, the Lord is near.

One other thing we must guard against is a propensity to be easily offended. Some people tend to be very "touchy" and are offended by things that don't even matter. Leaders cannot afford to allow little things to affect them in such an adverse way. If we do, it will affect the way we treat others. We need to develop a "thick skin" so that the emotional darts that are thrown our way will not put us into a bad temper.

**A Christian needs to have the heart of
a marshmallow and the hide
of a rhinoceros.**

Dick Benjamin

What does this teach us?

- To guard our hearts.
- To keep a tight rein on our tongues.
- To develop a “thick skin”.
- To tolerate the differing opinions of others.

Application Time

Which one of these areas do you struggle with the most? _____

Which one of these have you grown in the most?

Do you have a plan to improve your “people skills”? _____

If so, what is it? _____

A Submitted Heart

Lesson Nine: Heart of a Leader

When you think of the word submission what do you think of? Subservience? Blind obedience? Slavery? Actually, the word submit means "to yield." — yield to people, precepts, and principles that have been placed in our lives as authorities.

Throughout our lives someone is always in authority. At home, it's our parents. In school, the teachers or principal. In business, it's our employer, and at church, it's our pastor.

Yet we seem to think the idea of submission is for the other person, especially away from our employment.

What does the Bible say? This may shock you but in Eph 5:21, it says, . . .

Ephesians 5:21
Submit to one another out of _____ for Christ.

I Peter 5:5
Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, _____ with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Principle #1 Submission is for EVERYONE!

The term submission is one that is absent or abhorred in our society today. Because of its absence, the enemy has been allowed place in our lives and we have clothed ourselves in mental and emotional disguises. Some of us have "dressed" that way for so long that we've begun to believe in the fictitious characters we are playing.

In our study of Ephesians, we have heard Paul say to us, "Put off this, and put on Christ" — What is he talking about? I believe the answer is found in Matt 11:28-30.

Matthew 11:28-30

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰

For my _____ is _____ and my _____ is _____."

The Lord wants us to know how truly liberated we are when we live his way.

Submission does not just belong to Christians. It is a universal principle, much like the law of gravi-

ty or the rule of reaping what you sow.

Whether in your church, home, country, or business, yielding and operating according to an established order results in greater peace.

Principle #2 Submission plus faith equals power.

Submission without faith is slavery. Submission with faith is power! It takes faith to believe that God is correcting a relationship, situation, or circumstance when all outward signs show the opposite. "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (II Cor 5:7)

Throughout the Bible we are admonished by God to submit (be subject) to those who are in authority:

- **EVERYONE must submit to God.**

James 4:7

_____ yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

- **EVERYONE must submit to church leadership.**

Heb 13:17

_____ your _____ and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

- **EVERYONE must submit to authorities in the land.**

Romans 13:1

Everyone must submit himself to the

_____, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

- **EVERYONE must submit to employers.**

I Peter 2:18

Slaves, submit yourselves to your _____ with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.

- **WIVES must submit to husbands.**

Eph 5:22

Wives, submit to _____ husbands as to the Lord.

We need to understand when those in authority disagree with us, we have the right to express our differing opinions in love. I think it's our responsibility to do so, yet our attitude is to be one of humility, and the final decision is still theirs!

And what if we're absolutely, positively sure we're right? What if we know their decision will have a negative effect on the church, job, or home? At that point we have to make a choice. We can respond by continuing to press our point and force the issue, which will often result in anger and strife, or we can turn to Philippians 2: 14-15.

Philippians 2:14-15

Do everything without _____ or _____, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe

God is the equalizing factor in all situations. We must choose to go against our human nature, which insists we get our own way. Then, once we've chosen to exercise faith in our situation, God's power is unleashed.

Sometimes He resolves the issue quickly; other times, patience will be required on our part to see the situation settled. And we must always keep in mind that the other person just may be right. If so, God will reveal that also.

Just how does God deal with people who are in authority and choose to go contrary to our suggestions? We find the answer in Prov 21:1.

Proverbs 21:1

The king's heart is in the hand of the _____; he _____ it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.

God would love to fix the relationships, situations, and circumstances in our lives because we are His children and He loves us. However, many times we are the ones that prevent His action.

I Peter 2:13-14

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, ¹⁴ or to governors, who are _____ to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

When we defy people placed in authority, we are really saying that the situation cannot be resolved unless we take action. We are, in actual fact, playing God.

When we go to God and say, "Father, I think this person is wrong, but I'm trusting you to show him (or her) what is right and to change them," that simple act of faith releases His power to freely act on our behalf. We can also pray, "Lord, if in their stubbornness they refuse to submit to Your guidance, I know I can count on You to rectify the outcome, no matter what!"

I Peter 5:6

_____, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Principle #3 Submission plus power equals liberation.

Once we've committed the issue to God, our faith in Him liberates us to be around the opposing person without murmuring and strife. If the other individual is wrong, God begins to show that person in ways only known to Him. Perhaps, while we're sleeping soundly eight hours every night, the other man or woman is tossing and turning in a rumpled bed.

It takes childlike faith to believe that God can handle any person, debate, or circumstance. When we choose to submit, we can easily see why God says that unless we become as little children, we cannot enter the kingdom of God.

It may be that, at this moment, you're feeling frustrated with certain people in your life. Or you're annoyed about tensions that have arisen over disagreements. Or you're feeling troubled about the outcome of situations in which you had to relinquish control. Could a subtle attitude of rebellion be creeping into your thoughts?

If so, consider Jesus. He is always our best example of submission at work. We know that he often slipped away to pray to His Father. Do you think that he went only to receive orders about what he was to do next? Mark 14:36 reveals that Jesus both shared His heart and also surrendered to the Father's final authority.

Mark 14:36

"Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet _____ what _____ will, but what _____ will."

Jesus knew all too well about the suffering he would soon face on the cross. He questioned the means His Father had chosen for man's salvation, yet he submitted himself to the father's final decision. It's an awesome lesson in submission to realize that our personal salvation rested upon Jesus's submission.

Reflection Time

How well do you submit without complaining or arguing?

How well do you treat those who are below you in the chain of command?

Many Christians are living their lives in violation of God's principle of submission because they refuse to surrender to an order that God, not man, has established.

We may sometimes ask, "What if the people I submit to make mistakes? I'm the one who's going to suffer the consequences of their actions!" The answer to that is, once again, faith.

Being human, we all make mistakes — a fact which should keep us from pointing a finger at someone else and saying, "I told you so." A spirit of love shown to one in error will allow him (or her) to regroup. And the next time you share an opinion, you can believe it will be heard more attentively. Many of us want to force our ideas on people in authority without having earned the right.

We can believe, by faith, that God can heal someone of cancer, free someone of a drug addiction, or place a child in a barren womb. But do we have the faith to believe that God can speak to another person's heart and tell him what to do? Do we believe that God can make the best of a situation, even when an authority figure blindly opposes God's directions?

These questions are true tests of faith. Do you have the confidence to believe that God can fix anything? There's an old saying: "God can hit a

straight line with a crooked stick."

Let's continue on with another facet that goes along with submission — being teachable. Have you ever stopped to consider how teachable you are? How willingly do you receive correction or instruction? Do you get angry any time someone tries to suggest an area in which you might have room for improvement? If so, this is an area you need to improve! ☺ The mentoring process itself suggests that there is one ahead and one following. If you are not a good follower, you will not be a good leader.

The Roman Centurion who came to Jesus on behalf of his own servant, understood this principle.

Matthew 8:5-10

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering." Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him." The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man _____ authority, with soldiers _____ I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do

this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.

John 13:16

I tell you the truth, no servant is _____ than his _____, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

Having a teachable heart goes along with humility, which we discussed in an earlier lesson. A humble person is not threatened by the fact that he has a lot more to learn, that he has room to grow. Instead, he embraces it and welcomes it. A humble person is willing to admit when they sin, or fall short in some way.

Proverbs 4:13

_____ to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.

Proverbs 8:33

_____ to my instruction and be wise; do not ignore it.

Proverbs 12:15

The way of a fool _____ to him, but a wise man listens to advice.

Proverbs 13:10

Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who _____.

Proverbs 13:13

He who scorns instruction will pay for it, but he who _____ a _____ is rewarded.

Proverbs 19:20

Listen to advice and _____ discipline, and in the end you will be counted among the wise.

A teachable heart is just as obvious as a rebellious, unsubmitted heart. There was a young man who felt God had called him into the ministry. He had been to Bible college and had some experience in leading Bible Studies. He had a lot of great ideas and a lot of different ways of doing things. But he couldn't understand why he wasn't being recognized by his pastor or elders as an up-and-coming young leader. One day, one of the elders, in a very loving way, pointed out how unsubmitted and unteachable he was. Every time the pastor or the elders made a suggestion, he had balked at it, always thinking his way was the better way. The kindness of that elder, sharing his fault in such a loving way, opened his eyes, and he was able to overcome this area of weakness.

In the military, an enlistee doesn't just sign up and become a 4-star general! He has to go through some training and gain some experience before he even becomes a private first class! They don't take a private and put him in charge of a battalion – there are principles that must be learned, and character that needs to be developed. In the same way, within the church, your pastor and elders are watching out over you, providing instruction and training for you. They cannot allow just anyone to come in and start a ministry. They must know those who are under their care in the ministry, otherwise, how could they entrust other people's lives to them by putting an unknown person into a leadership position?

What does this teach us?

- That trusting those in authority over us is a matter of faith in God.
- That if we are not good followers we cannot be good leaders.
- To embrace the fact that we all have a LOT more to learn.

Application Time

Which one of these areas do you struggle with the most?

Which one of these have you grown in the most?

Do you have a plan to continue your growth in submission and teachability? _____

If so, what is it?

A Tither

Lesson Ten: Heart of a Leader

Let's begin our discussion of tithing by talking about stewardship. Stewardship is utilizing God-given abilities to manage God-given resources to accomplish God-ordained results. It involves the right use of our time, talents, and treasure (resources, possessions, and finances). Tithing is merely a principle of financial giving which is included within the concept of stewardship.

The beginning point is the understanding that everything belongs to God – EVERYTHING! Even what we think we own belongs to God. He is merely giving us management of it for a time. Therefore, tithing is really managing God's resources in the way God desires. It is an act of faith and obedience. It's saying, "O.K., God, I trust you. All I have belongs to You. I will give you the 10% you require and trust you with the 90% you allow me to keep."

The second understanding we must come to is – You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving. So let's examine the "heart" behind the "hand" of giving.

Luke 21:1-2

As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two _____ copper coins.

You see, the rich people were lined up in front of

everybody, putting in their offerings to the Lord. By outward appearance, it looks as though these rich people are really sacrificing and honoring God by their giving. But God does not look at the outward appearance, He looks at the heart. Let's go on and see what Jesus says in verses three and four:

Luke 21:3-4

"I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in _____ than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her _____ put in all she had to live on."

Jesus teaches us that generosity is determined not by the amount of our possessions but by the attitude and character of our giving. Giving is not a function of cold numbers, but a result of a warm heart.

Consider the Parable of the Good Samaritan from Luke 10:25-37.

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"²⁷ He answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' ; and,

'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" ²⁸ "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." ²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰ In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' ³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" ³⁷ The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

As we examine this story, we see that there are three different attitudes exhibited by the characters involved:

What is yours is mine and I'm going to take it. (Vs 30)

This was the outlook of the robbers, an attitude of greed and sinful flesh — and we want nothing to do with it.

Is God the owner of everything? YES! — we only manage what He has placed in our care.

If I consider myself a Manager

- I am thankful (attitude of gratitude)
- I'm mindful of the Master's Kingdom
- I realize what I have is transitional (just for a period of time)
- I desire to use what I have to bless another (God gives to you so you can help and please

others)

If I consider myself an Owner

- I am proud (look what I have done)
- I am building my own kingdom
- I think what I have is permanent (here today, always be mine)
- I live to please Myself (what will give me the greatest comfort)

What is mine is mine and I'm going to keep it. (Vs 31-32)

This second attitude was exhibited by the Priests and Levites. They weren't going to take anything from anyone, but whatever they had, they were certainly going to keep it to themselves. The Priests and the Levites were going to the temple — and they couldn't touch this man, the law said, or they would be unclean. So they cared more about their own status than they did for this suffering person lying on the side of the road.

Religious and legalistic people tend to have tunnel vision to the point where they can't see the needs of people because they're so focused on viewpoint of the law. Jesus taught that grace and love are above the law — it's hard sometimes to help people understand this. Legalistic Christians are the worst.

Most people go through life breaking no rules and not hurting anyone, they just keep themselves to themselves. They think, "My world is here, your world is there," like there's an imaginary boundary around their life and they go through life isolated. They treat life like a picnic area. They gather all their utensils and napkins, and so forth. . . set up their table, eat their meal, and then pick up everything, put all their trash away, and walk away and say, "See, I didn't bother anything. I didn't litter, mess up anybody's area, it looks just like I found it." And for a moment we will look back and say, "That's a nice person." But think . . . Who put the picnic table out there? Who put the tree out there to give them shade? Who built the restrooms? Somebody gave more than just sitting and eating. They gave of themselves and their resources so

that others coming after them could enjoy something better. And everything you and I enjoy today is either a benefit from God or a blessing that somebody else prepared for us to enjoy.

So the philosophy of “what’s mine is mine and I’m going to keep it” is not sufficient because we have to understand that these things deteriorate and decay, they require maintenance. As a steward, I must realize that I’m not only responsible to take care of what is under my care, but I’m also responsible for you and the next generation.

What is mine is yours and I’m going to give it. (Vs 33-37)

This was the attitude of the Samaritan. Jesus obviously commended this attitude.

Now, when we look at these characters, we see three similarities between them

They all saw the same problem.— Some people say, “I’m not a giver in life because I don’t have the opportunity.” Everybody has that opportunity (time, talent, money). If you say, “I can’t”; we say, “Baloney!” The poorest people are some of the greatest givers. (The widow)

They all had something else to do.— “I can’t help because I’m busy.” Things, or tasks should never come before people. You don’t decide to help someone or decide against helping because you’re busy.

They all had reasons not to help. But the Good Samaritan’s attitude helped him to overcome his own prejudices, and to give up his conveniences.

Observations about Attitudes:

- **Your attitude is more important than your ability.**
- **Attitude is more important than position.**

We tend to think, "If I had a more powerful position, I could give." You could gain that

more powerful position and still not be a giver. The Bible says to be doers of the Word, not hearers only.

- **Your attitude is more important than timing.**

If you see somebody struggling, help them! (Vs 29) Legalism keeps us from loving the way we should. Legalism is about our rules eliminating the need for God and His love.

Become an active giver now. (Vs 36-37) It says, "Go and DO the same." Don't be just an observer. Quit looking and start working.

There was a man who took his son to McDonald's for lunch. He bought himself a sandwich and bought his son a kid's meal, which included french fries. When the dad was finished with his sandwich, he asked his son if he would share his french fries. The son refused. This hurt the father's feelings and even made him angry. Why? The answer is a great reflection about our Father's heart toward us:

The little boy had no idea that the father was the source of those french fries.

The little boy didn't understand that his dad could just take those fries without his permission ~ or he could order more fries than he could imagine!

The little boy didn't comprehend that the dad could get his own french fries.

The little boy didn't understand that his dad didn't want his french fries as much as his willingness to share.

God wants you to share and give, not because he’s hurting and needy, but because giving is a part of God’s own character and he wants it to be passed on to his children. The first Bible verse many of us learned was John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave. . . Throughout the Bible you will find God is always giving and he is very interested in our response. He waits to see how we will

respond when he says, “O.K., I want you to give some of that away — I want you to give some of your fries to that kid at the end of the table.”

I Chronicles 29:10-16

David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, O LORD, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting.

¹¹Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for

_____ in heaven and earth is _____, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. ¹² _____ and honor

_____ from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. ¹³ Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name. 14"But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything _____ from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. ¹⁵ We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. ¹⁶ O LORD our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you.

In the first nine verses of this chapter, they have just taken a very large offering for the building of the Temple. Verses 10-16 is a powerful passage in revealing that God is the source of every blessing that we have. Circle the word “everything” in verse 11, and in verse 14. “Everything comes from you. And in verse 16, “All of it belongs to you.”

In verse 12, David understood that God was in control and sovereign.

Vs 14 — Everything comes from you and we have given you only what comes from your hand. — interesting!

Vs 16 — O Lord, our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it came from your hand, and all of it belongs to you.

David is saying that God is the total source — we have given to you what you have given to us! Have you ever given your children money so they could buy you a Christmas present? This is the same concept. God gives to us the same way, and we give to Him in return.

You have nothing in your hand that is not a direct blessing from God Himself. Everything? — YES - health, wealth, houses, family, air, trees, everything you have!

When you understand this, doesn't it surprise you that we would act like that kid at McDonald's, and not share with our father or others? The Father is hurt by our short-sighted, immature understanding. He wants us to realize that everything we have was His in the beginning.

Now, is there any greater delight than having your kids or the person you gave to, share with you and show gratitude for what you gave them? God requires nothing of us that He has not already given.

Three Truths about Our Giving God:

- **God has all the power to give. He is totally able.**

Verse 12 says, “ In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.”

- **God is willing to give.**

Anything that he would ask of you right now he has already given you the resources to do it. Ask yourself, "Would God ask me to go through a trial, or difficulty or a dark time without giving the grace and wisdom, discernment and the power and the strength to make it through?" James says that God gives abundantly to those who ask.

Sometimes, however, we want resources that

we really don't need. God gives, today, what you need - to be what you need to be - today.

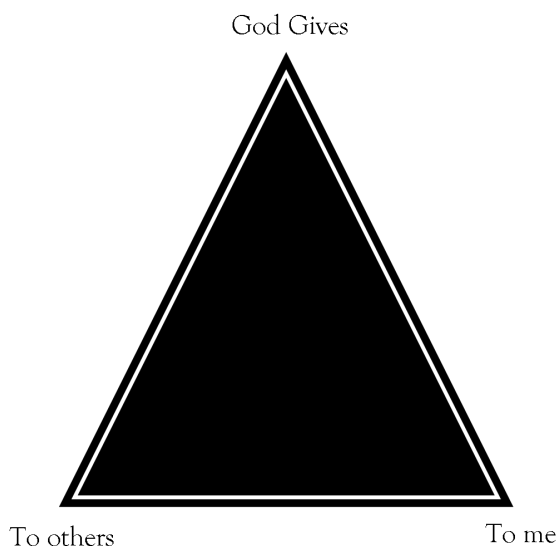
Do I need a martyr's power now? NO! He doesn't give until you need it, it's a matter of trusting God. It's a matter of understanding that God gives to you in this very hour to be all that you need to be. And trusting Him for that supply and resources.

We want to be like the children of Israel, who were commanded to gather only enough manna for each day's need. When they gathered more than they needed for one day, it was moldy and wormy the next morning!

The lesson is this — that God gives you what you need today. He doesn't need to give you any more!

- **God has a reason to give.**

Take a look at the diagram below.



God initiates, we give back, they give back, we give back sometimes indirectly. When you have every-one giving, then you have good partnership.

God gives to us so that we can give to others and give back to Him. Why? Because God wants us to be like Him. He is a giving God.

Matt 25:31-46

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his _____ in heavenly glory. _____ the _____ will be _____ before him, and he will _____ the people _____ from _____ as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his _____ and the goats on his _____. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, _____ who are _____ by my Father; _____ your _____, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you _____ for one of the _____ of these _____ of _____, you _____ for _____. ' "Then he will say to those on his _____, ' _____ from me, you who are _____, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison,

and did not help you?" "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you _____ for one of the _____ of _____, you _____ for _____.'

"Then they will go away to _____, but the righteous to _____."

Observations:

- We are accountable to God with what we do with His blessings. When he gives us french fries, he watches what we will do.
- Giving to others is giving to God. When we see someone needy and we give to them we are giving to God. Vicariously – God would say, “I was the one who was hungry.”
- Not giving to others who are needy is not giving to God.
- We are incomplete without each other. We are incomplete unless we give what we have to each other.

Reflection Time

What is the definition of stewardship?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate yourself as a giver? Explain your rating.

We are assuming, if you’re pursuing a leadership role, that you’ve completed the Discovery Series. One of the lessons in this series includes an excellent foundational teaching on tithes and offerings. This may be a good time to review it, just to make sure you have a good, foundational, biblical understanding of the tithe.

Quick Review: The word tithe literally means one-tenth. There is no getting around this particular percentage. God makes it very clear.

As it is used in the Bible, the tithe is the payment of one-tenth of one’s income to the work of the Lord. Tithing was instituted by God long before the Law of Moses. When Melchizedek stated to Abraham that God was “possessor of heaven and earth,” Abraham immediately became aware of his responsibility to God and paid tithes of all he had (Genesis 14). It is recorded in Genesis 28 that Jacob had a supernatural dream. The first words that Jacob spoke when he awoke were, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.” Then as he continued, he said, “ of all that you

give me I will give you a tenth.” Notice that all this occurred *before* the law was given. Like Abraham, Jacob realized the presence and reality of God and concluded that he had a financial responsibility to God. Abraham was a wealthy man when he decided to tithe. Jacob was fleeing for his life and had little or nothing. So financial status has nothing to do with it. God blessed both Abraham and Jacob for their heart toward him that resulted in tithing.

During the time of the law, at least three tithes were given to the Lord. The first tithe was the children of Israel supporting the priesthood tribe of Levi with a tenth of their increase. Then the Levites, themselves, paid tithes to the high priest. (Numbers 18:21-28)

In the second tithe, the people brought the increase of his ground to the house of the Lord and made a feast with it (Deut 14:22-28). If he lived far away from the temple and his tithe weight a great amount, he was authorized to change the tithe into money and bring that with him. With this money, he arrived at the city where the temple was, bought food and became a partaker of the festivities.

The third tithe was paid every three years. (Deut 14:28-29) Again, it was a tithe of the people’s increase. It was given to the widows, the fatherless, the stranger, and to the Levites.

This is a very short, encapsulated description of giving during the time of the law. God also preached tithing through the prophet Malachi in the last book of the Old Testament. In this book God declares three very important things:

You rob God when you spend His tithes and offerings on yourself.

Malachi 3:8-9

"Will a man rob God? Yet you _____ me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In _____ and _____. ⁹ You are under a curse~the whole nation of you~because you are robbing me.

When you don’t tithe, you are under a curse! God warns us to consider our ways very carefully.

We are to bring the tithes into the storehouse, so that there will be food in His house.

Malachi 3:10

Bring the _____ tithe into the _____, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

The storehouse represents the local church, where we receive shepherding, support, care, instruction, and fellowship. God is greatly concerned that his “house” does not become a “ruin.” He is concerned that his servants are cared for properly. The “storehouse” is where you are getting your spiritual food. If your primary source of spiritual food is from a radio minister, then send him your tithe. If you are in a local church, you need to be supporting that church with your tithe. Since the tithe “is the Lord’s” (Lev 27:30) and does not belong to us, it is not ours to do with as we please.

Haggai 1:4-6

"Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?" ⁵ Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. ⁶ You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a _____ with _____ in it."

The picture of putting your money into a purse with holes in it is very descriptive. So many people wonder, “Where does all my money go?”

God has asked us to “test” him in tithing.

This is the only place in the entire Bible where God makes such a statement. Do you have this kind of faith? Can you believe His Word? If you honor God in this way, he has promised to pour you out such a great blessing that you won't even have enough room for it!

Often, when people gain an understanding about tithing and begin to do it, they're amazed at how, suddenly, they find the best bargains and even have things given to them free of charge! Often the blessings we receive cannot be measured by a mathematical accounting. As one friend of ours puts it, "We have our math, and God has His!" God is SO able to bless us SO abundantly beyond what we can even ask or think. He truly is an amazing God.

Malachi 3:11 (NKJV)

And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

God will "rebuke the devourer for your sakes. . . ." Has the devourer taken your tithe some other way because you didn't bring it to the Lord? Do you continue to have difficulty getting financially adjusted? Perhaps you should take a careful look at your record of tithes and offerings. Is God really obligated to bless you financially if you cheat him and the church of Jesus Christ?

Tithing and Leadership

You may wonder why we will not consider someone for leadership if they do not tithe. It is not

because God needs your money. It is because the Bible teaches that your money is tied to your heart. Frankly, we do not need or want leaders in our church whose hearts are not faithful to God or in harmony with us and the mission and vision of this church.

Matthew 6:21

For where your _____ is, there your _____ will be also. (Also Luke 12:34)

A person who stubbornly refuses to surrender their lives completely to the Lordship of Christ will never become a strong, victorious Christian, let alone a leader in the kingdom of God. An unwillingness to yield our finances and possessions to God may be an indication of spiritual selfishness, distrust, dishonesty, and greed. A stingy, materialistic mentality is also detrimental to spiritual growth.

Proverbs 11:24-25

One man _____ freely, yet _____ even more; another _____ unduly, but comes to _____.²⁵ A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.

What does this teach us?

- That everything belongs to God.
- That tithing is actually a pre-law principle.
- That tithing is a matter of faith.
- That withholding the tithe puts us under a curse.

Application Time

Which one of these areas do you struggle with the most?

Which one of these have you grown in the most?

Do you have a plan to maintain a good attitude when it comes to giving? _____

If so, what is it?

A Christ-centered Influence

Lesson Eleven: Heart of a Leader

I Peter 3:15-16

But in your hearts set apart

_____ as _____. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with _____ and _____, ¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

What we're really talking about here is having good character and integrity. To help define what character is, we should also see what it is not.

Character is not just what a person will be (ideally) in the future, it's what a person is at the present time. When pressure comes to a person's life, the real person surfaces. A person may act or think one way under the blessings of the Lord, but quite another way when the trials and heat of life come upon him. As witnesses for Christ, we are on display ALL the time, not just during the blessing stages, but also – and perhaps even more so during times of struggle.

Character is not only how a person acts, it includes a person's inner thoughts, motives and attitudes. Even though our thoughts are hidden, they indicate the real character of a person. To change the char-

acter of a person, we must go deeper than outward actions.

Character does not appear without pressure. The pressures of life test what the Lord has really accomplished in a person. Common irritations of everyday living expose the weaknesses in every person's life. How do you respond to the disappointments and pressures of everyday life? The qualities that are truly part of a person's character are consistent, whether the heat is on or off in his life.

Character is not only what other people see on the outside. It's what people do not see. People may only see the side of a person that the person wants to display, but God sees the real person. We can't hide our weaknesses from the Lord. He sees it all! People might look at the outside, but God sees directly into our hearts. A person can do many outward good works and still be ungodly. Good works are not always a sign of good character. The important thing is to live in a way that is pleasing to God.

If I take care of my character, my reputation will take care of itself.

D. L. Moody

Proverbs 16:7

When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes _____ his _____ live at peace with him.

Character is not having wisdom to comment and counsel upon the behavior of others. Intellectually knowing how to act, think, and feel according to Bible principles may be a long way from actually living out those principles. A person with true character doesn't just verbally tell other people what to do, but lives as an example worthy of following.

Character is not limited to relationships between Christians. To believe that it doesn't matter how a Christian acts toward non-Christians is a deception. Character shows godly principles in every situation and toward all people.

Character is not limited to a person's relationship with his spiritual family. It also shows in how he treats his natural family. How does he respect and honor his mother and father? How does he treat his wife and children?

We Need Good Character.

The Bible warns us that in the last days, wickedness and perversity will increase. This increase in evil only increases our need for godly character. The standards of this world are obviously becoming more and more corrupt. As this happens, the Lord is causing the character of the church to be more mature. More than ever, Christians need to develop their character. Leaders must lead the way in this process.

Wicked men will grow more and more perverse. The occult will continue to grow. The morals of many are already being shaken. The world is challenging, shaking, and destroying the spiritual values of many young people. Church leadership must give a clear word to the church. We need strong, godly character to stand against the attacks of the enemy.

We have taught again and again that leadership is influence. This is true in any phase or arena of life

— in the marketplace, in our homes, in our neighborhoods, anywhere we find ourselves in the company of other people. However, in the kingdom of God, it is even more important that our leadership/influence is centered around the right things. Why? Because we represent Jesus Christ on the face of the earth. As His representatives, we cannot afford to allow our influence to be shoddy or inappropriate.

I Timothy 3:7

He must also have a _____ with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

Proverbs 22:1

A _____ is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.

Even to those outside the church, having a certain level of good influence is important. If we live in such a way, we will be above reproach. Like Daniel, in the Bible. There were men who were jealous of him, and began to plot against him. They could not find anything with which to accuse him. So they had to make up some bogus law and get the King to agree with it in order to accuse him. We need to live in such a way that no one can find anything sinful to accuse us with!

In I Thessalonians 5, verse 22 (King James Version) it says, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." This means that we even need to be careful that we don't give people the wrong impression. For instance, a man visits a woman alone at her apartment night after night. What do you think about that? They are in that apartment having a Bible Study. But what are the neighbors thinking? They are thinking the worst! What did YOU think when you first read that sentence? Be honest! Wouldn't it be better for this man and woman to meet in the library or some other place to have their Bible Study, so they're not giving off the wrong impression? Or better yet – they should invite several others to join them so they're not all alone together for hours at a time. It's better for

the appearance of the thing, AND it's better to avoid temptation of any kind – none of us are above it!

Why must we live this way? Is it because we are all bound up worrying about what other people will say about us? NO! We live this way because we want to live a good testimony for the sake of our Lord – and for his witness on the earth. We must realize that we all have a sinful nature. It's because of that sinful nature that people would rather assume the worst about people than believe the best about them. So, knowing that, we should live our lives – as much as possible – avoiding every appearance of evil.

It is also important for us to be friendly and to walk in forgiveness and peace with others. Again, in the King James Version of Proverbs 18:24, it says, “A man that hath friends must show himself friendly . . .” In other words, if you want to have friends, BE a friendly person. Cultivate a good

attitude. Be cheerful and kind. Some of us really have to work at this. Leaders have a tendency to be task oriented, and that's a good thing, because we want to accomplish things – BUT, in the Kingdom of God, our tasks involve people! We cannot afford to be so focused on what we do that we ignore people or become terse or rude with them. I Corinthians 13 says that “Love . . . is not rude.” So, no matter how we justify it, or no matter how busy we are, we have no excuse for rudeness.

Hebrews 12:14

Make every effort to live in _____ with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

Romans 12:18

If it is possible, as far as it _____ on _____, live at peace with everyone.

Reflection time

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your reputation within your church?

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your reputation with those outside the church?

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

On a scale of 1 to 10, how friendly are you?

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

What is a man of God – or a woman of God? How do we recognize a spiritually mature person? When Timothy stayed in Ephesus to help the church mature, he came face to face with men who wanted to be teachers and spiritual leaders in the church. In I Timothy 3, Paul advises Timothy about this subject.

I Timothy 3:1

Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone

sets his heart on being an overseer, he _____ a _____ task.

Paul is saying that those who desire a leadership position are desiring a very good and noble thing, but he goes on to advise Timothy to make sure that certain character qualities are present in the lives of those who are put in leadership positions. Many, if not all of those qualities are addressed in this Heart of a Leader.

A man or woman of God does not just suddenly “appear.” Our character is slowly cultivated by the Holy Spirit, it is usually a long process. While the standards set in I Timothy 3 and Titus are for elders or deacons, they are qualities that we ALL should cultivate — especially because our leadership involves people, and not merely tasks.

“Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,³ not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.⁴ He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.⁵ (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.⁷ He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.⁸ Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.⁹ They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.¹⁰ They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.¹¹ In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.¹² A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.¹³ Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.¹⁴ Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that,¹⁵ if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.” (I Timothy 3:2-15)

As you can see the qualities of leading your own family well and being an overcomer have already been addressed in this series. Let's go over the rest of these qualities and bring further definition to them.

Above reproach.

Being above reproach means being blameless. Having unquestionable integrity. We all need to try to live in such a way that no one can come and accuse us – let alone prove their accusations. This is for our own good, as well as the good of those whom we may be leading. It enables us to live free from the pressure of being tainted by scandal or accusation. In the event of false accusations, we need to live our lives in such a way that any false accusation will appear absurd or ridiculous.

Titus 1:7

Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be

_____ . . .

I Peter 2:12

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they _____ your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Temperate.

A temperate person has a clean perspective on life and a correct and fruitful spiritual lifestyle. A temperate person does not lose his physical, psychological and spiritual balance. He is stable, steady, thinks clearly, and doesn't lose his perspective under pressure. He maintains a proper perspective, even under worldly influences or false securities. This may sound like a tall order. But God is able to give us a sound mind (II Tim 1:7 KJV).

I Thessalonians 5:6-8

So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and _____ . . .⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

So many religious fads, fancies, and unstable ways are offered to leaders today. Leaders with a safe, sane, steady mind in all matters of life will not easily shake from God's path. They are cautious, wise, and careful. They have an understanding of

the present, not allowing themselves to get caught up in fantasy or vain imaginations or impractical schemes. The King James calls this sober judgment.

Respectable.

The Greek word for “respectable” should be understood in its broadest sense as going beyond being a refined, courteous, and polite person. It implies that a respectable person lives a well-ordered life. It is used to describe a well-ordered house (Matthew 12:44) and well-trimmed lamps (Matthew 25:7). Paul is saying here that a man who is respectable has a lifestyle that displays the teachings of the Bible in his speech, his dress, his home life, and his business. God is a God of order. A man or woman of God should be orderly and proper as well.

I Thessalonians 4:10-12

And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.¹¹

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you,¹² so that your daily life may _____ the _____ of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

Philippians 1:27

Whatever happens, _____ yourselves in a manner

_____ of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel

Hospitable.

The Greek word for “hospitality” literally means “a lover of strangers.” A hospitable person enjoys the company of others, both believers and unbelievers. It means more than simply taking people into your home. It means being fond of and kind to them while they are there. It means that your

heart is to help them and make them feel at ease when they are with you.

Leviticus 19:33-34

“When an alien lives with you in your land, do _____ him.³⁴ The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

Hebrews 13:1-2

Keep on loving each other as brothers. 2 Do not forget to _____ to strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without even knowing it.

I Pet 4:9

Offer _____ to one another without grumbling.

Not given to drunkenness.

Again, in the Greek, this phrase literally means “not staying near wine or strong drink.” In this passage, Paul is not talking about total abstinence. He uses a word “paoinos” that definitely refers to excess, meaning that he is talking about the kind of drinking that causes a person to lose control of his senses and be brought into bondage. However, an even higher law should guide us in this matter. We need to be careful not to do anything that causes another person to stumble.

Romans 14:21

It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do _____ else that will cause your brother to fall.²² So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves.

Not violent but gentle.

A person who desires leadership must NOT be a person who strikes out, either physically or verbally. The word “pugnacious” describes the opposite

of this character quality very well. A pugnacious person carries a chip on his or her shoulder and always seems ready for a good argument — perhaps even just a good “theological discussion.” A pugnacious person loses control of his or her senses and is controlled by anger, having a combative, belligerent nature. This can even move into physical violence. We cannot have leaders in the body of Christ with these types of characteristics. If you struggle in this area, there is GOOD NEWS! You can learn to be self-controlled. You can be healed of the wounds in your heart that may be causing you to over-react to other situations. You can learn positive ways to express whatever anger needs to be expressed. And you can become loving, kind, and forgiving. God has helped and used some who had an anger problem. Moses killed an Egyptian, threw down and broke the first set of commandment tablets, angrily struck God’s rock of provision instead of obeying God’s command. God taught him, and used him anyway! Also, Peter was rash in both word and deed. He cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant in the Garden of Gethsemane. Later on, we see Peter being used powerfully in the work of spreading the Gospel.

The opposite of “pugnacious” is “gentle.” Patient, kind, considerate, and forgiving. These are good character qualities to cultivate.

Not quarrelsome.

This is very near to the previous one, but is slightly different. This signifies someone who is not quarrelsome and contentious, but is peaceable – a person of peace. This involves being easily corrected – not defensive. A contentious person domineers others, but in reality, he is insecure and defensive, struggling against others. He isn’t happy unless he is in charge and is usually not flexible. Such a person struggles with jealousy and selfishness and is motivated by pride.

A peaceable personality seeks peace, not just in his or her own life, but in the lives of others – a peacemaker

Romans 12:16-18

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, _____ at _____ with _____.

Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the _____, for they will be called sons of God.

Not a lover of money.

This literally means, “free from the love of money.” The love of money is a bondage! It is truly the root of all evil! A person who is free from the love of money is not greedy, and will not bend to the temptation to acquire money by dishonest means. It also involves not being jealous or covetous of other people’s possessions.

Not a recent convert.

We must never, ever put a newly-converted Christian into a position of leadership. Beginners, or babies in the faith may have great character and wonderful ministry giftings, but they still lack the maturity in the faith that is needed. They also lack a time of proving. This does not refer to a young man’s age, but to his spiritual maturity. Some of those who are elevated to leadership too soon survive the mistake, some are ruined for life, and others never seem to find a balanced role in the ministry.

What does this teach us?

- That it’s a good and noble thing to desire to be a leader.
- That there are character qualities that must be evaluated and met before placing a person into a leadership position.
- That leadership always involves people, not merely tasks.

Application Time

Let's look at some comments made by leaders in the vernacular. How do they apply to you?

- He's a lovable guy!
- He's honest. I'd trust him with my bank account.
- He is a sensitive person.
- He radiates Christ.
- He's a good father.
- He loves people.
- He works hard.
- He keeps his word.
- He makes you feel comfortable.
- He doesn't let you down.
- He doesn't take advantage of you.
- He is thoughtful and cordial.
- He is fair.
- He is a good steward of time and talent.
- He doesn't lose his cool.
- He is consistent.
- He recognizes and respects authority.
- He hangs in there.
- He admits when he's wrong.
- He is teachable.
- He is honest.

Uncompromising Biblical Convictions

Lesson Twelve: Heart of a Leader

I Thessalonians 1:5

... because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we _____ among you for _____.

Fundamentally, our convictions are not only what we believe and why we believe it. Having convictions affects the way we live our lives, the way we present ourselves to others, and the way we discipline our inner self.

Conviction , n.

1. A convicting or being convicted. 2. The state or appearance of being convinced as to the truth of a belief (to speak with conviction). 3. A strong belief.

In the book of Daniel, we see that many Israelites had been taken into captivity. Out of these, a few had been chosen to serve in high offices. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were chosen to be administrators over the province of Babylon. These were young men of conviction.

One day, King Nebuchadnezzar made a huge gold image, set it up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon, and commanded everyone to

come to the dedication he had planned for this image. All the officials attended the dedication, including Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. During the festivities, the King's herald stood up and announced, "This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language: As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up." Then in the very next verse, he gets to the crux of the matter.

Daniel 3:5-6

"Whoever does not _____ down and _____ will immediately be thrown into a blazing _____."

"Bow or burn!" A very effective technique. For Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, it was an acceptable thing for them to attend a celebration to dedicate a statue. But when it came to the point where they were commanded to bow down and worship that statue, that was a line they could not cross. So when the time came, and the music played, everyone bowed down to worship. But there were three men left standing.

This made some of the other leaders angry. So they (the astrologers) went to the King and complained, "Not only do Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego pay no attention to you, O king. They

refuse to serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.” Of course, King Neb was furious! He commanded the three men to be brought before him and said to them, “Is it really true that you refuse to serve my gods or worship my gold image? I’ll tell you what, I’m going to give you guys another chance. When the music plays this time, you must bow down and worship the image. If you don’t – it’s into the furnace with you, and nobody will be able to rescue you!”

The three men said to the King, “We don’t need to defend ourselves about this. If you throw us into the furnace, our God is fully able to rescue us. But even if He doesn’t rescue us, we want you to know that we will NOT serve your gods or worship the gold image.”

King Neb became even more angry with them. It says, “his attitude toward them changed.” He went from having some mercy to showing no mercy whatsoever, and commanded the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than it had previously been. Then he commanded seven of the strongest soldiers in his army to bind the three men, hand and foot, and throw them into the furnace. The fire was so hot, that the seven soldiers died while they were throwing Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into it. Yet, when King Neb looked into the furnace to see what was happening, he saw four men instead of three. Suddenly, King Neb began to believe that the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was more than one of the gods he was accustomed to serving. This changed the King. It also changed the nation.

- **Their convictions caused them to choose this course of action.**
- **When you act, God is able to work!**
- **They were an influence upon their culture because they stood on their beliefs.**

When we think of the church and the need for leadership in the body of Christ, we realize that there are **four kinds of people in the church.**

- **Strong** ~ need to give and be re-strengthened (fill up & empty out). If they do not continue giving and re-filling, they will become stagnant and their growth will be hindered.
- **Stable** ~ need to be strengthened. Stability is great, it means they’re not wobbling or easily stumbled, but further strengthening is needed to help them maintain their stability.
- **Struggling** ~ (weak and/or babes) need to be strengthened, encouraged, and taught. They are tossed to and fro by every “wind of teaching” they may hear. They really don’t know what they believe or why they believe it, so their beliefs can’t really affect their lives.
- **Stragglers** ~ no vision, just hanging around (need vision & love). They like to be around other Christian people and they feel good about hearing the Word of God, but they really don’t grasp it for their own practical use.

Reflection time

Of the four types of people listed above, which category fits you best? (There is no wrong answer – you need an honest assessment). _____

How does your life reflect what you believe in your heart?

When faced with an uncomfortable or unpopular decision, how do you choose?

One thing we can be sure of is that we will go through hard times in our lives. Jesus even warned us in John 16:33, "In this world you will have trouble. . ." Hard times really help to reveal our character, and how strongly we stand upon what we believe. It's one thing to have a strongly held belief, but if you don't stand up for it, what good is it?

For instance, many people say they hate gossip and they know the word of God speaks strongly against gossip. But when they are around people who are gossiping, they not only do not speak against it, they go ahead and participate in it. They may feel bad about it later, but they have not stood for their belief – therefore, it is not a true conviction, is it? Truly, by their lack of conviction, they have silently given their approval to the very thing they say they hate.

People of God, we need to strengthen our backbone! We need to take a stand for what is right. Our society has been affected negatively, not just because there are evil forces at work to destroy what God has begun, but because people who know what's right fail to stand up against the evil.

Testing shows both our strengths and our weaknesses. However small the testings are, they give us an opportunity to put our beliefs into practice – OR – we can wimp out and continue in our old ways, or the popular way. It's hard for some people to go against the stream of popular thought because they are worried about what others may think of them. We need to be worried about what GOD thinks of us!

Luke 8:13

Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear

it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they _____.

We don't want to be the kind of person who falls away when we go through testing. We want to become mature and complete, and able to stand up under testing so that we can be strong enough to help other, younger, weaker Christians to stand up when they go through it.

*The only thing necessary for
evil to triumph is for good
men to do nothing.*

Edmund Burke (1729-1797)

James 1:3-4

. . . because you know that the
_____ of your faith
_____ perseverance.⁴

Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be _____ and complete, not lacking anything.

James 1:22-25

Do not _____
_____ 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 a man who looks at his face in a mirror²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.²⁵ But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and contin-

ues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it~he will be blessed in what he does.

According to James 1:22, we have two choices. Choice number one – deceive ourselves. Or choice number two – DO what the word of God says. Our convictions will be tried, tested, and also witnessed by others. What kind of a witness will they see in you?

Hebrews 12:27

The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken~that is, created things~so that what _____ be _____ may _____.

There will be times when we will feel so shaken because of the circumstances in our lives. But during those times of shaking, we will see what remains! That which cannot be shaken, remains! Isn't that beautiful? Whatever cannot be shaken is our true conviction. And no force on earth can take that away from us.

In The Message translation of the New Testament, there is an introduction we'd like to quote here:

The arrival of Jesus signaled the beginning of a new era. God entered history in a personal way, and made it unmistakably clear that He is on our side, doing everything possible to save us. It was all presented and worked out in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It was, and is, hard to believe – seemingly too good to be true.

But one by one, men and women did believe it, believed Jesus was God alive among them and for them. Soon they would realize that He also lived in them. To their great surprise they found themselves living in a world where God called all the shots – had the first word on everything; had the last word on everything. That meant that everything, quite literally everything, had to be re-centered, re-imagined, and re-thought.

Introduction to *The Message*

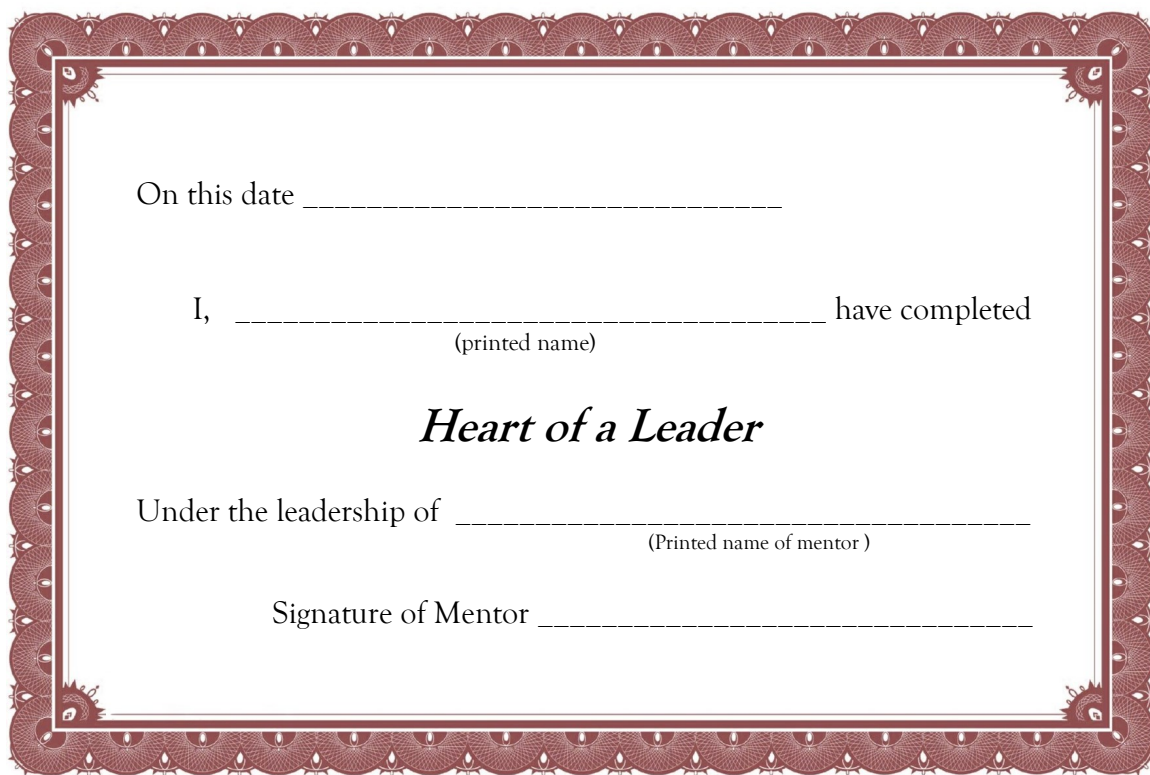
Applicaton Time

How is your backbone? How do you stand for your beliefs in the face of resistance or pressure?

What is your plan to develop strong convictions?

What is your plan to practice standing for your convictions?

When you have completed Heart of a Leader, please fill out the following form, have your mentor sign it, then turn it in to the church office so that you can receive proper credit for your achievement.



On this date _____

I, _____ have completed
(printed name)

Heart of a Leader

Under the leadership of _____
(Printed name of mentor)

Signature of Mentor _____