

FAITHFUL MEN · A LIBRARY OF CHRISTIAN CLASSICS

Advanced Christian Training

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(editor)

Faithful Men
PlymouthBrethren.org · KEE Philippine Missions

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“The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2)

How to Get the Most Out of This Course

Your study of *Advanced Christian Training* will be most profitable if you give heed to the following guidelines for personal preparation and class participation.

Personal Preparation before Class

Set aside adequate time each week for the completion of your homework. You should take the following steps for each lesson:

1. **Pray To God.** Ask Him to help you understand and apply His Word. Let your prayer be: “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law” (Psa. 119:18).
2. **Answer The Study Guide Questions.** *Before* reading the NOTES, complete all items of the STUDY GUIDE. If you have difficulty with a question, pass on to the next question and return later to the troublesome question.
3. **Read The Notes.** Underline important thoughts and mark anything that you do not understand or that you have questions about. Look up key Scripture references and read them from a modern translation, such as the New American Standard Bible.
4. **Memorize Personal Evangelism Verses.** Use the memory techniques suggested in Appendix A of “Intermediate Christian Training.” Begin learning new memory verses early in the week. At the end of the week, check yourself for word-perfectness of all memory verses.

Training Class Requirements

True training cannot exist without requirements or without a way to measure learning or effectiveness of participation. Indeed, training without standards is like a game without rules. If the following standards are observed, then the training in the ACT class will be effective and meaningful.

1. **Attendance.** The lessons are progressive and cumulative, so plan to attend the full 13 sessions in order to obtain maximum benefit from the training. Excessive absences (three or more) will leave you inadequately prepared for the next training class. Whenever you can, let your leader know in advance about your absence.
2. **Homework.** Each week turn in your homework to your group leader. Missed homework should be turned in the first meeting following an absence. Successful completion of ACT requires that all missed homework be completed well in advance of the final lesson.
3. **Promptness.** Tardiness displays a contempt for the value of others' time. Prompt attendance at meetings will allow the sessions to begin and finish on time.
4. **Memory Work.** You are required to memorize one new verse per week from the Personal Evangelism Packet (PEP) which you began in ICT. Successful completion of ACT requires that all PEP verses be quoted word-perfect.
5. **Evangelism Training.** You are required to attend two evangelism outings (or equivalent) during the 13-week cycle. If personal circumstances prohibit attendance at planned outings, it is your responsibility to request an alternate means of fulfilling this requirement.

6. **Evaluation And Completion Of Training.** Your progress will be evaluated by the group leader(s). However, beyond this, you should seek the “AUG” degree—Approved Unto God. Remember that training makes you more responsible before God. Unto whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48). The ultimate test of the training is personal application of God’s truth. The proof is in your changed life. If you have made no adjustments after looking into the “mirror” of the Word, then the training has failed (James 1).
7. **Record Of Completion.** The Record of Completion, when fully filled in and signed by the group leader, is your graduation record. Upon your leader’s recommendation, you are eligible to enroll in the Discipleship Training Session (DTS).

Lesson 1: Search The Scriptures

Diligent study of the Word of God is His will for every believer (Josh. 1:8; Deut. 6:6-9). The Lord Jesus told the Pharisees that the Scriptures were the key to eternal life. Yet the Pharisees, who prided themselves in their knowledge of the Scriptures, failed to recognize their Messiah and to know the way to God. A serious deficiency existed in their study. Many professing believers read the Scriptures only sporadically, in times of crisis, or as a mere routine. The Word is not reflected in their lives. They do not dig for divine truth as though it were hidden treasure (Prov. 2:1-5). They do not delight in God's Word nor do they meditate therein day and night (Psa. 1:2). They do not "search the Scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11). As a result they are spiritually poor.

Tragically, the typical believer today depends solely upon Sunday sermons for his Scriptural knowledge. There is a lack of commitment to serious study of the Scriptures. Some believers are dedicated to Christ but do not know how to study the Bible effectively. This lesson is for those who are committed to the Lord Jesus Christ and to the serious study of "the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Pet. 1:23). We will consider the necessary areas of *preparation, observation, interpretation and application*.

Preparation

1. **Physical Requirements.** Be rested and fresh. Morning study is better from this standpoint. Get to bed early enough to get the rest you need. Have all study helps readily at hand, including a notebook, dictionary, and concordance. Use a version of the Scriptures that you can understand.
2. **Spiritual Requirements.** The Bible involves understanding by spiritual as well as mental means. The natural mind cannot understand the teachings of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:14). God's Word is veiled from many eyes (2 Cor. 3:13-15). Even the most devout believer should pray, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law" (Psa. 119:18). Understanding is given to the obedient heart (John 7:17). We must prepare our hearts and minds before coming to the Word. Then the Scripture will come to us in living power. Remind yourself of these things:
 - a. Pray and ask God to teach you (Psa. 119:33, 73).
 - b. Confess all known sin (Psa. 119:133).
 - c. Have a clear conscience before God (Acts 24:16).
 - d. Reconcile with others where possible (Matt. 5:24).
 - e. Be humble in coming to the Word (Matt. 11:25).
 - f. Desire to do the will of God (John 7:17; Jas. 1:21-25).
 - g. Come believing it is the very Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16).

Observation (What does it say?)

We must learn to examine closely what we read. Without careful reading we are unprepared to make any conclusion about what a verse means or how it pertains to personal life. Avoid skimming over material. Take time. Discipline your mind. Work hard in studying the text. This requires much practice.

1. General Procedure.

- a. Concentrate when you read! Resist mind-wandering.
- b. Make notes on thoughts and questions. Underline important words.
- c. Read sentences and phrases rather than one word at a time.

2. Details To Observe.

- a. Key words often are apparent from repetitions.
- b. Promises, warnings, examples should be identified.
- c. Comparisons or illustrations explain things in terms of the familiar.
- d. Is there a list or series of things? Is there evidence of one thing leading to the next?
- e. What questions were asked?
- f. What emphatic words were used ("truly," "behold")?
- g. When you look at an incident or story, try to relive it personally by putting yourself into it as one of the characters. Who are the characters? Where is this taking place? How does the story begin and end? What is the response of each character? What attitudes are expressed or evidenced? Are the characters receptive or hostile?
- h. Notice the verbs. Do they state a completed action, a present occurrence, or something in the future?
- i. Pay attention to connective words. Connectives are important. AND indicates continuation of an idea. BUT shows a contrast between two ideas. FOR gives us a reason or explanation for a statement. BECAUSE indicates the cause of something. THEN, THEREFORE, WHEREFORE bring us to a conclusion. THAT shows the purpose in view.

IF is an important conditional word. Note any conditions stated or implied.

Interpretation (What does it mean?)

To understand an author we must seek to grasp the meaning as he conveyed it under the direction of the Spirit of God. This differs from application to our own lives, a separate step which occurs later.

The material you have gathered from observation becomes the basis for interpretation. It is important to ask yourself many questions in order to think things through. Why is this in the Bible? Is there any symbolic meaning to certain actions or words? Is the statement meant to be taken literally or is it a figure of speech? What is the context? (What went before this section and what came after?) The answers to these questions are vital to the interpretive process.

Three simple principles govern general procedure.

- 1. NOTHING BUT THE WORD is finally authoritative.
- 2. ALL THE WORD gives balance and correctness.
- 3. INTERPRETING BY THE WORD is the most reliable method. Think deeply. Have you prayed and meditated about this? Do you have a bias in any way that might have influenced your thinking? Have you consulted helps or other sources as a basis for comparing your ideas with others? Have you adequately studied cross-references to the same subject? Have you

considered differing aspects of the same word or doctrine, remembering that some Scriptural doctrines may seem to conflict with others? Resolve these by study.

Application (How can I apply it to my life?)

Application is the fruit of genuine Bible study. What will you do about what you have read? Even great truths about God should have the effect of changing our lives. Otherwise, it becomes an intellectual game of accumulating knowledge and exchanging information. The method of the Lord Jesus was *teach and do*, not just *teach*. Try to identify a single thought which you will seek to apply, rather than several thoughts about which you do nothing. Use the question method to obtain applications.

Ask yourself: What is the importance of this truth to my daily living? Is this a principle working in my life? What do I specifically plan to do about it? Why have I not acted before? Who will verify that I take action and pray with me until it happens? Am I sincere?

The following additional questions help define areas of personal application.

1. **Is There A Promise To Claim?** The assurance of the faithfulness of God's promises rests upon His integrity. "God is not a man that He should lie" (Num. 23:19). Believers have long made a practice of claiming God's promises by faith (2 Pet. 1:4). Make sure you have noted any conditions. Answered prayer, for example, is highly conditional (Jas. 1:5-7; 1 John 3:22; 5:4; Psa. 66:18). Frequently we are hindered because we think some things are too hard for God (Jer. 32:27). Endorse God's checks on the Bank of Heaven. Make them yours!
2. **Is There An Example To Follow?** The lives of the heroes of the Bible provide many positive examples. The lives of godly men and women are intended to be models for us (Heb. 13:7). Imitate them!
3. **Is There A Command To Obey?** "If ye love me, keep my commandments," said the Savior (John 14:15). Obedience to Christ is evidence that we are true believers (1 John 2: 3-4). Obedience is not to be confused with "legalism," which is adding to God's requirements for salvation or Christian living. The Word should speak to us constantly in areas where we may now be in disobedience. Do as the King commands!
4. **Is There A Sin To Forsake Or A Warning To Heed?** We may need to turn from something that is hindering us, to cease to do something. It may be an attitude such as bitterness or envy or an unresolved grievance. This will grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). We may be worrying instead of trusting. Our priorities in life may be wrong. Our devotional life may be neglected. We may be seeking security on earth instead of laying up treasure in heaven. Change when you are warned!
5. **Is There An Encouragement Given?** Virtually every believer has experienced discouragement. This is one of the Devil's principal tools of attack. Those who are introspective (looking within too much) by temperament are very prone to this. God limits our trials or temptations (1 Cor. 10:13). He gives us adequate resources in every situation. The believer can encourage others with the same refreshment he receives from God (2 Cor. 1:3-5). Rise up from discouragement and doubt!
6. **Is There Counsel To Take?** We must learn not to plan without first consulting the Lord (Jas. 4:13-16). A very clear statement from Scripture can help us at a crucial time. Most of the will of God can be found within the pages of Scripture; if not directly, then in principle. Feeling-oriented believers miss out on God's direction through the Scripture because they

confuse their subjective feelings with the Word of God. Ask and expect God to show you through the Word.

7. **Is There A Character Trait To Be Noted?** What is to be learned about God Himself? Note every character trait of the Lord Jesus, considering that we are to be conformed to His likeness (Rom. 8:29). Learn from the lives of God's great men, such as Abraham, Daniel, and Paul. What does God want to see developed in your life?

Conclusion

Let us search more diligently then into this inexhaustible treasure of the Holy Scripture. In his farewell to the Ephesian elders, Paul said: "I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). As the precepts of God's Word work in our lives we also will be built up.

Search The Scriptures

The purpose of this exercise is to practice the principles of Bible study outlined in the NOTES. Carefully read the NOTES and refer to them often as you take the following steps to analyze James 1:21-27.

1. *Preparation.* Review the checklist in the NOTES under SPIRITUAL REQUIREMENTS.
2. *Observation (What does the passage say?)* Read James 1:21-27 several times until you are thoroughly familiar with its contents. Then using the guidelines in the NOTES, look for details in the passage and record your findings below under OBSERVATIONS. (Several sample observations are shown for v. 21.) Watch for details such as key words, contrasts, comparisons, illustrations, key connectives, verbs, repetition or progression of ideas, etc. Take plenty of time for this step and list as many observations as you can. Use additional paper if necessary.

(The sample observations and questions for v. 21 printed in the original manual are not in the source used for this edition.)

Verse	Observations	Questions
v. 21		
v. 22		
v. 23		
v. 24		
v. 25		
v. 26		
v. 27		

3. Interpretation (What does the passage mean?)

- Bombard the passage with questions to stimulate your meditation. Use questions like these: What is the meaning of ... ? What is the relationship between ... and ... ? What is the significance of ... ? Why does James say. . . ? Record your questions in the column labeled QUESTIONS. (Some sample questions are listed for v. 21.)
- Seek the exact meaning of the passage. Use a dictionary to define key words. Try to answer several of your *more important* questions from the context and cross-references. Use additional paper if necessary.
- Summarize in one or two sentences your insights into the *meaning* of each of the following groups of verses.
- 21
- 22
- vv. 23-24
- v. 25
- vv. 26-27

4. Application (How will I apply the passage?)

- What is the importance of this passage to your life?
- How is its teaching presently working or not working in your life?
- How will you apply its teaching to your life? Be specific.

Lesson 2: Understanding The Word

The Psalmist pleaded with God, “Give me understanding” (Psa. 119:34, 125, 169). The danger exists of merely reading words without understanding. The Lord Jesus said, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). The Scriptures are the most profound writings in the world. They demand our fullest attention and effort. The life-changing potential in the spiritual intake of them is beyond our calculation. Therefore, we must not be careless in our study.

The Holy Spirit is the great teacher of the Word (1 John 2:27). That is why the Psalmist pleaded for God to open his eyes (Psa. 119:18). Since understanding is by the Spirit, many well meaning believers conclude that the process of reason or discrimination is unspiritual. Leaders who are cultic, hyper-emotional, or manipulative have urged believers to by-pass the mind entirely and rely upon subjective notions of the Spirit’s leading. This surely is one of the most dangerous roads to take. God has given us minds to use, not ignore. We are to love the Lord with our minds (Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). We are to prepare our minds (1 Pet. 1:13). God desires to put His laws into our minds (Heb. 8:10). No one should quote Psalm 81:10, “Open your mouth and I will fill it,” to mean that God will instruct us apart from study or effort. The undisciplined mind must be trained to study. We must improve our reading habits, look up word meanings, pay attention to details, and see relationships. Intensive study must replace casual reading of the Bible if we are going to understand the Word.

Observation

Study of the Scripture should be both telescopic and microscopic, including the large view and the smallest part. Analysis should be:

1. By Books. Review the whole book before you analyze the parts. Relating parts to the whole will, among other things, prevent the insertion of ideas unrelated to the context. Take a bird’s eye look for preliminary impressions.
 - a. Read the book through more than once, seeking the big picture.
 - b. Write down the major ideas as you read through.
 - c. Determine the central truth or theme.
 - d. Identify a key verse which expresses the main idea.
 - e. Look for the lesser or supportive ideas.
2. By Chapters. If the chapter does not complete a unit of thought, then take the verses that form a major passage. There are no chapters or paragraphs in the original writings.
 - a. Relate the passage to both the previous and following one.
 - b. Determine the major ideas.
 - c. Divide the passage into units of thought or paragraphs.
 - d. Relate these units to the major idea in the section.
 - e. Put a short title or heading above the chapter or section.
3. By Sentences. Verses often represent only a portion of a sentence. Consider the whole, then break it down into parts according to the rules of grammar.

- a. How does each sentence relate to the unit of thought in the chapter?
- b. Observe the parts of speech in order to truly understand what is written.
1. What is the main subject? (That about which something is said)
2. What is the main object? (That toward which the verb action is directed)
3. What is the main verb? (That which expresses the action or mode of being)

Example: "The *Lord* (subject) *loves* (verb) a cheerful *giver*" (object).

Does the verb express completed action, continuation now, or something for the future?

Example: We might write 2 Corinthians 1:10 to express the actions this way: "He *has delivered* (past action) us, is *delivering* (present action) us, and *will deliver* (future action) us," describing the Lord's great work on our behalf.

4. By Subjects. Become familiar with major Bible doctrinal topics and recognize when one of them is touched in a verse. One can rarely understand a doctrine from one verse. In fact, isolating a statement from the remainder of what the Bible says upon a subject is almost certain to lead to error. Topical study of the Bible lays a proper foundation for Scriptural knowledge and life. It enables one to master a subject relatively quickly. Do not exclusively study in this manner. When studying by subjects these suggestions may help.
- a. Think of similar words or ideas to check in a concordance.
- b. Compare with other verses using key words.
- c. Be sure you have considered the idea from all angles.
- d. Do not let reference sources on topics displace personal study.
- e. Do not major on one or two subjects.

Interpretation

Remember that to interpret is to explain the meaning of something in understandable terms. What is God saying through the pen of the writer? The key to this step is the use of questions, especially *what* and *why*. If you are to bring to proper light, in clear terms, this communication from the Lord then you must challenge your understanding of the text by *questioning yourself*.

1. What is the meaning of this word?
 - a. Is your understanding of it the same as the Biblical meaning?
 - b. On important words can you think of an exact synonym?
 - c. Remember that there are three approaches to word meaning: The *ordinary* use (how is it defined in a dictionary?); the *contextual* use (how is it used?); the *comparative* use (how is it used elsewhere in Scripture?).
2. Why is this statement or action included in Scripture?
 - a. What does it add to our understanding?
 - b. Is anything implied without being expressed?
3. What is the relationship of this statement to the context?
 - a. What is the cause and effect?

- b. What is the progression of thought?
- c. What is the explanation within the flow itself?
- 4. Have you visualized the situation in your mind?
 - a. What is the situation here?
 - b. What are the people like?
- 5. Have you tried to screen out any bias on your part?
 - a. Are you importing into the verse something that is not there?
 - b. Have you been fair to the spirit as well as the letter?
 - c. Are you eliminating something applicable without justification?
 - d. Are you prayerfully listening to God, open to revising your thinking?

Application

There are three major areas of personal application: yourself, your relationship to others, and God.

1. Your Personal Life. God is interested in changing the character of believers, molding them into the likeness of His dear Son.
 - a. He may want to purify us. This may be by affliction (1 Pet. 1:7; Zech. 13:9). This may be by self-judgment (Jas. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:22).
 - b. He may want to encourage us (Rom. 15:4). Dark hours can be brightened by God's consolation and the hope set before us.
 - c. He may want to guide or counsel us (Psa. 119:105). There are many pitfalls around us and we need a wisdom that can come only from Him (Jas. 1:5).
2. Your Relationship To Others. As the poet said, no man lives as an island unto himself. God has made us to live in social relationships. We are to glorify God in this area.
 - a. He may want to minister through us. We can sustain others with the right word (Isa. 50:4). There is always opportunity to give even a cup of cold water in His name (Matt. 10:42).
 - b. He may want us to humble ourselves before others (1 Pet. 5:5-6). God is opposed to the proud and gracious to the humble.
 - c. He may want us to speak God's message to others (Tit. 2:15). Whatever form it may take, we are called in this to represent Him.
3. Our Thoughts About God. So often these are too small to do justice to His glory. "The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods" (Psa. 95:3). We must grow in our knowledge of Him.
 - a. You may need to know what He is like. He has summoned men everywhere to lift up their eyes to His greatness (Isa. 40:25-26). Mark carefully anything He has been pleased to tell us about Himself. That is all we can know about Him and it is worth knowing.
 - b. You may need to know His ways. He lamented those who did not know them and suffered terribly as a result (Psa. 95:10). His ways are not our ways (Isa. 55:8-9). We need to find out where they are different and act accordingly.

- c. You may need to see His face by faith. This speaks of the presence of the Lord. When His face is hidden from us we are troubled (Psa. 27:9; 69:17). When His face shines upon us we are blessed (Psa. 119:135).

Be determined to stay with your study until you allow God's Spirit to speak to your soul. In what way have you been challenged? All Scripture is profitable "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). Let it work that way in you!

Understanding The Word

In this exercise you will practice the principles of Bible study outlined in the NOTES of Lessons 1 and 2. Read the NOTES carefully and then apply the following steps in a study of Luke 12:22-31.

1. *Preparation.* Review the checklist under SPIRITUAL REQUIREMENTS in the NOTES of LESSON 1.
2. *Observation (What does the passage say?)* Read Luke 12:22-31 several times to acquaint yourself with the passage. Then read the passage several more times, watching for important details. Look for key words, important connective words, contrasts, comparisons, illustrations, repetition and progression of ideas, verbs, and the use of questions or emphatic statements. Record your findings below in the column labeled OBSERVATIONS. Spend plenty of time observing the passage. List as many observations as you can, using additional paper if needed.

Verse	Observations	Questions
v. 22		
v. 23		
v. 24		
v. 25		
v. 26		
v. 27		
v. 28		
v. 29		
v. 30		
v. 31		

3. Interpretation (What does the passage mean?)

- Flood the passage with questions to help you think about its meaning. Try questions of the following form: Why does Jesus say. . . ? What is the meaning of ... ? What is the relationship between . . . and . . . ? What is the implication of ... ? Record as many important questions as you can in the column labeled QUESTIONS. If necessary use additional paper.
- Seek the exact meaning of each verse. On a separate sheet of paper, define important words and answer several of your most important questions using the context and cross-references.
- Write two or three sentences which summarize your insights into the meaning of each of the following groups of verses.

vv. 22-23

v. 24

vv. 25-26

vv. 27-28

vv. 29-31

4. Application (How will I apply the passage?)

- a. What is the importance of this passage to your life?
- b. How is this teaching of Jesus working (or not working) in your daily life?
- c. How will you apply this passage to your life? Be specific.

Lesson 3: Life More Abundant

“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:38 NASB). Thus the Lord Jesus described the life of His people. It is the life that only God gives and it is abundant (John 10:10b). This life is energized by the indwelling presence of the Spirit of Christ which is the portion of all who belong to Him (Rom. 8:9). This life carries with it the blessings of peace (John 14:27), rest (Matt. 11:28), spiritual power (Acts 1:8), and deliverance from sin as master (Rom. 6:14). God promises such a life to all who are believers, to all who have His life in them. God desires this to be the normal, not the exceptional, life of His people.

However, not everyone who professes to believe in Christ enters into the fullness of God’s provision. Some remain in the immaturity of spiritual infancy (1 Cor. 3:1). For example, the church at Corinth was troubled by quarrels (1 Cor. 1:11), immorality (5:1, 11), lack of love (ch. 13), church disorder (ch. 14), and other problems. The pages of both Testaments frequently refer to saints who were not experiencing victory. Today many believers go through cycles of sin and repentance. They long for a holy life but do not enter into it. They may engage in much “spiritual” activity but show little fruit. They may make strong resolutions that are only followed by failure. They may feel emptiness, lack of peace and joy, and times of spiritual lows and darkness. Their defeat and lack of power brings them great pain. Often believers sincerely desire spiritual blessing and an overcoming life. They seek the solution to their lack of victory in various teachings and spiritual systems. Many of these systems are at variance with one another and with the Scripture itself.

What is the way of victory? Is it some secret formula known only to the select few? Why is the high level of spiritual life, presented in the promises of our Lord, not the normal experience of most believers today? What is needed to enjoy the abundant life?

The Provision

God has provided the means of spiritual life from the time when we were first born again. Before the new birth we could not live for God. What changes took place when we came into this new relationship with Him? Let us ask some questions and provide some answers.

1. What Is Man? What kind of being is he? He is spirit, soul, and body, a tri-unity of being (1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12). The human *spirit* is the means of contact with God. The *soul* is the means of self-awareness. It may also be described as personality or personhood, made up of mind (thinking), emotions (feelings), and will (choosing). The *body* is the means of contact with the world. Man originally was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26). This image was marred or spoiled by sin (Gen. 3). This is what is wrong with man and what keeps him from living in a right way.
2. What Is The New Creation? When born again, man receives eternal life. This life is not just one of infinite duration but is also of infinite quality. It is participation in the life of God. His “seed” enters our being (1 John 3:9). Man becomes a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). The original personality (soul) is not blotted out but remains (as the body) and begins to undergo spiritual renewal. That renewal is by the process of growth empowered by God as man responds to Him. There is no instant and total change of personhood at the new birth. The “inner man” is renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16). A believer is “renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him” (Col. 3:10 NASB). The

climax of this transformation will come when all believers meet their Savior and receive glorious new bodies (Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 15:44). We will not be, in daily life, without flaw within and without until we meet the Lord (1 Thess. 5:23).

3. What Are The *Old Man* And The *Newman*? These expressions contrast our former (unsaved) and our present (saved) standing before God. The “old man” or “old self” is all that we were “in Adam,” our original natural parent (Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9). The “new man” or “new self” is all that we now are “in Christ,” as born again believers (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). The diagram below illustrates what happened when we entered our new family.

Partaking of his life.	Partaking of eternal life “in Christ.”
All unbelievers are:	All believers are:
1. Dead in sins (Eph. 2:1)	1. Alive unto God (Rom. 6:11)
2. Children of Satan (1 John 3:10)	2. Children of God (1 John 3:10)
3. Under condemnation (John 3:18)	3. Declared righteous, perfect in God's sight (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 10:14)
4. Slaves of sin (Rom. 6:17)	4. Freed from sin's power (Rom. 6:18) but not from its presence

It is important to think of ourselves as God thinks of us, that is, in a new standing before Him. This rests solely upon the work of Christ. It has nothing to do with personal righteousness or labors of service. Whether weak or strong, every child of God is made acceptable to God only in Christ (Heb. 10:10, 14). We are washed and made clean forever by the blood of the Lamb (1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5). Our consciences are freed to serve God (Heb. 9:14; 10:2). The book of Ephesians opens with the statement that God has “blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (1:3 NASB). We are invited to enjoy what God has done for us already, not to set out and attain it for ourselves. In Christ all believers are holy, blameless, and irreproachable (Col. 1:22). Jesus Christ and His finished work are the only foundation of God's provision for abundant life (1 Cor. 3:11). True spirituality must begin with the recognition of this foundation. Acceptance before God is in His beloved Son (Eph. 1:6), not by what we do. Remember that your standing before God is forever grounded upon Christ's work, NOT your own. Daily Christian living should be *in accord with* this standing, but it is *not a part of* that standing.

The Pathway

We have shown what God has done to lay the foundation for the abundant life through His Son's work. Yet this life is not the experience of all. Why not? Because man's active and continuing response is required in walking the path of spiritual life. What does God want His children to do? Consider the following elements.

1. Thirst. It is important that we deeply desire to experience a life of close fellowship with God. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matt. 5:6 NASB). The Psalmist cried out, “I shall seek Thee earnestly; My soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh yearns for Thee” (Psa. 63:1 NASB). “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God” (Psa. 42:1 NASB). Those who are content with shallow or ordinary spiritual lives are not seekers, thirsters, or yearners. Therefore, they never know an ever-deepening fellowship with the Eternal One. When close fellowship with the Lord is not important to us, God lets us live without it. He rewards those who are more concerned about the Giver than about His gifts.

2. Recognize. Victory also requires spiritual awareness. Eternal life is in a Person (1 John 5:12). Therefore, abundant life is an interrelationship with that Person, the Lord Himself. God has brought believers into a union with Christ (Rom. 6:5). We are in Christ (Rom. 16:7; 1 Cor. 1:30). Christ also is in us (Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27). When we live in conscious, daily awareness of this, we sense that we are not left to struggle with merely human resources. The same Lord is in us now who lived a supernatural life when He was upon earth. He who defeated Satan, sin, and the world system by His life, death, and resurrection is linked with our lives here and now. The life of Jesus is intended to be revealed in our bodies (2 Cor. 4:10). We need daily to sense this resident power of the Spirit of Christ available within for an overcoming life.
3. Appropriate. This simply means to take possession, to claim for our benefit. What should we claim? We should claim His strength and sufficiency in our inner being to live unto His glory (Eph. 3:16). We should draw nourishment day by day from His life just as branches draw from the vine (John 15:4). This is not begging, "Lord, please help me." This is saying, "Lord, I take by faith what you have given to enable a life that overcomes all of my opposition." The book of Joshua illustrates this point. God gave the people of Israel the land of Canaan, well called "The Promised Land" (1:2-4). They were commanded to possess this land, being promised His support in their battles against enemies (1:5-6). There were conditions of success, like courage and obedience to God (1:7). Some, such as Caleb, drove out the foes and possessed the land (14:12-14). Others had to be urged to do so when they lagged behind (13:1). Joshua rebuked them for their failure (18:3). Thus, it may be seen that although God has given us good things to enjoy we will not have them unless we take possession by faith. C. A. Coates has written, "It is appropriation that tests us. How often we stop at admiration." If we spiritually understand what God has provided and then understand the need to claim this for victory, then we will daily lay hold of His life and power within. We may not immediately receive all we expect or need. Yet by faith we must brush aside inner doubts and draw from the Fountain that is within.
4. Consecrate. This means to present to God for His holy purposes. The highest call we can receive is "to present our bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God" (Romans 12:1 NASB). The hymn writer stated it well, "Take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to Thee." What is it that we are to consecrate to God? The verse says "our bodies" which are the vessels in which we live. Inside these, however, are our souls and spirits which also need to be consecrated to God. What is not to be presented to God is that which He has already condemned, the old self or old man. Its place is crucifixion with Christ. What is to be yielded to God is the new self, created in the image of God. "Present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God" (Rom. 6:13 NASB). New lives are given to us to glorify God by being fully available to His purposes. When we daily present them to God for His full control, we make way for the unhindered operation of the Spirit of Christ within conforming us to His image. They become holy things used by a holy God. Yielding may come after deep soul-searching, brought about by the powerful work of the Spirit using some message from God's Word. Surrender may also be more gradual. The realization of temperamental weaknesses and lack of love for Christ may convince us that we are in the quicksand of defeated and powerless living. Deficiency of consecration (that is, lack of full devotedness to Christ) is possibly the greatest hindrance to dynamic spiritual lives. The life of Jesus will flow

through vessels which are unconditionally yielded to be channels of His gracious work day by day.

5. Walk. This means, in Scripture, the way we live and act as we go about our daily lives. We are not taken immediately to heaven when saved but left to live here in a hostile and sinful world. Christ does not take us out of this world but prays that we may be kept from evil while in the world (John 17:15). We have temptation from the world, the flesh, and the devil. There are many opportunities to get off the right path. Sometimes even devout believers have strayed from what is right. This does not mean lawlessness or practicing sin, which is not the path of a child of God (1 John 3:4, 8-9). It does recognize that Abraham, David, Peter, and countless others have needed to be corrected from a wrong way. The Word of God exhorts believers to walk according to the Spirit, that is, according to His direction (Gal. 5:16). If we live by the Spirit, in His enablement, then we will act according to His direction (Gal. 5:25). This will be in a manner worthy of God (1 Thess. 2:12), in love (Eph. 5:2), in truth (2 John 4) and by faith rather than by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). It should be clear from this that we do not arrive at perfect spirituality in one giant step. We are to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18). We need to “grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15 NASB). There are often major turning points in life, sometimes called crises, even beyond the initial point of being born again. These can have a major, even revolutionary, effect. Yet conformity to Christ in character is a matter of walking and growing, not leaping to overnight maturity. Do not despair when you fail. Get up and begin again. Do not compare yourself to others whom you think are more spiritual. God has not called you to such comparisons. Start each day afresh under the direction of God’s Spirit, in harmony with the Word of God.

The Preventatives

Since spiritual abundance and victory seem so often to be lacking, there must be reasons. Some people seem to pray and talk as though God were withholding something necessary to gain victory. For this reason they keep begging God to give them something more to succeed, or to take away something that causes a problem. Yet God has already granted to all His children “everything pertaining to life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3 NASB). He has blessed us with “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3 NASB). God is not holding out on us. The problem rests with us, not with Him. Here are some major possibilities.

1. You May Not Be Saved. Perhaps you had a childhood or adult experience when you “asked Jesus into your heart.” You may have been baptized and come into the local church and participated in the Lord’s Supper. Your parents and friends may have been convinced and told you often that you were saved. None of these things is a proof of true regeneration. If you said you knew Jesus and practiced disobedience to His Word, then the Bible says you were a liar (1 John 2:4). If you have not been His follower before, then become one now by turning your life over to Him completely. Trust His finished work on the cross to make you acceptable to God. Do it now without argument.
2. You May Not Be Motivated. Maybe you have been satisfied with a low level of spiritual living. Christ has been nothing more to you than a ticket to heaven and an escape from hell. Perhaps you have been taken up too much with material things (Gen. 13:10), concerned more about treasures on earth than in heaven (Matt. 6:19-20). You have been lacking a deep appreciation for Christ and what He has done for you (2 Cor. 5:14-15; John 21:15-17). If true, you need to repent and have a great love for Jesus (Rev. 2:3-5). You need to

do it now, with a disgust for the lukewarmness of your soul and the lack of profit to God in your life.

3. You May Not Be Instructed. Perhaps before these lessons you have never had God's great provision for an abundant life explained to you. If this is so, when this lesson and the next two are completed, you ought to be done with this excuse. Your responsibility will then be to act upon what you have learned.
4. You May Be Discouraged By Past Failures. You may say, "I have tried all this before and it has done no good. I always fail." Has God failed? Are His promises untrue? Are you some major exception to the power and sufficiency of God in the weakest of human vessels? Then put past failures aside and do not let Satan keep you from a fresh start at laying hold of God's truth and Christ's life within you. Stop feeling sorry for yourself and begin anew with your life daily committed to letting the Spirit of Jesus Christ control you in a growing, spiritual experience.

The Promises

Let us review once more the truths of this lesson. Although sin has marred the image of God in you, the Lord has made you a new creation and begun a process of spiritual renewal in you. If you are truly born again, you are now out of Adam's family and in God's family. You have a perfect standing before God, being accepted because you are "in Christ" not because you are busy in Christian service. If you are motivated to live for Christ because you appreciate His great sacrificial love, then you can truly thirst for God's best for your life. Recognize the resident, supernatural power within you to empower Christ-like life and character. Claim His sufficiency and strength for all you need to be and do. Commit yourself without reservation each day to the full control of the Spirit of Christ. Then walk in the knowledge that your maturity will be a matter of gradual growth in character and productive ministry.

Here are some things you can expect:

1. Deeper fellowship with God (1 John 1:3) with a greater appreciation for the loveliness of Christ (Eph. 1:17).
2. Daily victory over besetting sins (Rom. 6:14). This is not sinless perfection in every detail but a life that is consistently overcoming weakness and temptation. Obedience to God will not be considered a chore.
3. The fruit of the Spirit will become more apparent to others. We are not to be occupied with our own virtues, but others will see Christ in us in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).
4. Spiritual power in service for God will become more evident (1 Thess. 1:5).
5. There will be a deepening of prayer life as you pray under the direction of the Spirit (Jude 20).
6. The Word will begin to live richly within your life, rather than be a required reading (Col. 3:16).

This is the life the Lord Jesus promised to believers. "Out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water."¹ It is life in the Spirit, abundant life, for all of His people, not just a few.

Life More Abundant

1. What kind of life does God promise each Christian (John 10:10b; 1 John 2:25)? When does he receive this life (John 5:24)?
2. What is the relationship between the life God promises and the Person of Jesus Christ?

John 10:10b

John 11:25

Colossians 3:4

1 John 5:11-12

1 John 5:20

How would you describe the quality of the life of Jesus Christ (Matthew 3:17; John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 8:29; 16:33; Romans 15:3; Hebrews 2:14; 4:15b)?

3. Based on your answers so far, define the “abundant Christian life.”

Would you say that this is God’s norm for every believer? Explain.

4. What are some characteristics of the abundant Christian life?

John 7:38

John 15:16

1 Corinthians 10:13

Galatians 5:22-23

1 John 2:6

1 John 5:4

5. Read Romans 5:12-21. Make a comparison between Adam and Christ. What does a man receive through each?

“Through Adam”

“Through Christ”

6. What was our standing or position with God before salvation (Ephesians 2:1; 4:18)? What is our position with God as believers (Ephesians 2:4-6; Colossians 3:1-3)? How is a person brought into this standing with God (1 Corinthians 1:30)?

7. What does it mean to be “in Christ”?

What are some of the blessings or benefits of being “in Christ”?

Romans 8:1

2 Corinthians 5:17

Ephesians 1:3

Colossians 2:10

8. Who lives within the believer (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:27)?

How is your *union with Christ* (you in Christ and Christ in you) the only basis for a life of victory and abundance?

9. What are some reasons that a person might not experience an abundant Christian life?

1 John 5:12

Matthew 5:6

Hebrews 11:6

10. Examine your life. Are you experiencing the life that God intends? What hinders you?

How do the truths of this lesson increase your appreciation for the Lord and for your relationship with Him?

In view of your union with Christ, write a paragraph describing how you should now live.

Lesson 4: Crucified With Christ

The book of Romans is the great exposition of the gospel as the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). This salvation is not limited to delivering us from the *penalty* of sin, which is eternal death (Rom. 6:23). God also frees us from the *power* of sin so that we might walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4, 22). The death of Christ accomplished both deliverances. He died for our sins as our *substitute* (Rom. 5:8). He died also to sin (Rom. 6:10) and overcame its power as our *representative* (one that acts for another). To be saved from sin's penalty, we must place our complete trust in Christ's work on the cross and His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Likewise, if we are to experience daily deliverance from sin's tyranny, then we must trust in Christ's victory on our behalf over the power of sin.

Righteous living is the fitting and proper response to our righteous standing or position before God. We are not to continue in sin (Rom. 6:1-2). We who once were slaves to sin have become slaves of righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18). We should now live accordingly. By His victorious life, death, and resurrection, Christ has provided everything we need for an overcoming and righteous life. We experience or enter into this kind of life by making certain active responses which God calls for in Romans 6–8. These responses are indicated for us by the words *know* (Rom. 6:6), *consider* (Rom. 6:11), *present* (Rom. 6:13, 19), and *put to death* (Rom. 8:13).

Know

How do we know anything with complete confidence about spiritual and invisible things? We can know only by revelation, only by God telling us in His Word what we could never know otherwise. What do the Scriptures say about deliverance from sin's power in our lives? "For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin" (Rom. 6:6 NIV). Think carefully about this statement. To "know" here means to be certain about a truth, not by feeling or imagination, but by believing firmly what God says. What do we know? It is that our old self was crucified with Christ. The term "old self" or "old man" occurs only two other times in the New Testament (Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:9-10), where it is contrasted with the "new self" or "new man." The "old self" is all that we were as unregenerate people in Adam's family. It is said to be characterized by evil practices and lusts. In contrast, the "new self" is all that we are now "in Christ Jesus." It is in the likeness of God, created in righteousness and holiness. God crucified the old self at the same time and place that His Son was crucified. What was accomplished in the crucifixion of the old self? The result was that "the body of sin" was rendered powerless. Thus, we are no longer slaves to sin. We are able to walk in "newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). As Jesus died to sin once for all (Rom. 6:10), so also did we at that time. We participated representatively in that victory over this evil force. We can now live unto God without being constantly dragged downward. We are united with Him and His life (Rom. 6:5).

Consider carefully the truths concerning our union with Christ which God wants us to know:

1. We Are United With Christ In His Death And Victory Over Sin.
 - a. Christ died unto sin once for all (Rom. 6:10). He died to the realm where sin reigns as king (Rom. 5:21a).
 - b. We died with Christ (Rom. 6:8), being co-crucified with him (Gal. 2:20). We must understand "that if one died for all, then were all dead" (2 Cor. 5:14).

c. Since Christ died to sin once for all and since we died with Him, we also died to sin and are freed from its enslaving power (Rom. 6:2, 6-7, 18, 22). What does “sin” mean here? It is indwelling sin, an evil principle working within our yet unredeemed bodies (Rom. 7:17, 20, 23). What is meant by “freed” since it is so obvious that Christians do sin? Christ broke the chains that held us as slaves to sin (Rom. 6:6). Indwelling sin is still present and seeks to exercise control over us through our mortal bodies (Rom. 6:12), but we are no longer its slaves. Our relationship to sin has changed. As the hymn-writer put it, Christ “breaks the power of cancelled sin, He sets the prisoner free.” Freedom from sin’s bondage has its basis in Christ’s victory over sin and death (Rom. 6:9-10) and in our union with Him.

2. We Are United With Christ In His Resurrection And Present Life.

- a. Christ rose from the dead (Rom. 6:4, 9). As a result, “the life that He lives, He lives to God” (Rom. 6:10 NASB), in that kingdom where God alone rules.
- b. We rose from the dead with Him because we have been united with Him (Rom. 6:5; Eph. 2:5-6; Col 3:1).
- c. Therefore, we share in His present resurrection life and we can thus walk in newness of life. He is now master over His foes, so we too can be master over our foes through Him (Rom. 6:9-10). What is true of Him is also true of us because we are in Him. Moreover, His resurrection power is present to function within us (Eph. 1:19-20; Phil. 2:13; 3:10).

When we know and understand the truth of our union with Christ and when we realize who we are and what we have “in Christ Jesus,” we must conclude, “How shall we who died to sin still live in it?” (Rom. 6:2 NASB). The only fitting response is that we direct our hearts and minds so that in daily living we conform to what we really are in Christ (Col. 3:1-3).

Consider (Reckon, Count)

It is necessary to translate these revealed and liberating truths into our personal experience. Truth always needs to be worked into the way we live. This is accomplished by firmly believing and then acting upon what God has revealed to us in His Word.

God tells us that the death that Christ died, He died to sin and the life He now lives, He lives to God (Rom. 6:10). He then exhorts us, “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11 NASB). Here He calls us to count or reckon something to be true of us because it is true of Christ and because we are united with Christ. What is true of Christ? In His death, He died to the kingdom in which sin ruled. He broke any claim of sin as a power. Now He lives to God, in the realm where God reigns. These things are true of Christ. Thus, they are likewise true of us through our union with Him. We are “dead to sin” because we are “in Christ Jesus.” We were incorporated into His death at the cross (Rom. 6:3, 5). As our representative, He acted on our behalf. Thus our relationship to sin is now the same as His. Similarly, we are “alive to God” because we are “in Christ Jesus.” God “made us alive together with Christ ... and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:5-6 NASB). Our citizenship is in heaven. We live out our lives now in an entirely new kingdom where God rules and grace reigns through righteousness (Rom. 5:21; Col. 1:13).

We have God’s word for it that we died to sin and are now alive to Him. We must regard it as true of us whether our senses or feelings agree or not. God does not say to us “pretend this is true.” It is true! He does not say to us, “crucify the old man” or “make yourself dead to sin and alive to Me.” That was done 2000 years ago at Calvary! He says to us in effect, “see yourselves

as united with My glorious Son and regard yourselves as what you are in Him—dead to sin but alive to Me.” Just as we believed the gospel for salvation from the penalty of sin, so also we must now believe what God says about what we are in Christ to experience deliverance from the power of sin. Both deliverances come through active faith, not by sight or feeling.

Present (Yield)

We must not stop with knowing these important truths or with counting upon them in faith. God gives us a command, something we must *do* in response to what we know and reckon to be true. “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (Rom. 6:12-13 NASB). Here is an appeal to our wills. Notice that it has both a negative and a positive aspect.

Negatively, we are exhorted not to let sin rule in our bodies. Sin as an evil principle and power is still within our mortal, unredeemed bodies. It seeks to dominate them. By a definite and continual act of our wills we must not permit it to do so. We must actively oppose and fight sin. Further, we must not even give sin a single foothold from which it can work against us. We must not present any member of our bodies to sin for its unrighteous use. The term “present” means “put at the disposal of” or “yield” or “permit to use.” The word “member” refers to the parts of the body, such as hands, eyes, and mind, and the abilities and powers of the body. Sin seeks to use our members as weapons of unrighteousness, but we must make no provision for it to do this. We have the ability to obey this exhortation because our relationship to sin as slave-master has ended. We have been “freed from sin and enslaved to God” (Rom. 6:22 NASB).

From the positive aspect, God commands us to present and yield ourselves to Him. As those alive from the dead, we are now His slaves and so we put ourselves and the members of our bodies entirely at His service. Our members once were presented to sin for unrighteous purposes; no one needed to instruct us how to do that. But now we are new creatures, with new lives and a new Master (2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:16-18). We should choose to obey God moment by moment as our new Master. We should be available to Him and serve Him with the same intensity and fervor that we once served sin. “Just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification” (Rom. 6:19 NASB).

What could be more fitting than to place ourselves and our members entirely at God’s disposal? We are not our own (1 Cor. 6:19-20). God has bought us at the tremendous price of His Son’s blood (1 Pet. 1:18-19). “He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf” (2 Cor. 5:15 NASB). Moreover, when we know the truth of our union with Christ in His death and resurrection and reckon ourselves dead to sin but alive to God, it is only logical that we present our members no longer to sin but to God. By a deliberate act of our wills, we should continually and habitually place our lives completely at His disposal. The result will be holy and victorious Christian living.

Put to Death (Mortify)

The encouragement to actively war against indwelling sin and to yield ourselves wholly to God is summarized in Romans 6:14 (NASB): “For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.” Note well the guarantee or reason given as to why sin shall not

rule as a tyrant over us. A new rule or principle of life is now in operation. We are not under law, but under grace. Let us consider what this means.

Once as unsaved people—as those “in the flesh” (Rom. 7:5; 8:9)—we were under law. We attempted to gain God’s favor by our actions or works. However, law of any kind, even the Law of Moses, could never deliver us from the power and bondage of sin. It could not help us in holy living or produce spirituality. It could never give life (Gal. 3:21). “By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20 NASB). The purpose of the holy Law of God was to convict us of sin, to show us the exceeding sinfulness of sin (Rom. 7:13). “The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal. 3:24). It was never meant to deliver us from the bondage to sin. In fact, when we were “in the flesh” the Law actually aggravated sin. Sin took advantage of us through the Law, produced lust of every kind and bore the fruit of death (Rom. 7:5, 8, 11).

But now as Christians—as those “in the Spirit” (Rom. 8:9)—our former relationship to the Law no longer exists. Through our union with Christ in His death, we were released from our unfruitful marriage to the Law (Rom. 7:1-6). We have been joined to Christ in order that we might bring forth fruit to God (Rom. 7:4) and serve Him in “newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter” (Rom. 7:6 NASB). The Law could not justify or sanctify us “in that it was weak through the flesh” (Rom. 8:3a). It brought only condemnation and death. Therefore, what the Law could not accomplish, Christ did at the cross. “He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us” (Rom. 8:3b-4). Because we are in Christ there is no condemnation for us and we have been set free from the “law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:1-2). We are now under the reign of God’s grace. God, by His indwelling Spirit, helps us live in a way that pleases Him. We are not left to our own strength. God’s power is working within us (Phil. 2:13). If we were to struggle to live a holy life apart from this power and try to keep the Law in our own energy, we would suffer crushing defeat and despair (Rom. 7:14-25). Certainly that is not what God intends.

Consider the stark contrast between the Christian and the non-Christian (Rom. 8:4b-11 NASB). The unsaved are described as “those who walk according to the flesh,” as “those who are according to the flesh,” and as “those who are in the flesh.” In this context, the term “flesh” indicates man in his unregenerate state. He is an alien to the life of God. He lives his life apart from the Holy Spirit. He has his mind set on “the things of the flesh,” his thoughts and actions are governed by “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and pride of life” (1 John 2:16). His fallen, corrupt, and unregenerate human nature dominates the way he lives. He is hostile toward God, not able to submit to God’s Law, and unable to please God. But now we are “not in the flesh, but in the Spirit” if the Holy Spirit dwells within us (Rom. 8:9). We are described as those who “walk according to the Spirit.” The general tenor and character of our lives manifest that we are habitually controlled and empowered by the Spirit. Christ is in us. Our bodies, being still unredeemed, are dead toward God on account of indwelling sin, but our spirits are alive (Rom. 8:10; Eph. 2:1). The Spirit of God dwells within us as our helper and as our guarantee that one day God will give life to our mortal bodies (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:35-57). For this reason, we eagerly long for our “adoption as sons, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23 NASB). Then we will be free at last from the very presence of sin!

Therefore, seeing that we are not under law but under grace, what conclusion are we to draw? How should we live in light of what we are as Christians? Hear what the Word of God says! “So

then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh you must die, but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Rom. 8:12-13 NASB). We are not debtors bound by duty to live as we once lived when we were unsaved. Rather we are debtors to grace. We are under obligation to Christ to live for Him. Remember who we are and what we have by our union with Christ. Christ has brought us into a glorious new position with God and made every provision for a life of victory over sin. We are now living in the realm of the Spirit. We are alive to God. Christ dwells within. In view of these things, how can we possibly go on living as though we were still “in the flesh”? Such a course is completely inconsistent with who we are in Christ.

Instead, by the Spirit’s strength and help, we must be “putting to death the deeds of the body.” Notice that this is an *action* that *we* take. Nowhere do the Scriptures teach that the way of victory is merely to “surrender to God” or “abide in Him” or “let go and cease trying” and then “let God win the victory for us.” Everywhere the Bible instructs and commands us to take action by God’s grace or enablement. We are not released from responsibility in the matter of victorious Christian living. Moreover, the Scriptures do not teach that we will not experience or should not expect conflict and struggle along the way. We are called to a spiritual warfare which requires us to take up the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10-20). We are to put on Christ and not make any provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14). We are to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against our souls (1 Pet. 2:11). We need to buffet our bodies and make them our slaves (1 Cor. 9:27). Enabled by the Holy Spirit, we must continually wage war against sin and mortify its out workings in our mortal bodies. This will mean, of course, that we keep in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:25) and not quench His inner promptings to take action (1 Thess. 5:19).

Conclusion

This then is the Scriptural way to victorious and holy Christian living.

1. Know and understand the fact of your union with Christ (Rom. 6:3-10). You were united with him in His death, burial, and resurrection. Your old self was crucified with him and your body of sin was rendered powerless so that you should no longer serve sin.
2. Consider yourself to be what you actually are—dead to sin but alive to God (Rom. 6:11). Christ died to sin and now lives to God. The same is true of you.
3. Present yourself continually to God as one alive from the dead (Rom. 6:13). No longer yield the parts and faculties of your body to sin, but habitually put them at God’s disposal. Do not let sin reign in your mortal body (Rom. 6:12).
4. Put To Death the sinful misdeeds of the body (Rom. 8:13). Recognize that you are not under law but under grace. God gives His strength to help you obey Him and please Him. In this strength, wage war against the fleshly desires and deeds of indwelling sin.

This is not a series of steps to be followed mechanically. Rather it is a call to live continuously in a manner that is consistent with who you are and what you have in Christ Jesus. Recognize God’s wonderful provision for your sanctification. Deal ruthlessly with sin and strive after holiness with the Spirit’s help. Then you “will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:17 NASB).

Crucified With Christ

Read Romans 6-8:13 several times and then carefully study the passage and answer the questions below *in your own words*.

1. List the experiences that all Christians shared with Christ because they are “baptized into” or united with Him (6:3-5).
2. What does the Apostle Paul say every believer should *know* (6:6)?

What is our “old man” or “old self” (6:6; Col. 3:9-10; Eph. 4:22-24; 2 Cor. 5:17)?

What was the result of our old man’s crucifixion with Christ (6:2, 6-7)?

3. Based upon what we know, Romans 6:11 says that we are to *consider* or *reckon* ourselves to be two things. What are they? What does each mean?

Why are you able to reckon these things so (6:8-10)?

4. What does Romans 6:12-13 say we should do based upon what we know and reckon to be so?

List below the ways in which you *present* or *yield* your members to sin and to God.

Mind

Eyes

Ears

Mouth

Hands

Feet

5. Read Romans 6:16-23. Identify the possible masters that a person can serve as a slave and list the results or fruit of each slavery.

How does a person reveal who his master is (6:16)?

6. What great change has every Christian undergone (6:17-18);

In view of this change, what should your response be (6:19)?

7. How does Romans 7:1-6 explain Paul’s statement in Romans 6:14?

How and for what purpose were we made to die to the Law (7:4-6)?

8. What struggle would one experience when he tries to please God if he were under law rather than grace (7:14-25)?

What discoveries would he make about himself?

7:14

7:17

7:18

7:20

7:21

9. Why is there no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (8:1-4)?

Contrast the Christian and the non-Christian (8:4b-II).

How should you live in light of what is true of you as a Christian (8:12-13)?

10. Write a paragraph describing how you will translate the teaching of Romans 6-8:13 into your daily practice. How will you obey the exhortations to *consider, present, and put to death*?

Lesson 5: The Cross In The Believer's Life

"If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life (soul) shall lose it, but whoever loses his life (soul) for My sake, he is the one who will save it" (Luke 9:23-24 NASB).

Several times in Scripture the believer is likened to a traveler passing through life. The course of following God is likened to a path or road. It is called "the way of truth" (2 Pet. 2:2) or simply "the Way" (John 14:6). The Lord said that the way is narrow (Matt. 7:14) and that few would find it. We sometimes think this journey is limited only to the day we passed from death to life. However, it includes deliverance from wasted or misguided living from now to eternity. The point is that we enter into truly abundant life through a journey rather than one great leap forward. It is more than a momentary decision. It is the path of following the Lord Jesus.

Jesus says that if one wishes to come after Him, then there is something that needs to be done. He then states the challenging condition, which most of us might seek to avoid. It involves a painful decision, it calls for great sacrifice. He says, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Following this Jesus takes His disciples through an experience figuratively represented by a cross, a means of death in Jesus' day. Taking up the cross is exactly the same path He walked, according to the Father's will, when He was led to Calvary and crucified. At that time, not one of the twelve volunteered to follow Him. In fact, they abandoned Him. His path to Calvary was humbling, self-sacrificing, and painful. Yet it was essential. He renounced His personal desires when He said, "not My will but Thine be done." It is this same path which is the example for believers in Philippians 2:3-12.

As God's Son walked the way to His cross, so He calls us to deny self, take up our cross, and follow the same path. The Savior reminded us, "a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become as his teacher, and the slave as his master" (Matt. 10:24-25 NASB). He took up His cross, and we must take up our cross daily in following Him. Every child of God might desire to follow such an inspiring Leader if the price were not denying self. The word "deny" means to refuse any connection with something. It is the same word used in Christ's prophecy that Peter would deny Him three times (Luke 22:61). The Lord requires that we deny self to the extent of accepting a cross if we are truly to be His followers.

The Problem: Self-Life

What does the Lord mean when He speaks of someone losing his life (soul)? The verses on both sides of Luke 9:24 demonstrate that He is speaking of self. The word "soul" comes from the Greek *psyche*, from which we get our word "psychology," which has to do with the study of man's inner self and resultant behavior. In Scripture, "soul" is used to describe the immaterial and invisible part of man (Matt. 10:39; 11:29; Eph. 6:6; Heb. 4:12; 6:19; 10:38-39).

The call to lose our life is not a call to lose our personality or individuality. It does not mean that we are to be "nothings" or "non-persons" before God. Our worth in God's eyes is great on two grounds. First, we are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26; Col. 3:10) in a spiritual or moral sense. Secondly, we are esteemed to be worth Christ's giving up His life for our salvation.

What we are called upon to lose is *self-life* or *selfism*. Self-life means being occupied with *me*. It is the assertion of my will, for my own pleasure, apart from God's will. Self-dominated life is

the opposite of Christ-directed or Spirit-controlled life. Self-life does not trust God's Word or God's sufficiency or God's way. It trusts self. It is interested primarily in self.

Most of us dislike obvious examples of selfism in others. However, we sometimes have difficulty in recognizing the same things in our own behavior. Here are a few examples for reminders:

1. Speaking frequently in terms of what "I" want, need, think, feel.
2. Seeking attention by word, action, or dress—craving praise.
3. Easily offended or angered but not easily corrected or taught.
4. Self-sufficient, proud, intolerant, highly critical, argumentative.
5. Decisions made on the basis of self-interest, not the interests of God or others.
6. Complaining, bitterness, self-pity, little expression of appreciation.
7. Taking care of "me" as the center, circumference, and goal of life.

This is the self-life that needs to be dethroned and denied.

We need to be liberated from the wretchedness of selfism. Galatians 2:20 makes clear in its very first word what is our chief problem. It begins, "I am crucified." The barrier to godliness and fellowship with Christ is indicated in a one-letter word—"I." That is why "I" had to be crucified. This happened at the cross of Christ when we were slain with Him positionally. The crucifixion of selfism needs to happen in practice so that the true life of Jesus can be seen in us (2 Cor. 4:10).

The Remedy: Crucified Life

"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27 NASB). What is this necessary cross? Obviously it is not the wood on which Jesus died. It is something His disciples must carry daily. The tense indicates not a momentary thing but a present, continuous activity. It is more than an involuntary difficulty or burden to bear, as some have thought. Arthur Pink comments, "To deny himself is not only for a man to disown his own righteousness, wisdom, and strength, but to renounce all self will and self-pleasing. The whole of self is to be set aside and the cross taken up."² To take up the cross is to choose deliberately the pathway or lifestyle of following Jesus at the expense of self-interest. The cross involves shame, suffering, and sacrifice for the Lord's sake, just as Jesus' cross involved these things for His own life.

The idea of a crossless Christianity (as a way of living) seems to have gained great popularity in the western world. Yet that which God suffered His Son to pass through is not likely to be omitted in His plan for those who wish to be His followers. With Christ Himself, the humbling death of the cross preceded exaltation, according to Philippians 2:8-9. It preceded also the display of His resurrection life. It is apparent that daily death to the self-life must precede the outflow of dynamic life and power in us promised in Ephesians 1:19. If we are to know the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, then we must be "conformed to His death" (Phil. 3:10). Paul spoke of our "always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. 4:10-11 NASB). Paul's cross-bearing was a submission to God's plan for his

life which involved hardship (Acts 9:15-16). Our surrender of self-interests may likewise involve hardships for the cause of Christ.

The Path: Broken Life

When self-life is confronted and rejected, the path will lead to complete submission to His will, or brokenness. Resistance hinders the work of God's Spirit. We remember that an untamed colt was brought for the Lord Jesus to ride in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19:30). It was immediately broken for His use. This principle is repeated several times in Scripture. God first breaks, then He uses. The warrior Gideon had his soldiers break the pitchers in their hands at the sound of the trumpet as they stood about the enemy camp. Then the light of the torches within the earthen vessels blazed visibly (Judg. 7:16-22). God's light shines forth best from broken vessels. The woman broke the vial of precious perfume to anoint the Lord Jesus. Brokenness releases the fragrances of spiritual worship to God. The greatest sacrifice ever made demonstrated this. "This is My body, which is broken for you" (1 Cor. 11:24). How God values brokenness! "A broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Psa. 51:17).

Of what are we to be broken? The things that hinder our conformity to the image of God's Son must be removed. We see God doing this in the life of the patriarch Jacob. At a critical point, he met the Lord at Peniel, which means "face of God" (Gen. 32:24-31). There this man, so strong in self-life, wrestled with the heavenly being until he was rendered helpless. He acquired a new name, a new strength, and a new vision; but he walked thereafter "limping on his thigh." He had been broken.

William MacDonald in his booklet "Lord, Break Me" lists examples of brokenness including:

1. Readiness to confess sin to God and those we have wronged (Psa. 51).
2. Restitution (paying back) where we have caused damage to another (Luke 19:8).
3. Willingness to forgive when we have been wronged (Col. 3:13).
4. Enduring wrong without retaliating (1 Pet. 2:19-20).
5. Repaying evil with good (Rom. 12:17, 20-21).
6. Honoring others above self (Phil. 2:3).
7. Accepting and obeying God's will without resistance (Psa. 32:9).³

Ground must be plowed and cultivated before it can be productive (Jer. 4:3). Then the seed of God's planting can be fruitful. Broken lives do not resist the work of God, wherever that work may lead. Remember the Savior's invitation, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart" (Matt. 11:29 NASB).

The Result: Christ-Controlled Life

An important question at this point is, "Are you walking in the way of the cross?" This is not asking whether you are saved. It means, "Are you doing what the Lord Jesus has called you to do in being His disciple?" The following diagram illustrates two ways of living which are possible for believers. One is not the will of God, thus blocking the abundant life experience for you. If you wish in a deep and serious way to change from self-pleasing to Christ-pleasing living, then you must take self-life to your cross, as He taught.

Self

Selfish (fleshly) Living practiced by many believers

Trying to live spiritually by my strength

Obedience to God according to my feelings

Motivated to act according to self-interest

Spirit-filled (controlled) Life available to all believers

Living by His grace and His enablement (confidence in Him, not myself)

Obedience to God according to His Word

Motivated to act according to my appreciation of Christ's love (2 Cor. 5:14)

You must choose daily to have a Christ-directed, Spirit-empowered life. There may be an initial crisis experience. The change may be more gradual. But Christ must be allowed to live His life in you unhindered and express His risen, powerful life and character in your life.

The Condition Restated

The Lord teaches a clear principle in John 12:24-26:

1. In agriculture the grain must be detached from what connects with its own natural life. Then it dies. Only after death is there new reproducing life (v. 24).
2. The principle is applied to the believer (v. 25). Jesus says, "if you hold on to your soul (your self-life) you will lose it." Only when you hate this worldly self-life and choose to give it up to Christ for the benefit of others will you make your life count eternally.
3. Following Jesus in service requires that we follow in His earthly path (v. 26). That path led Him to the self-denying, God-glorifying death of the cross. We cannot follow Him and escape the path of the cross for ourselves. This means death to the life of self-pleasing. It means the remaking of it into the mold of the Lord Jesus Christ that His life might be seen in you.

When we have decided to take up and carry our cross daily, we will turn our backs on self-pleasing. Walking by the Spirit we will not fulfill the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). Are you ready to take up your cross and follow Him (Luke 14:27)?

The Cross In The Believer's Life

1. How does God intend every Christian to live (2 Cor. 5:15; Gal. 2:19b)?

In what ways did the Lord Jesus demonstrate this type of life (John 5:19, 30; 8:28-29; Rom 15:3; Phil. 2:5-8)?

2. Describe the life that is the opposite of the one in question 1. List some of the evidences of a life that is lived for self rather than for God.
3. Study carefully Luke 9:23-24. What is the meaning of each of the following steps?

"let him deny himself"

"take up his cross daily"

"follow Me"

4. How are the steps in Luke 9:23 the solution to the problem of self-life, or selfish living?

5. What is the relationship between the believer's cross-bearing and the process described in 2 Corinthians 4:7-11?

6. Paraphrase (write in your own words) Galatians 2:20.

Why is this truth the key to living the kind of life that God wants you to live?

7. What aspect of cross-bearing is brought out in Romans 8:13b and Colossians 3:5?

What will this mean in practice?

Romans 13:14

1 Corinthians 9:27

1 Peter 2:11

8. Identify some of the practical ways of obeying Luke 9:23.

Philippians 2:3-4

Colossians 3:8-9

Colossians 3:12-14

9. Read John 12:23-26. What fundamental principle regarding fruit-bearing does Jesus give?

How did His life demonstrate this principle?

Why is living for self an obstacle to bearing fruit for God?

10. How does the self-life manifest itself in your daily walk? Be specific.

In those areas where self-life is evident, how will you deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow Jesus? Identify practical steps you will take.

Lesson 6: Christ's Character In The Believer

The magnificence of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ has always attracted people. No earthly life has ever matched His life. He did all things well (Mark 7:37). His life was the light of men (John 1:4). No one loved as He loved, gave as He gave, labored as He labored, or died as He died. None was so patient, so compassionate, so courageous, so humble, so spotless, so wise, so whole-hearted in devotion to the will of the Father. To children, to the needy, to lepers, to outcasts, to the best, and to the worst, He ministered faithfully, displaying the perfect character of God. Who has ever successfully matched the character of Jesus?

It is the desire of the Lord to manifest this same moral excellence in His people. Christ is in us, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). He wants to live that marvelous life in the body of every believer who will yield fully to the control of His Spirit. The goal of God is not simply to have people who attend weekly church meetings and perform various acts of service or ritual worship. It is rather to conform His people to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29).

Christian virtues are frequently listed in the New Testament and accompanied by exhortations to adopt them [for example, see Gal. 5:22-23 (the fruit of the Spirit); 2 Pet. 1:5-7 ("add to your faith"); 1 Tim. 6:11]. There are also many references to negative traits, with commands to put them out of our lives. This lesson is designed to help us consider Christian virtues, along with Scriptural suggestions for getting them firmly rooted in us.

Qualities of Christian Character

The following brief descriptions are for Scriptural definition. Much of it is indebted to W E. Vine's "Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words."

1. Love. This is the greatest of all moral qualities for the believer (1 Cor. 13:13). The Scripture says if we lack love, we do not even know God (1 John 4:8). God must be the primary object of our love. This love must be expressed in obedience to His commands (John 14:15, 21, 23). The New Testament has several distinct words for "love," whereas many languages have only one. The special Greek word is *agape*. It is used of God's love for us and for the love of the believers for one another. *Agape* love is self-giving or sacrificial. It is not based on natural inclinations, attractiveness of the object, or emotional impulse. Its most beautiful description is found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.
2. Faith. This is also a primary virtue (1 Cor. 13:13). In fact, without faith we cannot please God (Heb. 11:6). Godly men obtain His approval through faith (Heb. 11:2). It is active trust, reliance, or confidence. Therefore, faith is commonly seen in some act in obedience to God's Word. His Word or promise is always the basis of Biblical faith. Faith has nothing to do with appearances but rather dwells in the realm of the unseen (Heb. 11:1). It has nothing to do with probabilities, but glorifies God by believing what seems impossible (Rom. 4:19-20).
3. Holiness. What is holiness? To be holy is to be separate *from* — that which is defiling and to be separated *unto* God. It is thus both positive and negative. As God is holy, so believers are to be holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16). As believers are holy in position (sanctified and called saints) so they are to be holy in practice. Without holiness, no one will see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). Defilement breaks fellowship with a holy God. Purity glorifies Him.
4. Self-Control. This might also be rendered self-discipline. This is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23). Self-discipline is something that we must practice by the Spirit's enablement and is

high on God's list for us (2 Pet. 1:6). Unless self-discipline is developed in our lives, we will be unfit for the work of the ministry.

5. Servanthood. The believer is taught that not only is he the ordinary servant of Christ, but also he is Christ's bondservant (1 Pet. 2:16; Rev. 22:3, 6). Through love we are to serve one another (Gal. 5:13). The servant-minded believer looks for opportunities to serve, not to seek preeminence or the easy path. Not so much as a cup of cold water given in Christ's name will lose its eternal reward (Matt. 10:42). Our Lord Himself took the role of a servant when He walked among men (Luke 22:27). The quality of hospitality to strangers might come under this heading (Rom. 12:13; 1 Pet. 4:9).
6. Grace. The frequent greeting of New Testament letters begins "Grace be unto you." This undeserved favor is what we need from God and from one another. We are not called upon to treat other people as they deserve but rather as they do not deserve. The people wondered at the gracious words of the Lord Jesus (Luke 4:22). Our words also should be with grace toward others (Col. 4:6). Forbearance and forgiveness of others spring from this marvelous well called grace.
7. Faithfulness. This means trustworthy or reliable and is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). It is a requirement of anyone given a trust (1 Cor. 4:2). A faithful person is hard to find (Prov. 20:6).
8. Wisdom. This has particular reference to the spiritual rather than the natural kind of wisdom. It is related to spiritual understanding (Col. 1:9) and wise conduct (Col. 4:5). It comes through the Word of God (Col. 3:16).
9. Righteousness. We usually think of this as that which is reckoned to us by God through faith in Christ (Rom. 4:5). However, it is also something that is practiced by believers (1 John 3:7). It refers to right action before others, for which there will be eternal recognition (Rev. 19:8). It is the breastplate of the believer's armor (Eph. 6:14) and considered to be a preeminent virtue (1 Tim. 6:11).
10. Godliness. This is the quality of devotion or piety which pleases God and is in the inner ring of important moral excellencies (2 Pet. 1:6-7; 3:11). It is an attitude of heart that is directed toward God.
11. Hope. This describes a favorable expectation toward what is coming in the future, particularly in relation to God (1 Pet. 1:21). No believer should be pessimistic when he considers the hope we have laid up in Heaven (1 Pet. 1:3-4) and the blessed hope of the coming of our Lord Jesus (Tit. 2:13). Christ will reign and we will reign with Him as joint-heirs. Displaying such a positive outlook has a profound effect upon the faith of others. Therefore, it is a leading character quality (1 Cor. 13:13).
12. Patience. This literally means "abiding under." This quality grows through trials (Jas. 1:3). It does not surrender to circumstances. It is closely related to longsuffering (Eph. 4:2; Col. 1:11; 3:12). "Longsuffering is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate" (Vine's). Forbearance and endurance are associated words. Active patience is sometimes translated as perseverance (Rom. 5:3 NASB; 2 Pet. 1:6 NASB).
13. Courage. This is also rendered "boldness." It is a lack of fear to speak what God has called us to speak, to go where He has called us to go, and to do whatever we must in His cause (Acts 9:29; 13:46; 18:26; 19:8; 1 Thess. 2:2). A courageous person perseveres even in great difficulty or suffering.

14. Zeal. This means eagerness, enthusiasm, fervor, and passion in the things of God. It was written of our Savior, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (John 2:17). His disciples saw that this was true of Him when He drove the money-changers from the Temple with a scourge. Lukewarmness is abhorrent to our Lord (Rev. 3:15-16). Passion in the things of God has His endorsement (2 Cor. 7:11; 9:2; Col. 4:13). Zeal must not be misguided or out of order (Rom. 10:2; Phil. 3:6). *Diligence* and *whole-heartedness* are associated character traits (Col. 3:23).
15. Humility. This derives from the word "low-lying" or lowly (Rom. 12:16). It is regularly associated with the idea of *meekness* (Matt. 11:29; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12). That it has nothing to do with weakness is seen in its association with our Lord Jesus even as King (Matt. 21:5). His humility is our example in Philippians 2:3-8. "It is that temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting" (Vine's). It is an inward grace and it is first to be displayed toward God and then toward others. It is opposed to the idea of being contentious, argumentative, unteachable, or uncorrectable. Rather, humility is "easy to be entreated."
16. Joy. This has the idea of gladness and delight. It is the gift of Him who is the author of all joy. He wants that joy to remain in us (John 15:11). It cannot be stolen (John 16:22). Unlike mere "happiness" or "fun," it is independent of circumstance and can abound even under adversity (Jas. 1:2; Phil. 2:17). Believers should not be characterized by long faces or gloom; ours is the lasting joy of salvation. It will not be lost when our eyes are fixed upon Him and eternal values.
17. Peace. This means a state of tranquility or quiet within, of rest or contentment even when strife is rampant around us. It is the gift of our Lord Jesus (John 14:27). It is the antidote to anxiety and will guard our hearts through the Lord Jesus (Phil. 4:6-7). "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee," is the promise to us (Isa. 26:3). A worrying believer does not reflect the character of our unruffled and serene God.
18. Kindness. This is also rendered as goodness and gentleness (2 Cor. 6:6; Col. 3:12; Gal. 5:22). It is uprightness expressed in deeds (Vine's). This is a reminder that the character of a believer is to be reflected in good works as the fruit of our salvation (Eph. 2:10). It is well that we learn to show this in speech and attitude. Mercy, which is active compassion, works along parallel lines.
19. Honesty. This can also be thought of as integrity or incorruption (Rom. 12:17; 2 Cor. 8:21; 13:7). This trait covers a very wide range of conduct and deals with that which is right, fair, honorable, and ethical. Honesty monitors speech so that we do not give false impressions or make promises which will not be kept or intentionally exaggerate. It applies to our work (promptness, diligence, quality). It touches on our business and social dealings (fairness, concern for others, sensitivity to their feelings). It goes beyond the minimum and leaves the believer above reproach. It rejects partiality or favoritism.

Means of Developing Christian Character

It would be wonderful to be able to read an inspirational book, take a Christian life course, or attend a meeting for a religious experience and at once have a mature Christian character. Of course, we can see this is not realistic. The prayer of the Apostle Paul was that Christ might be formed in believers (Gal. 4:19). Such a towering purpose is not something which is achieved in a short time. It is a part of the progressive work of the Spirit called "growth" (1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet.

3:18; 2 Thess. 1:3). How will this come about in us? Will it be by firm resolve or by trying harder?

Change and growth start with the “God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). The Spirit of Christ must work in us mightily (Col. 1:29). Any failure to grow rests with man and not with God. Growth will require the response of our own hearts in submission, obedience, and faith. It may involve the input of helpers or leaders who will minister to us such as Paul did to Timothy (2 Tim. 2:2). God, ourselves, and others are all involved. Here are some things to consider in the path of developing moral excellence.

1. Be Aware Of Character Needs. Since the New Testament is filled with lists of positive traits, it is evident that God has placed them there for our attention. Negative traits also listed are simply the opposite side of the coin. We need to see where God is taking us. Begin to mark in your Bible the traits that should be personally added or eliminated.
2. Look Unto Jesus. He is our example and the perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2). We tend to become like that which we think about and look upon (2 Cor. 3:18). The Spirit continually points to Christ as our model. Godliness comes by the true knowledge of Him (2 Pet. 1:3). We are not helped by looking within ourselves in a morbid way or by comparing ourselves to others.
3. Allow Christ's Life To Work Within A Surrendered Vessel. Full surrender to His Lordship, firm reckoning of the death of our old self on the cross with Him, and faith that appropriates His risen life within us unleash transforming power. As we obey Him and draw upon His strength and wisdom, He will produce the fruit of moral beauty fashioned in His likeness. The skilled Potter will fashion our clay gloriously (Rom. 9:21).
4. Meditate Upon The Word. Fruit is promised to the man who meditates upon God's Word day and night (Psa. 1:2-3). That Word is transforming and renewing, working in us mightily to build us up (Acts 20:32). This does not mean skimming through the Word, but diligently applying the Word. Do you regularly “chew upon” the meat of God's Word?
5. Imitate The Godly Example Of Others. We are primarily to imitate God (Eph. 5:1), but we are also invited to imitate godly people (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17). We should follow church leaders who are godly examples (Heb. 13:7). People need models of written truth. This helps translate Christian character into life. Find a good model and be a spiritual “mimic” or imitator. Stop and think of someone worth patterning your life after.
6. Allow Suffering And Persecution To Mold You. It is easy to count a time of trial as a misfortune. However, the Scripture says that we are to count it all joy (Jas. 1:2-3). This is because trials will perfect our character if we will let them do so. More will be said about the benefits of suffering in a following lesson.
7. Take Action On Problem Areas. When things like bitterness, anger, and hurtful speech continue from our lips we are commanded to put them away (Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8). When tenderness, kindness, and a tender heart are needed they are to be put on as moral garments (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12). We are to seek the strength of God for enablement, but we are not to hide negligence with pious words like, “I am praying to the Lord to do it.” We must be active. We must do (Jas. 1:22). What needs to be put away? What needs to be put on?

The goal of pastoral care in the church is to present every man mature in Christ Jesus (Col. 1:28). Infinite development in character will no doubt take place for all eternity, but the beginning point is here and now.

Christ's Character In The Believer

The purpose of this exercise is to help you identify and develop a needed Christian character quality in your life. Read the notes carefully and then complete the following items.

- 1. Select one character quality from those listed in the section "Qualities of Christian Character." Choose that which you or others see needs the greatest improvement now in your life.

The quality I most need to develop in my life is

What negative trait is opposed to this quality and is present in your life?

- 2. Read the Scriptures listed in the NOTES under the quality you have selected. Using a concordance, find additional Scriptures related to it. Write down each reference and summarize the main idea.

Reference

Main Idea

- 3. Explain in practical terms why this character quality is essential in your life as a Christian.
- 4. What efforts have you previously made to develop this quality in your life? What has been the outcome?
- 5. What specific areas of daily living must be changed or established if this character quality is to grow?
- 6. In definite, measurable terms, list the actions that you will take to develop the desired quality. What schedule of time will you set for taking these actions?
- 7. Select a prayer partner who will help you implement these actions and develop the selected quality Give a copy of your plan of action to him and have him monitor your progress regularly.

My prayer partner is_____

How will he monitor your progress? Be specific [for example, "He will telephone every week at (state time)."]

Lesson 7: Trials And Suffering

"If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" (Judg. 6:13). This wonderment was expressed by the Old Testament warrior Gideon to the angel of the Lord over 3000 years ago. The Psalmist at times also wondered if God had ceased to be concerned about His people (77:1-9). The prophets openly complained to God because they did not understand the ways of the Lord when His people were in difficulty.

The suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ, the most godly person who ever walked this earth, is a mystery to millions. Why did this wonderful person need to go through His death on the cross and all its associated troubles? How was it that He had to endure poverty, hunger, betrayal, mockery, sorrow, and difficulty in His path of obedience to the Father (Heb. 5:8)? Why was such a path to be an example for all His followers (1 Pet. 2:21; 4:1)?

In the early church Stephen was martyred (Acts 7:54-60). James was also murdered (Acts 12:2). Others were imprisoned. Difficulties and testings have been the common lot of believers (1 Pet. 5:9). The Lord Jesus predicted, "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). Paul reminded the believers, "We told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass" (1 Thess. 3:4). Peter counseled the Lord's people: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (1 Pet. 4:12).

Sources and Purposes of Trials

The recurring question is "Why? How could God let such things happen to good people?" There is always an element of mystery in God's dealings (Rom. 11:33). His thoughts and ways are not ours (Isa. 55:8-9). The origin of trials is a complex matter. Prayerful thought and consideration of many Scriptures is required in order to think rightly about what is happening to believers.

1. **Consequences Of Man's Fall.** Such things as sickness, handicaps, and death are a part of human life since the fall of man (Gen. 3). At that time sin and death entered into the world (Rom. 5:12). The whole creation groans under the continuing results (Rom. 8:20-22). Believers are not immune from the human predicament. Evil, with all its associated baggage, is an effect of sin.
2. **Consequences Of Personal Sin.** Some afflictions are a judgment for misconduct (1 Cor. 11:29-30; Jas. 5:15). We bring this into our lives by doing foolish things, making unwise decisions (Psa. 106:14-15), neglecting responsibilities and speaking without caution. At times men blame God, the devil, or others for what is their own fault. Man is responsible for personal choices (Gen. 3:12-13).
3. **Temptation From Satan.** This mighty spiritual personage of evil is a fallen angel. He is permitted by God for a season to oppose the divine purpose. Satan was the instigator of Job's troubles (Job 1). He has continuously plagued man (1 Pet. 5:8; Luke 22:31). He acts as the tempter (Matt. 4:3). He brings physical affliction to men (2 Cor. 12:7), as well as doubt and discouragement. He instigates persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).
4. **Testing From God.** In a general way, the hand of God overrules all of life. He permits things without being the author of them. At times He may directly test the faith of someone, as in the classic instances of Abraham being commanded to offer Isaac (Gen. 22:2). At other times, He may work good in spite of others' evil actions, as in the instance of Jesus at the

cross. These actions are part of what is called the *providence* of God. He orders circumstances for our ultimate good. Often these dealings are a mystery even to devout believers. However, trials are not uncontrolled happenings without meaning. Testing demonstrates the quality of our faith in God. The Scriptures speak of “the trying of your faith” (Jas. 1:3). It is like the purifying of gold in a refiner’s fire (1 Pet. 1:7; Mai. 3:3). There can be a sharing in the afflictions of Christ in the flesh for His body’s sake (Col. 1:24). There is the fellowship of his sufferings (Phil. 3:10). As His sufferings abound in us, so does our consolation (2 Cor. 1:5). This is not to say that the purpose is to gain merit since we already have a perfect standing with God through Christ’s finished work. Rather, it is an opportunity to glorify God (1 Pet. 4:16).

Types of Trials

How are we tested? In almost every way. The forms of crises are varied. Famines, droughts, and hardships tested the children of Israel in the wilderness. At times they grumbled and even openly rebelled against the hand of their Deliverer. Persecution, torture, and death came against Old Testament giants of the faith (Heb. 11:35-37) and was strong against believers in the Apostolic period of the church. This continued afterward. Sickness and physical handicaps touched even the servants of God (Phil. 2:25-27; 2 Tim. 4:20; 1 Tim. 5:23). They have afflicted millions of God’s people. Pain can be a great trial, especially when it is chronic. Sorrows of many kinds, especially the loss of a dear one, have brought many tears. Hard times and poverty are common in many parts of the world. Disappointments in life can overturn faith. We can be forsaken and even betrayed by so-called friends. Many have been falsely accused or slandered. Great difficulties in Christian endeavors are heart breaking.

There are subtle and invisible testings. The Lord said, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail” (Luke 22:31-32 NASB). One can hardly imagine a more difficult test than the one which came upon Abraham when commanded to offer up his son as a burnt offering (Gen. 22:2). The simple discipline of having to wait upon God for guidance or answers to prayer is difficult for most believers.

These brief illustrations should be enough to alert us to the fact that life experiences should never be attributed to passing or meaningless misfortunes. They are part of the great spiritual warfare that is constantly being waged, often by unseen forces. We need to pray, to have others pray, and to look to the prayers of our Great Intercessor (Heb. 7:25).

Perspective on Trials

A positive response to trials is dependent on our focus. Victory over suffering requires the long or eternal view (Heb. 11:10, 26; 2 Cor. 4:17). Joseph, the favored son of Jacob, was able to look back and see the hand of God working in his early life. He was sold into slavery by his brothers, imprisoned, and falsely accused while seeking to live righteously. He might have been bitter and vengeful. Instead, he saw it all as part of God’s long-term plan for good (Gen. 45:5-8). He was able to rule over Egypt and save the lives of his own family members. We may think that God is indifferent or insensitive to our troubles until we consider the character or attributes of God.

1. God Is All-Knowing. He knows when His people are suffering (Exod. 3:7).
2. God Is Wise. What is hidden from us is clear to Him (Rom. 11:33).

3. *God Is Compassionate. He suffers with His people and pities them (Isa. 63:9). He comforts His people in trials, teaching them to comfort others (Isa. 40:1; 2 Cor. 1:3-4).*

4. *God Is Just. He will reward us in time (2 Cor. 4:17).*

5. *God Is All-Powerful. He will be a refuge in trouble (Psa. 46:1; 9:9-10).*

The immediate outcome of trials may or may not be what we desire. He sometimes delivers us promptly (Psa. 34:6, 19) but oftentimes only after delay and suffering. Such was the case of the prophet cast into a dungeon (Jer. 38:6, 28; 39:14). We may cry earnestly to God and not be delivered (2 Cor. 12:8-9). It is glorifying to God when we are prepared to accept God's will, whatever it is, as the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace did (Dan. 3:17-18).

Response to Trials

The benefits of testing are often related to our response (Heb. 12:11). It is possible to drift into bitterness, resentment, self-pity, and despair. Some have denied the faith and turned away from the Lord Jesus. Those professing faith in Christ are frequently exhorted to be on guard against such attitudes. One may interpret severe trials as a sign of God's disapproval. This was the theory of Job's friends, but plainly they were mistaken (Job 42:7). If Paul had interpreted his sufferings in this manner he would have given up the ministry (2 Cor. 11:23-27). There is, of course, earthly judgment for sin (1 Cor. 11:29-31; Acts 5:3-5), but the misconduct should be obvious in these cases and not something for which we need to search our souls endlessly. Such introspection often ends up with a wrong explanation. He may doubt his sure standing with God (Eph. 1:2-6).

Godly men have often misinterpreted their problems. Jeremiah thought that God was punishing him (Lam. 3:1-12). The disciples thought that the man born blind was afflicted because of either his parents' sin or some supposed sin while in the womb. Neither was true (John 9:1-3). Believers are sometimes overwhelmed with doubt and fear. The Lord's disciples were terror-stricken when a fierce storm struck their little boat. Jesus asked, "Where is your faith?" (Luke 8:24-25). The opposite reaction is seen among the Thessalonian saints when persecution did not shake their strong faith (1 Thess. 3:3-6). What can we do when attacked by doubt, fear, and confusion?

1. *Meditate On God's Character.* God is in control. Trust Him. Be still and know that He is God (Psa. 46:10). Love Him. Praise Him at all times (Psa. 34:1). Praise glorifies God, especially in adversity. Paul and Silas sang when imprisoned, to the amazement of others (Acts 16:25). Spirits are lifted beyond the present trials when we consider the dependable character of our wonderful Savior.
2. *Seek The Mind Of God.* Go deeply into the Word. The Bible can give encouragement to your soul (Psa. 119:28, 50, 147). Difficulty can be a marvelous opportunity for fresh insights into God's character and dealings with us. Prayer is particularly in season during times of affliction (Jas. 5:13). Thank the Lord in every circumstance (1 Thess. 5:18). Devotedness when things are not going well is purer than love which is only in the sunshine. Refuse the emotion of fear (Psa. 34:4-5). Over 100 times in the Bible believers are told "be not afraid." By faith God can replace trembling and dismay with strength and courage (Josh. 1:9). Panic makes anything worse. Keep your poise. This inspires and encourages others.

3. **Glory In Your Weakness** (2 Cor. 11:30). Our weakness is an opportunity to display His strength and power through us (2 Cor. 12:9). Helplessness forces us to depend upon God alone and turns us from self-sufficiency. See trials as a means of building character (1 Pet. 5:10; Rom. 5:3; Jas. 1:2-3). Face difficulty triumphantly (Heb. 11:33-34). It is particularly helpful if we are patient (1 Pet. 2:20). Rejoice in it, rather than just endure it (2 Cor. 8:2; Acts 5:41).
4. **Utilize Opportunities**. Trials can be used to advance the gospel. Because Paul was in prison he was able to share the knowledge of the Lord Jesus with the whole palace guard (Phil. 1:13). Believers who saw Paul's example were encouraged to speak the Word of God more courageously and fearlessly (Phil. 1:14). Personal conflicts can be building blocks in ministering to others. God comforts us in troubles so we can comfort others in times of trial (2 Cor. 1:4).
5. **Focus On The Future**. Look ahead. Present sufferings are nothing when compared to future glory (Rom. 8:18). Light affliction is for a brief time and is then followed by the reward of eternal glory (2 Cor. 4:17). Great persecution will bring great reward to the sufferer (Matt. 5:11-12). The Lord Jesus says, "Rejoice!"

Trials And Suffering

1. Identify the *origins* of trials and suffering in each of the following verses:

Genesis 3:17-19; Romans 5:12

John 5:14; 1 Corinthians 11:29-30

Luke 22:31; 1 Peter 5:8

Genesis 22:1; Hebrews 12:6

2. How does God use trials and suffering in a believer's life (John 15:2; 2 Cor. 12:7-10; Heb. 12:10; 1 Pet. 5:10)?

The Bible teaches that a believer is called to suffer with Christ and for His sake. How does Paul's life manifest this (Acts 9:15-16; Rom. 9:1-3; 1 Cor. 4:10; 2 Cor. 4:11; Col. 1:24)?

3. What quality in a believer's life does God test (Jas. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:6-7)? How do trials and suffering actually test this quality? Why is it important (Heb. 11:6)?
4. What are some *ways* that a Christian may be tried?

2 Corinthians 11:26

2 Corinthians 12:7

Philippians 2:27

1 Thessalonians 3:3-4

1 Timothy 6:9-10

2 Timothy 3:12

5. Identify some of the *benefits* of trials and suffering

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

2 Corinthians 4:16-17

Romans 5:3-5

Hebrews 12:11

James 1:3-4

Which of these benefits motivates you the most to endure testing? Why?

6. The Book of Job addresses the problem of suffering and gives us instruction on the proper response to suffering. What kind of man was Job (1:1, 8; 2:3)? What does Satan's challenge indicate about the reason Job was tested (1:9-11; 2:4-6)?

Identify the trials Job faced and his response.

1:13-22

2:7-10

The greatest attack was on his trust in God. What attitude did he have (13:14-15)?

7. What should be a believer's response when facing trials and suffering?

Psalm 46:10

Psalm 119:71-72

2 Corinthians 12:9

Ephesians 5:20

1 Thessalonians 5:18

James 1:2

Why is a proper view of God's character important during these times? List the attributes of God that you might meditate on in times of testing.

8. Describe the response toward trials and suffering of the following: Christ (Heb. 12:2):

Stephen (Acts 7:54-60):

Paul (2 Cor. 4:17-18; Rom. 8:18):

What common factor is present in the outlook toward trials?

9. Read 1 Peter 4:12-5:10. List key steps to take during times of trials and suffering.
10. Cite an experience in your life in which you underwent a trial or suffering. What helped you endure it? How did you benefit from the experience?

Lesson 8: Grievances And Offenses

The Lord desires that there be no divisions among us as fellow believers (1 Cor. 1:10). “Be at peace among yourselves” is His direct command (1 Thess. 5:13). With humility and patience we are to do all that we can to maintain the “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:2-3). We are warned against the danger of a root of bitterness springing up in our heart (Heb. 12:15). Strife, quarreling, contention, division, and dissension are but various manifestations of the flesh and are contrary to the mind of God (1 Cor. 3:3; 2 Cor. 12:20).

It is unnecessary to ask if we have ever quarreled with another person or experienced bitterness, resentment, or hurt feelings. However, do we normally handle conflicts in a way that pleases the Lord Jesus? Many of us could be honest only by answering “No.” Either we do not know how to handle grievances and offenses Scripturally, or we fail to act upon what we know. As a result we find fault with others, contend with them or retain a grievance against them. The Lord finds no joy in this, we are unhappy and others see us as having the same attitudes as the unsaved.

Responding Negatively to Others

It is helpful to review first some typically wrong ways of responding to differences with others:

1. Justifying Wrong Attitudes. We can say that we are only human and that it is natural to have negative feelings about someone who has displeased us. We can leave it to the other person to see what we regard as the error of his ways and do nothing personally. We can say that we tried to correct the problem in the past but it did no good.
2. Retaining Negative Feelings (Gen. 27:41). The longer something continues the more deeply rooted it tends to become. That is why we are warned not to let the sun go down on our anger (Eph. 4:26). There can be brooding, resentment, and a prolonging of hurt feelings if we do not give it to God or settle it with the other person. The issue festers like an untreated sore.
3. Withdrawing (Luke 15:28-29). We may have nothing further to do with people who have offended us. We may pull out, resign, quit, and wash our hands of the whole matter. We may say we were doing it to avoid a disturbance, but in reality it is often a form of punishing others with our displeasure.
4. Complaining To Others (Prov. 25:9). Problems may be discussed with third parties rather than directly with the person involved. We release our unhappiness this way. Complaints have a way of getting back to the person concerned and making things worse.
5. Retaliating (Prov. 24:29). We may stir up ill feelings in others against the offending party, so that now a group of people condemns, rejects, or opposes him. We might even think of some way to retaliate or get even (1 Pet. 3:9). It is even possible to file a lawsuit against other believers, an action God condemns (1 Cor. 6:1-8).

It hardly needs to be said that the Lord Jesus never handled situations in any of these ways. Each of these actions is a prescription for further strife. How then can we act in a Christ-honoring way when we are offended?

Resisting Offenses

1. **Avoid Being Offended.** Some people are thin-skinned. They seem to become offended more easily than others. This might well indicate an over-sensitive disposition. If feelings are easily hurt and resentments crop up, there is likely an undue focus on self. This requires self-judgment on our part, rather than resentments toward others. It is possible to be always standing on our rights. It may or may not be true that certain things are “due” us. The godly believer, however, has surrendered all of his rights to the Lord Jesus by virtue of the fact that Christ bought him with a price (1 Cor. 6:20). In place of our rights the Lord gives us privileges in the spirit of grace. Thus, we are willing to accept wrong if necessary (1 Cor. 6:7).

It is helpful to be more concerned about the needs of others than the rights of self. A person may be weakened by physical, emotional, or spiritual strain. Thus, it may be a good thing to make allowances for some word or action by that person which is not typical. We need a calm acceptance of flaws in others who, like us, are not perfect in the flesh. Very commonly, we misinterpret statements, expressions, and actions. We may not be correct as to what was said or meant by others' statements. Language is often tricky. The state of mind of both ourselves and others is a major factor. It is best to give others the benefit of the doubt. It is possible to magnify a matter beyond its true importance and “make a mountain out of a molehill.” We should be particularly cautious in receiving reports from third parties. The ancient rule still stands: “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Cor. 13:1). Our Lord Himself was a model of tolerance and patience in the midst of much misunderstanding, abuse, and ingratitude. He advocated and exemplified even accepting insults (Matt. 5:11).

2. **Avoid Hurtful Responses.** What a Christian does when offended should be totally different from what an unsaved person might do. We should not fall into the trap of acting according to our old nature. Believers are never called to act against unkindness with more of the same. Emotions can sometimes be internalized in the form of boiling resentment or hurt. This injures us. Spreading our grievances to others is sin. Often this is done in the pretense of “sharing for prayer,” and can cause others to “take up an offense” that is not their business. God wants offenses to be taken up with the parties concerned.

Responding Positively to Offenses

1. **Develop Positive Attitudes.** We often suffer from what has been called “gunbarrel vision.” This is the practice of looking at something from only one narrow viewpoint. The Scriptures indicate that usually there is more than one dimension to a situation. Here are some steps that broaden our viewpoint: (a) Remember that offenders are often God's tools (2 Sam. 16:5-12). Even an insult, properly received, can be used of God to improve our character, (b) Give thanks in everything (1 Thess. 5:18). It is amazing how this constructive response glorifies God. (c) Accept wrongs as part of our calling (1 Pet. 2:19-23). Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, (d) See the needs of others as opportunities (Luke 22:32). We can be so disappointed in people that we fail to see the opportunity to minister to them, (e) Leave all vengeance to God (Rom. 12:19-20). (f) Separate the offense from the offender. If we do not, we will hate people rather than hate their sins. God makes this distinction (Psa. 103:12). Let us do the same.

Forbearance and forgiveness are wonderful ointments for hurts (Col. 3:13). Love covers all transgressions (Prov. 10:12); it does not take into account the wrong suffered (1 Cor. 13:5).

2. Initiate Positive Action. *When you are the offender* you should: (a) Acknowledge your faults (Jas. 5:16). It takes a strong person to admit he has been wrong. Force yourself to take a good look. Could you possibly be in the wrong? (b) Initiate reconciliation (Matt. 5:23-24). Take the first step, even if you doubt that it is your responsibility.

When others seem to offend you, consider the following: (a) Pray for them (Matt. 5:44). Prayer changes things, (b) Stop being contentious yourself (Prov. 13:10; 18:6; 2 Tim. 2:24). Dropping an argument or offense is often the correct solution, (c) Forgive them where they may have wronged you (Eph. 4:32; Mark 11:25-26). God for Christ's sake forgave us and we did not deserve it. (d) Forget the offense. Brooding makes one miserable. It is a glorious thing to pass over a transgression (Prov. 19:11). (e) Go the second mile (Matt. 5:40-41). This means to exercise restraint to the point that you amaze the offender, (f) Go to them directly (Matt. 18:15-17; Luke 17:3-4; Gal. 6:1). Mend your differences and live in harmony (Phil. 4:2).

Restoring the Offender

Sometimes it is unwise or even wrong to ignore an offense. It may be difficult to forgive without speaking to the individual. What does the Bible say about confronting and restoring an offender?

1. The Occasion. The offense must be against us (Matt. 18:15). We cannot set everyone straight on everything. The Bible also warns against taking up an offense that is not our own (Psa. 15:3). However, an offense that is injurious to the offender or to the whole church should be confronted (2 Sam. 12:1-7; Gal. 6:1).
2. The Qualification. The person offended should examine his own life in the same area to determine his own blamelessness (Matt. 7:1-5). Restoring someone "overtaken in a fault" requires spiritual vitality (Gal. 6:1).
3. The Goal. The goal in dealing with an offender is always restoration. The focus should be toward benefiting the other person, not self. If we are successful, the person is restored to God and we have acquired a brother (Matt. 18:15).
4. The Attitude. Speaking to others should be done in a spirit of meekness (Gal. 6:1). This means that we stifle any "one-upmanship" or "holier-than-thou" attitudes. We should consider that we could just as easily have been the offender.
5. The Method. Details of the grievance procedure are given in Matthew 18:15-17. (a) We go to the offender alone and tell him about the fault. He hears it from us, not from a third party, (b) If the offender is not willing to hear and the problem cannot be resolved on this level, the one offended is to return with one or two witnesses. This shows serious intent and eliminates the "private quarrel" aspect of the offense, (c) Failure at the second level requires that the matter be brought before the church—first to the elders as representatives of the church, and finally, if necessary, to the assembly as a whole, (d) If the offender is unrelenting before the church, he is to be treated as a heathen or non-Christian. Thus, the obstinacy of the offender demonstrates a much greater problem than the original offense, (e) Even if it is necessary to put the offender out of fellowship (which is rare), the goal is still restoration. If the offender is penitent, he is to be forgiven and warmly restored to fellowship (2 Cor. 2:6-11). Rebuke and then forgive is the order (Luke 17:3-4).

Conclusion

The Lord Jesus Christ has given us all the necessary instructions for dealing with grievances and offenses. Yet, like Peter, we might ask, “Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?” (Matt. 18:21). Jesus told Peter “seventy times seven” and then related a parable about a man who was forgiven an enormous debt but was unwilling to forgive a very small debt (Matt. 18:22-35). The Lord called this man wicked because of his unforgiving spirit after he had been forgiven so much. God in Christ has forgiven us all our sin. So we too should demonstrate the spirit of forgiveness toward others, especially our brethren.

Grievances And Offenses

1. What are some ways in which we might respond wrongly when we are offended?

Genesis 27:41

Psalms 15:3

Proverbs 24:29

Luke 15:28-29

1 Corinthians 6:1-6

Ephesians 4:26

1 Peter 3:9

Which of these is your greatest tendency when you are offended?

2. How might our attitudes toward the offender and the offense help us in responding correctly?

2 Samuel 16:5-12

Romans 12:19-21

1 Thessalonians 5:18

1 Peter 2:19-23

3. From the following passages, identify principles that will help you respond positively to offenses.

Proverbs 19:11

Proverbs 25:9

Matthew 5:40-41

Matthew 5:44

1 Corinthians 13:5

Ephesians 4:32

2 Timothy 2:24

James 5:16

4. What is sometimes necessary in dealing with an offense (Matt. 18:15; Luke 17:3)?

What are some cautions we must take before confronting an offender with his offense?

Matthew 7:1-5

2 Corinthians 13:1

Galatians 6:1

5. What should be the goal of confronting the offender (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1)?
6. Identify the steps for resolving grievances when others have offended (Matt. 18:15-17).
7. Read Matthew 18:21-35. What lesson did the Lord Jesus teach here about forgiveness?

Why is this lesson important to remember when dealing with offenses?

8. *What steps do we take in resolving grievances when we are the offenders?*

Matthew 5:22-24

James 5:16

9. Give an example of a time when you did not handle a grievance in the Scriptural way. What was the result?
10. How can you begin to respond toward offenses in a more Scriptural manner? What principles learned in this lesson do you need to begin applying?

Do you have an unresolved grievance with anyone? If so, state what you need to do and when you will do it.

Lesson 9: Worship

The noblest activity of any human being is divine worship. It occupies the spirit, mind, and mouth of man with the greatest of all subjects, God in all His glory. This unique capacity for considering and adoring God separates man, as a spiritual being, from all of the lower creation. Worship renders to the Supreme Lord and Creator that which is ours truly to give. Thus God considers it most precious. Worship is only for Him. The first and greatest commandment declares that we are to worship no other god (Exod. 34:14). Yet Satan has attempted to steal this honor for himself (Matt. 4:9). Heathen rulers have sought and received it. Men have given worship to demons, idols, animals, trees, mountains, rivers, stars, the sun, and other men. Godly men and the angels of God have always refused it (Acts 10:25-26; 14:14-15; Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9). Significantly, the Lord Jesus accepted worship without rebuke, a clear mark of His claim to being God (Matt. 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9; Mark 5:6; John 9:38).

God seeks worshipers, but only on the proper basis. The Lord Jesus said, “True worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24). This suggests that there is a worship which is in error, just as it is possible to worship false objects. In Old Testament times, God gave detailed instructions for worshipping in the tabernacle in the wilderness and later in the temple in Jerusalem. New Testament worship also must be according to God’s order. One distinction of this new order is that all believers, not a select group, are now called “a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5).

An activity of high priority for Christians is worshipping God. Part of our eternal occupation will be to praise the Lamb as worthy (Rev. 5:9-14). Praise is also our present calling. We should long to grow in our ability to praise Him who alone is worthy. Growth as a worshiper is a significant area of needed spiritual development.

Meaning of Worship

What is worship? Many believers think of it as the morning exercises of a church, including preaching, announcements, choir singing, or rituals. Often these are called “Morning Worship.” A believer may indeed worship God at this time in a silent way or in singing some particular hymn. However, such a church service is far from the Biblical concept of worship.

The definition of “worship” indicates a bowing down, even prostration, to do honor to a superior. W. E. Vine in his “Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words” tells us that it is “the direct acknowledgement to God of His nature, attributes, ways and claims, whether by the outgoing of the heart in praise and thanksgiving or by deed done in such acknowledgement.” Worship renders reverential honor, adoration, devotion, and submission by word, thought, attitude, and action to the one true God. It is a response of loving appreciation, an overflow of a grateful heart, an outpouring of a redeemed soul occupied with God. Worship is not a discussion *about* God but is a direct address to God.

Worship is attributing worth to God for *who He is* or *what He is like*. This requires the study of what He has revealed about Himself in Scripture. As we do this, we find He is not exactly like anything or anybody we know. God is unique. Some traits are true only of Him. For example, He is self-existent (John 5:26), eternal (Psa. 90:2), unlimited (1 Kgs. 8:27), all-powerful (Job 42:2), all-knowing (Psa. 147:4-5), all-present (Psa. 139:7-12), changeless (Mai. 3:6), self-sufficient (Acts

17:24-25), and sovereign (Eph. 1:11). He also has certain characteristics in which we are called to be like Him. These include love, grace, mercy, holiness, righteousness, truth, patience, wisdom, goodness, and generosity. We can also share His wrath against evil and ungodliness (Rom. 1:18).

He is to be worshiped also for *what He does*. He is the Creator of all things, including man (Psa. 95:6). He is Helper, Deliverer, Redeemer. By His Word, He accomplishes His will (Psa. 33:6). He condescends to hear the prayers of lowly mortals (Psa. 65:2). He forgives sins and reaches out in grace to draw men to Himself (Psa. 65:3-4). He tests and refines His people (Psa. 66:10). He is an all-victorious Commander (Psa. 136:10-15).

Worship dwells upon the worthiness of Him who sits upon the throne of the universe (Rev. 4:10-11; 5:12-14). God, not self, is the focus. This is well illustrated by the woman who wiped the feet of Jesus with her hair (John 12:3-7). Worship also involves bringing sacrifices or gifts of great value to the Lord as did the wise men to the young child (Matt. 2:11). The very first mention of the word in the Bible shows the costliness of the sacrifice and the humble submission involved when Abraham offered up Isaac (Gen. 22:2-9).

Attitudes of praise help us define the true character of any spiritual offering. True worship:

Approaches God with lowliness and *humility*. Come as to “His footstool” (Psa. 99:5; 132:7).

Expresses the *joy of an inward delight* in God Himself. “Let us shout joyfully” (Psa. 95:1-2; 66:1).

Is *exuberant and outward* in its expression at times. Hence we sing praises unto Him (Psa. 135:3; 30:4; 47:6).

Is *deeply reverent* and never flippant. “Holy and awesome is His name” (Psa. 111:9).

Bubbles forth from within, rather than being worked up from without. “My heart overflows with a good theme” (Psa. 45:1).

Forms of Worship

How should we worship? There may be either individual or group expression.

1. **Personal Worship.** Private spiritual life is where worship needs to develop as a way of life. This may come as a time of rejoicing and appreciation before God. An example is when the servant of Abraham was given success in a great mission (Gen. 24:26). There may be a time of humble submission to God in the midst of calamity (Job 1:20). Morning or evening prayers ought to begin with worship. This is suggested by what is called “the Lord’s Prayer,” a pattern for believers. “Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed by Thy name” (Matt. 6:9 NASB). This praise is a holy offering to God. For example, we read, “Let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that 70 is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name” (Heb. 13:15 NASB).

The presentation of our bodies as a living sacrifice to God is an act of worship (Rom. 12:1). Gifts to the Lord’s work offered in Christ’s name are like a fragrant incense to God, representing sacrifice to Him (Phil. 4:18). Giving should be an act of worship.

2. **Collective Worship.** God’s people should gather to praise Him unitedly. The Old Testament order was elaborate. There was a central sanctuary, animal sacrifices, a special ministering priesthood, and carefully prescribed rituals. The significance of all these comes to light later as pictures of the Lord Jesus, His sacrificial work, and the way of approach to God. This is explained for us in the book of Hebrews. This book teaches that the former order of

worship has now been done away as mere shadows of the true. New Testament provision for worshiping the Lord is quite simple. Early church practice included teaching of God's Word, fellowship, prayer, and what was called "the breaking of bread" or communion (Acts 2:42). This observance seems to have been central to the gatherings of believers (1 Cor. 11:23-34) on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). There was a participation by several believers in this corporate gathering (1 Cor. 14:26). All believers were now priests (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6). The only altar was His sacrifice on the cross (Heb. 13:10). No holy locations were necessary (John 4:20-23).

A.W. Tozer has called collective worship "the missing jewel" of the evangelical church. Spiritual leaders today are calling for a revitalization through changing old forms or seeing that new life is put into the old forms. Often our worship is "holy but dull," as someone has said. There needs to be a relief from deadness and a curing of the lack of joyful celebration. Until close attention is given to worship, there will be no relief. The great lack must be recognized. The people of God must cease being mere spectators at a service, as though it were a concert. They must become God-focused as they come together. There needs to be preparation for worship beforehand and an opportunity to worship once they have arrived. Evangelistic or expository messages from Scripture are not worship. In worship, the issue is not "what I get out of it, but what I give to God."

3. Family Worship. Here perhaps is one of the oldest forms. From the earliest days of man on earth, the father acted as a priestly head who led his family in praise and offerings to God. Today, a need exists for a revival of times in the home when families pray and worship God together. The sessions need not be lengthy, and children can be taught from early years what it is to worship the Lord in a simple way. Children cried out the praises of the Lord in the temple, although some observers objected. Jesus replied, "Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babes Thou hast prepared praise for Thyself" (Matt. 21:16 NASB).

Requirements of Worship

When is our worship truly acceptable to God? When do we enter the presence of God with spiritual offerings that honor Him? Is it when the form is right? Is it when our words are correct? Is it when we feel good about it? Is it when the spiritual leaders or others about us say spiritual things? Is it by merely being present at a service? Here are some important necessities.

1. Relationship With God. Acceptable worship in God's sight requires a spiritual relationship. No person can enter the holy presence of God apart from being cleansed by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10:19). Remission of sins and access to God are impossible without that blood (Heb. 9:22). Seeking to approach God on our own merits, apart from blood sacrifice, is called the "way of Cain" and is under a curse (Jude 11; Gen. 4:3-5). Even if the form of approach is correct, an ungodly life will evidence a pretended relationship and bring rejection to the one who brings offerings to God (Isa. 1:11-17).
2. Fellowship With God. Walking in the light is necessary for fellowship with God and fellow-believers (1 John 1:7). Defilement excludes one from God's presence (Psa. 66:18). Self-judgment must precede worship lest we be disciplined by God (1 Cor. 11:27-32). Clean hands and a pure heart are necessary (Psa. 24:3-4). We are in the spirit of praising God when we are in step with Him, appreciating His character and grateful for His goodness. When Paul and Silas were in prison, they were singing hymns of praise to God (Acts 16:25).

That is the kind of fellowship that does not depend upon circumstances. Walk with God and your mouth will be filled with His praises.

3. **Knowledge Of God.** To worship God in truth we must know Him. To know Him we must become aware of what He has revealed about Himself in His Word. We must also be growing in a working knowledge of Him in the school of life. We are called to increase in that knowledge (Col. 1:10). To know Him in our inner being is more important to God than burnt offerings (Hos. 6:6). Uniquely we know God when we know in truth the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 4:13). The attributes of God such as grace, love, holiness, righteousness, and mercy are the very substance of the most glorious passages of worship in Scripture. The glories of the Son of God, who is the Lamb of God, form the theme of New Testament worship passages (Heb. 1:3-10; Rev. 5:9-13). He is a wonderful, glorious Lord, and we need to learn more and more about Him that we might increase the substance of our praise.
4. **Appreciation For God.** The Lord Jesus illustrated the question about who will love Him the most by a story of two debtors (Luke 7:41-47). The point of the story is that the one who believes that he has been forgiven the most will love the Lord most. The Psalms of David are outstanding examples of worship. The writer felt that God had forgiven him much and blessed him much. The Lord Jesus is sensitive to ingratitude and lack of appreciation (Luke 17:17). The thankful believer therefore will be careful to enter His courts with praise (Psa. 100:4-5). We want to give glory to God (1 Chron. 16:29). If you count your blessings and rejoice in the One who blesses you, then you can magnify the Lord and exalt His name (Psa. 34:3).

Suggestions for Worship

Adoration of the Lord does not come out of technique but out of life. The following thoughts may be helpful, however, in developing as a worshiper.

1. **Thirst For Deeper Fellowship With God** (Psa. 42:1-2; 63:1). Complacency and apathy are enemies of the life of praise. Seek continually to deepen your roots in Him. This will require a deeper experimental and Scriptural knowledge of Him.
2. **Be Serious About Worship.** Give it priority in your life. Determine that you will regularly enter His courts with praise, whether your circumstances are favorable or not.
3. **Have An Exalted View Of God.** Stand in awe of Him (Isa. 6:1-7). Tremble before His greatness (Isa. 66:2).
4. **Be Sincere In What You Tell Him.** He is sensitive to hypocrisy or attempted flattery (Matt. 6:5; Psa. 78:36).
5. **Be Continually Fresh In Your Offerings.** Do not use empty repetitions of words (Matt. 6:7). Take time to review His character and ways before beginning. Directly address the Lord in honest appreciation. Be fervent.

Someone has said that the devil fears true worshippers. There seems to be a greater working of God in power and blessing when praise ascends to God's throne. Praise or thanksgiving glorifies God (Psa. 50:23). Particularly when there is united praise for God from His people, the glory of the Lord comes down to fill the house (2 Chron. 5:13-14). We need not wonder then that worship is costly (Gen. 22:2; 2 Sam. 24:24; John 12:3). Here is where God is glorified supremely, and He has called us all to this ministry.

Worship

Each day this week we will do a devotional from a passage in Scripture dealing with the content of worship. At our next meeting the workshop period will be given entirely to worship of the Lord. We will not use our Bibles or notes during the workshop. We will not discuss the worksheet or talk to each other. The workshop will consist of worshipping God in direct address to Him. Therefore, it is necessary that we come prepared. We should not offer to God that which cost us nothing (2 Sam. 24:24).

The following order is suggested to help in our preparation:

1. Pray for illumination by the Spirit of God.
2. Read the passage several times.
3. Give each section a short title. Write a brief summary of the main point. Make a personal application.
4. In step 3 it may be helpful to ask questions as you think about the passage. Who is (are) the speaker(s)? Who is being addressed? What is the occasion? What can I learn about worship from this passage? What attributes of God are mentioned here? What motives are involved? How will this help me worship God better?
5. After completing your devotional each day answer the questions on the back of this worksheet relating to that passage.

Devotional Schedule		
Day 1—Psalm 103	Day 3—Revelation 4:8-11; 5:9-14	Day 5—Luke 1:46-55
Day 2—Psalm 95:1-6; 96:1-10	Day 4—Psalm 139	Day 6—Psalm 145
		Day 7—Review

Sample Devotional Worksheet

Passage: _____ Date: _____

Title _____

Summary: _____

Application: _____

Day 1—Psalm 103. List benefits you personally have received from the Lord (based on vv. 3-5). List character traits (attributes) of God (vv. 6-19). How will you include these thoughts in your worship today?

Day 2—Psalm 95:1-6; 96:1-10. Write as many different words or phrases you can find in these passages which are an expression of worship (as “sing for joy”). List reasons given in the passages as to why we should worship the Lord (as “the Lord is a great God”). How will you include these ideas in your worship today?

Day 3—Revelation 4:8-11; 5:9-14. Use your own words to describe two things for which the living creatures worship God (Rev. 4:8-11). Who is the center of praise and what is being said about Him in worship (Rev. 5:9-14)? How will you include these thoughts in your worship today?

Day 4—Psalm 139. What thoughts do you find about God here? What do you learn about God's attitude toward you? How will you include these in your worship today?

Day 5—Luke 1:46-55. What does Mary say about God's character? His acts? What progression do you notice in the focus of Mary's worship? How does this passage motivate you to worship God today?

Day 6—Psalm 145. List the character traits of God for which He is blessed. How does God treat all of His creatures, deserving or not? How will you respond in worship today?

Day 7—REVIEW. How have you been challenged in your own worship? What are your greatest needs in the area of worship? What steps will you take to become a better worshiper of God?

Passage: _____ Date: _____

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Summary: _____

Application: _____

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Lesson 10: Presenting The Gospel

The Scriptures indicate no single way for presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ to another person. Our Savior used various approaches with differing people. However, He always presented Himself as central to salvation. He also stressed the importance of His impending death and resurrection. These truths must be presented when sharing the gospel. The Spirit of the Lord alone can give us perception as to what must be emphasized. For example, do we need to point to God's love when a soul is despairing? Should we stress confessing sinnership when another is self-righteous? Is repentance needed in one who makes sin a casual thing? Does a Christ-denying cult member know that Scripture affirms that Jesus is God? Is there a problem with understanding saving faith? The Lord Jesus always touched on the most critical point in dealing with each individual.

The story of salvation is broken here into its varied parts for better understanding, not for prescribing a formula presentation. One should spend time with people on the areas of their greatest need. Key verses should be memorized. Exact quotation from memory is impressive. The one with whom we deal should have the open text before him whenever possible.

Remember these simple rules in sharing the Gospel:

1. Be prayerful and depend on God.
2. Assume nothing about the other person.
3. Ask good questions. Find out his spiritual condition.
4. Listen and observe thoughtfully.
5. Do not move beyond his understanding.
6. Make the Lord Jesus the major focus.

Opening the Door of Communication

Building a bridge of understanding or winning the right to be heard is the necessary first step in evangelism. Take the conversational initiative and show a sincere interest in others. This opens doors. Have a life that is respected by others (1 Pet. 2:12). They will more likely listen to your witness. Be enthusiastic about what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for you. They may sense that He also can help them. Speak about Christ in a natural way during normal contacts with others.

The Lord Jesus used good questions as openers. You can do the same with everyday topics that interest other people such as what we eat, where we live, or what we do. News events can be starters. Home backgrounds can be discussed even with strangers. Help someone practically. Smile or give a cheerful greeting. Ask for advice or assistance. Practice These Things In Daily Contacts. Pray for divine appointments. Our Father knows where the fish are that can be brought into His net (Luke 5:4-10).

Making the Transition

Move from an ordinary subject to the spiritual area. Practice doing this in daily contacts with others. A transition to spiritual discussion involves three elements:

1. Start Where They Are. Use the subject they have been talking about. If someone speaks of current events, you might say, "The news has been very disturbing."

2. **Move Toward A Spiritual Subject.** Relate the subject at hand to a spiritual observation. Using the starting sentence above, say, "It makes me thankful that I have a brighter hope."
3. **Connect With A Question.** Ask a question that directs them to respond to the spiritual subject you have introduced. Still following the example above, say, "In what way do you see a hope for the future?" Do not let them merely agree or disagree. You are seeking a discussion.

Making the Presentation

The Gospel can be discussed under these major headings. Other divisions are a convenient way to keep in mind various important truths so they will not be overlooked.

1. **Offer Made.** God has made the greatest of all proclamations. God's salvation is available to "whosoever will" (John 3:16; Rev. 22:17). He is willing to receive and forgive even the worst of sinners. That is the "good news." This is what our word "Gospel" means. He is not willing that even one should perish (2 Pet. 3:9).
 - a. *Abundant Life.* Tremendous blessings are freely offered: abundant life, peace, joy, rest, forgiveness, and eternal life. "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10b). You can have everlasting life even now (John 5:24).
 - b. *Love of God.* Ask others, "Do you know that God loves you?" (John 3:16). He loves even sinners (Rom. 5:8).

Is there any interest in these abundant blessings freely offered in Christ? Do not keep trying to explain salvation to a person who shows no interest and no sign of the working of the Spirit. Responders to Jesus in the four Gospels displayed considerable interest and even eagerness to come to Him.

2. **Offer Needed.** We cannot understand the origin of hate, war, suffering, violence, and evil unless we understand the greatest of all problems, that of SIN. We cannot rightly come to Jesus and ignore the problem of personal sin. The only person who needs a Savior is a sinner. The reason that Jesus came was to "save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21; Luke 19:10). Do not encourage people to come to Jesus only to solve their earthly problems or have greater meaning in their lives. People need to come to Christ to be saved from their sins and to escape the eternal judgment of God (John 3:36; 1 Thess. 1:10).
 - a. *What is Sin?* This must be measured by the standard of a holy God. Many think only the vilest of crimes are sin and believe they are innocent. A child or young person raised in favorable moral surroundings is as much included in Romans 3:23 as a murderer or an offender of the vilest sort. All have sinned. The heart of sin is turning aside to do what we want, not what God wants (Isa. 53:6). Sin is having self on the throne of your life. Acknowledgment of sinnership before God precedes God's act of justifying us (Luke 18:13-14). Jesus came to call sinners to repentance, not those who classify themselves as righteous (Matt. 9:13).
 - b. *Death and Separation.* Only one thing pays the debt of sin—death (Rom. 6:23). All sin demands the supreme penalty. One cannot pay for sin simply by asking for forgiveness. Going through church rituals or attending services will not make things right with God. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" is the verdict of a holy God (Ezek. 18:20). Physical death separates the soul and spirit from the body. Our bodies may decay, but the spirit remains conscious. Sin also separates the spirit from God's spirit (Isa. 59:2). If a person dies

physically while he is still separated from God, he faces the “second death,” which is separation from God for eternity (Rev. 20:14-15). This is the most terrible punishment of all and should make an unbeliever tremble, c. *Need to Repent*. Consider how many times even a “good man” offends God in word, thought, and deed. The goodness of God is intended to lead us to repentance (Rom. 2:4). The simple meaning of repentance is “change of mind.” This change of mind involves a *turning from sin* as well as a *turning to God*. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord” (Isa. 55:7). The Old Testament word was “turn” (Jer. 26:3). Some have denied the necessity of such repentance by saying this step would involve working for salvation; yet early Christian preaching included a call to repentance (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30). Jesus said that without repentance we will perish (Luke 13:3). Unless someone genuinely wants to turn from his sins as well as turn to God, there can be no salvation (Acts 20:21). True repentance does not require a prolonged period of sorrowing or agonizing. A saved person will be delivered from continuing in sin. Is there a sense of spiritual need in the life of the person hearing the Gospel? This is a mark of the Holy Spirit’s work in convicting of sin (John 16:8). Do not offer a remedy when there is no consciousness of need. 3. *OFFER JUST*. If God were not perfectly holy, righteous, just, and unchangeable in His character, then He could overlook our sin. He “will by no means clear the guilty” (Exod. 34:7). How can God execute His holy command and yet save the ones He loves. How can He be both “just and justifier” (Rom. 3:26)? God has wondrously worked out a plan where “mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psa. 85:10). This means that at the cross Christ reconciled seeming opposites in His character. God’s offer of salvation is the greatest solution of man’s greatest problem.

- c. *Substitutionary Death and Resurrection*. The solution is death for the sinner by substitution. Our debt is paid by another. Study 1 Peter 2:24 and 3:18. Christ bore our sins. He died for us, “the just for the unjust.” The significance of the many animal sacrifices of the Old Testament is the way they point to Christ’s death. The Passover lamb that was slain memorially by the Jews finds its true fulfillment in “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Jesus was “smitten of God” when He died in our place. “With His stripes, we are healed” (Isa. 53:4-5). We have “redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7). By seeing that death alone pays for sin, we can understand why Jesus died and what He accomplished. In addition, we must believe that Jesus rose from the dead (Rom. 10:9b). The resurrection of Christ was a vital part of early Christian preaching (Acts 4:33; 17:18).
- d. *The God-Man*. It is necessary to understand the identity of the Person who took our place. Jesus asked His disciples, “Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?” (Matt. 16:13). Since only a man could die for another man, our Savior is “the man, Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). He was also the Word and that Word was God. That Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:1, 14). Jesus is God, being so called many times (John 20:28; 1 John 5:20; Heb. 1:6-8). He took the Divine title “I AM” (Isa. 43:13; Exod. 3:14) and said that those who refused to acknowledge Him as such would die in their sins (John 8:24). Denying that Jesus Christ is God come in the flesh is evidence that one is not of God (1 John 4:2-3; Jude 4). Every saved person must acknowledge the deity of Christ, c. *Grace, Not Works*. The Divine Person who took our place in death did all that was necessary for our salvation. No human works or church activities can add to it. Salvation is by the unmerited favor or grace of God, not of works (Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5). When Jesus died on the cross, He cried, “It is finished” (John

19:30). The one sacrifice for sins that He made on the cross settles forever the sin question (Heb. 10:10, 12). Those who preach a salvation that requires something in addition to His work are under the curse of God (Gal. 1:6-10; 2:16). 4. OFFER ACCEPTED. Christ died for all men (1 John 2:2), but not all will be saved. Why not? The answer is that His work must be appropriated personally (John 6:50-57). This requires that we hear and then believe the Gospel before the Spirit of God enters our lives (Eph. 1:13). Salvation is like a check which must be endorsed before it can be cashed by an individual. Salvation is a person, the Lord Jesus Christ, who must be received if we are to have life (1 John 5:12). Study carefully the following points.

- e. *Believe the Gospel.* The Gospel is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16). It is carefully stated for us in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 and includes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ on behalf of sinners. It is by hearing the word of the Gospel that we believe (Acts 15:7; Eph. 1:13). We must hear, understand, and then believe the Gospel to be saved. The heart of the Gospel is a Person, the Lord Jesus. The simplest definition of a Christian is one who *has* the Lord Jesus Christ. “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:12).
- f. *Trust, Receive Christ.* How do we have Him? We have Him by *faith*, not by sight. This faith is in a Person (Acts 20:21; John 6:29). The basis is the Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13; Rom. 10:17). Believing leads to action (Matt. 12:13; John 9:7). Reality is evidenced by a changed life (Jas 2:14-26). See the faith actions in Hebrews 11. Faith is the channel through which the grace of God flows. Faith has no merit to earn salvation. John 1:12 and Revelation 3:20 are helpful in demonstrating that by a definite act of the will we receive the Lord Jesus Christ. A further example is that of marriage, to which Scripture likens our relationship to Christ (Rom. 7:4; Eph. 5:23-25). Just as the bridal couple take one another as man and wife, so the sinner takes Christ as Lord and Savior by faith.
- g. *Submit to the Lord.* Receiving Jesus is to receive Him as *Lord and Savior*, not omitting either the one or the other. Romans 10:9-10 and Philippians 2:10-11 make this necessity clear. One day even condemned sinners will acknowledge His Lordship. Christians will not delay this action until then. When saved, the rebel bows the knee to Jesus Christ. To pass into the kingdom of God, we must acknowledge the authority of the King. We may not fully see all the implications of His Lordship, yet we submit to His rule. The authority of Jesus is the point of stumbling with many who want sins forgiven but say “we will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14). The soul-winner must be satisfied that someone acknowledges his sinnership when expressing a desire to turn to Christ. The sinner must repent and believe the Gospel. Salvation comes not by merely saying a prayer, although it is helpful to have one who turns to God pray aloud. It is not a series of “yes” answers to questions, but a personal coming to Christ. The decision to turn to Christ is not something to be hurried through in our eagerness to get someone to pray. It is the most important step of life and deserves the most careful attention to the issues stated above. It is a transaction that results in eternal life. When a sinner repents and turns to Christ, the angels of heaven rejoice (Luke 15:7, 10).
5. *Offer Rejected.* The Lord has made full provision for the salvation of any who will come. Yet most seem to refuse our sorrowing Savior (Luke 13:34). Rejecting Him is a calamity when the refusal persists until death. Such a person faces the wrath of God (John 3:36; 2 Thess. 1:8-9).

We should pray for those who are not ready to receive Christ but show stirrings of response. We may need to be patient over an extended period of time. Our task is to sow the seed of the Word of God. The Holy Spirit alone brings about regeneration.

Presenting The Gospel

Before answering the following questions, carefully read the NOTES and then study John 4:1-42, a classic passage on personal evangelism.

1. What are some things that Jesus did to “build a bridge” to the Samaritan woman (vv. 1-9)? How did the woman respond?
2. How did Jesus make the transition into the gospel (vv. 10-12)? How does this illustrate the principles under “Making the Transition” in the NOTES?
3. How did Jesus present the offer of eternal life (vv. 13-14)? How did the woman respond (v. 15)? Why didn’t Jesus immediately tell her how to be saved?
4. How did Jesus cause the woman to see her need (vv. 16-18)? Why do you think the woman responded as she did (vv. 19-20)? How is what Jesus told her relevant to her need (vv. 21-24)?
5. What aspect under the Gospel outline heading “OFFER JUST” did Jesus deal with (vv. 25-26)? How do we determine how much to tell a person about “OFFER JUST”?
6. The section in the Gospel outline entitled “OFFER ACCEPTED” deals primarily with the will. Why did Jesus omit this step (vv. 27-30)? In what instances would we not spend so much time in this area? How did Jesus stress this area in the case of the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16-22)?
7. Jesus did not stress the area of eternal retribution (“OFFER REJECTED”) with the woman. With what type of people did Jesus emphasize this point (Matt. 11:20-24)?
8. In what ways did the woman demonstrate true repentance and salvation (vv. 27-30, 39-42)? What things might we look for as a sign of saving faith?
9. For each of the situations below, outline how you would build a bridge of communication and make a transition to spiritual things in order to present the gospel.

You are at a gasoline station getting directions from the attendant.

You are at work and a fellow employee makes a vague reference to religion.

You have neighbors several houses away and all that you know about them is their names.

You are having dinner with a relative.

10. List actual situations in your life that might be opportunities to witness. (Hint: think of your daily schedule, family members, neighbors, daily personal contacts, etc.)

What are some specific ways you will seek to build bridges and share the gospel in each of these situations?

Optional Project

Research the Gospels studying the various approaches Christ used to present the Gospel. Record at least four cases where Jesus started His presentation with something other than the concepts described under “OFFER MADE.” Indicate which of the five points of the Gospel outline He emphasized the most in each instance and why.

Lesson 11: Overcoming Objections To The Gospel

One would imagine that peace with God, forgiveness of sin, abundant and eternal life—all offered as a free gift—would find widespread acceptance. Instead there is resistance. Why? Because “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil (John 3:19). They do not like to retain God in their knowledge (Rom. 1:28). Many do not love the truth (2 Thess. 2:10), and they refuse to hear God’s words (John 8:47). Some are more interested in honor from men than honor from God (John 5:44). Many are deceived and so follow a way that seems right but leads to death (Prov. 14:12). Because of persistent rejection of God, some have even been spiritually blinded by God (John 12:40; Rom. 11:8, 25).

Because such resistance to the Gospel exists, we should expect that we will meet with all kinds of objections as we witness for Jesus Christ. For this reason, we are commanded “... do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to every one who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence” (1 Pet. 3:14-15 NASB). This defense is possible because, unlike other religions, the Christian faith has the advantage of absolute truth in every respect. It is a reasonable faith based upon historic facts and documents and backed by the power of God and the attraction of the risen Savior.

We must remember that believers have an important responsibility and role in God’s strategy for soul-winning. From God’s standpoint, men come to Christ by the will of God (John 1:13) in the time and manner of the Holy Spirit’s choosing (John 3:8). From the sinner’s standpoint, the issue is whether or not he wills to do God’s will (John 7:17). From our perspective as witnesses, we must effectively communicate the way of salvation and contend with objections by the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is not sufficient that we merely know *what* we believe as Christians. We must also be able and ready to defend *why* we believe.

Types of Objectors

An objector is one who presents or raises a question that constitutes a hindrance to believing the Gospel and accepting Christ’s claims on his life. In the course of a spiritual discussion, his objection may arise in a variety of ways. For example, he may present opinions about religious matters, such as creation or heaven and hell, that are clearly contrary to the Scripture. He may request information about the Bible. He may employ an objection to gain time to think. Each objection he presents has the potential of sidetracking a significant spiritual exchange.

An objector usually falls into one of two categories:

1. **Genuine.** The seeker of God may have a question, which if answered would lead the way for further exchange. This person is sincerely open for a reply. We want to provide a convincing answer.
2. **Pretended.** This person’s objection invites an answer which would make no real difference to him. The objection may be a cover for unwillingness to change. It may be a guise for argument, ridicule, or attack. Each answer leads to another question. The real problem is not the questions but the questioner’s attitude. Such a problem should be recognized, and we should not address the objection but expose the attitude. Jesus did not answer every question put to Him, nor should we.

Types of Objections

Objections may be classified under various headings for convenience.

1. Practical Objections basically ask, “does Christianity work?” *Question:* What about the conduct of professing Christians whose lives do not back up their claims to be changed by Christ? *Answer:* It is true that many people say they are Christians but fail to show changed lives. Yet why should a counterfeit Christian disprove the existence of a true one? Did not Jesus condemn the hypocrites (Matt. 6:2, 5, 16; 24:51)? Are we morally right to excuse our negligence by another’s misconduct?
2. Moral Objections question the justice or righteousness of God. *Question:* What about the heathen who never heard of Christ? *Answer:* The Judge of all the earth will do right (Gen. 18:25). The heathen have two witnesses, creation (Rom. 1:19-20) and conscience (Rom. 2:14-15). The Bible tells us that the heathen will be judged according to their response to God based on these witnesses. *Question:* Why do the innocent suffer? *Answer:* God created a universe without suffering (Gen. 1:31). He also gave man the freedom to disobey Him. This right of choice opened the way for sin, suffering, and death (Rom. 5:12). Thus, all suffering in the world, including that which touches innocent people, is the consequence of man’s disobedience to God.
3. Intellectual Objections are based on theoretical or speculative issues. *Question:* How do we know that God exists? *Answer:* The Bible makes no effort to prove God exists but says only that “the fool” denies it (Psa. 14:1; 53:1). Creation witnesses to the Creator (Psa. 19:1-4). The order, laws, and complexity of the universe more likely display the work of a creator than the work of chance. Does a wristwatch suggest a maker? Is there ever an effect without a cause? *Question:* How can miracles happen? *Answer:* Can an all-powerful God do them? If God is all-powerful, then miracles are possible. *Question:* Is not the Bible full of errors? *Answer:* “Well, name two or three that really bother you.” Most objectors will be unable to do this. They have not read through the Bible one time or read one good book dealing with the defense of the Christian faith. The marvel is that so many discoveries over the past 100 years have confirmed the truth of Scripture. For example, Nelson Glueck, one of the foremost modern investigators has said, “No archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference.”⁴
4. Emotional Objections might be called “non-rational” objections. *Objection:* Religion was pushed upon me as a child. I don’t want it any more. *Answer:* Does your childhood experience nullify the truth of Christ’s claims on your life? *Objection:* So many religions in the world claim to be true. How can anyone tell which is right? *Answer:* Have you tried to find the truth in sincerity? Have you prayed and sought God’s guidance? Have you thoughtfully read the Holy Scriptures? *Objection:* Religion is a result of childhood training or fear of the unknown. *Answer:* Some beliefs come during childhood. This can be helpful if the input is good. However, many come to Christ as adults who are thinking about eternal questions. Also, faith in Christ does not come simply to people who are afraid. However, if people are afraid of health problems, do you condemn them for seeking a doctor? Why not seek God because of spiritual problems? *Objection:* My life is good enough to get me to heaven. *Answer:* God’s perfect righteousness excludes all who are imperfect! Only His righteousness that He gives by faith in Christ (Rom. 3:22; 4:5), not good deeds (Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5), can qualify a person for heaven.

5. Religious Objections. Groups outside of orthodox Biblical Christianity have deviant views on the nature of God, the deity of Christ, and the way of salvation. *Question:* Is Christ the only way to God? *Answer:* Jesus said He was (John 14:6). Did He lie? His life confirmed Him as a man of truth. He fulfilled the prophetic word. Examine His claims against the many vows of lesser men. All cannot be equally right. We cannot change the law of gravity by vote or agreement—nor the way to God. *Question:* How can salvation be as simple as you say it is? *Answer:* The good news of salvation must be simple enough for a child or a person of low intelligence to understand, or it would favor certain groups of people.

How to Handle Objections

People tend to look closely at your response when they raise objections. Are you upset or angry? Do you appear confused because you do not know how to handle the matter? Are you defensive or just ignorant? If you show a calm poise and have an intelligent response, you may be able to overcome any objections and win a hearing for the gospel.

Ask yourself these questions before answering any objection:

1. Do I Understand? Clarify the objection. Repeat it back to them in their own words: “Do I hear that you are saying ...?” This shows that you are treating the matter seriously and intelligently.
2. Do I Know How To Answer? Admit, if necessary, that you do not know. Offer to check it out and get back to them. Do not bluff!
3. Why Is This Objection Being Raised? Is it a sincere request for information? Pause and consider the matter. Use a counter-question like, “If I answered this would it make a difference in your life?” Some questions or objections might be intended to lead you away from spiritual issues the objector does not wish to face. You must discover if you are dealing with a sincere objection or a pretended one. Only answer genuine objections and do so briefly. Defer pretended objections until later. Redirect the conversation to the gospel presentation. An example of this is seen in John 4:18-22. The woman was faced with her sin by the Lord. She tried to evade this with a controversial religious question about whether Jerusalem was the only place to worship, rather than the mountain in Samaria where her people worshiped. The Lord responded briefly and refused to be sidetracked. He got back to the subject of her need of salvation.
4. What Scriptures Can Be Used In My Answer? The Lord Jesus constantly employed quotations or references from the Word of God to deal with those who came to Him. The Word, also called the “sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17), is powerful. Even Satan himself could not overcome this weapon (Matt. 4:1-11). Remember that the Word is “mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds” and is capable of “casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:4-5). Use this mighty offensive weapon!
5. Am I Praying And Seeking God's Help? When Stephen, the first martyr of the church, was responding to those who opposed him, he showed that he was a man in touch with God. “And they were not able to resist the wisdom and Spirit by which he spake” (Acts 6:10). When our words come from God, in the power of the Spirit, no one can be successful in opposition. God's mind is superior to every other mind. Therefore, pray, think, and seek words from Him.

6. Am I Being Patient With Others? The mind which is blinded by Satan and confused by the world cannot quickly understand spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14). Be kind, humble, and patient with others while boldly speaking for the Lord. If the other person is ensnared in a false religion or cultic form of Christianity, the task may be difficult. In such cases you may require more information and greater perseverance.

Conclusion

We are commanded to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3 NASB). Preparing yourself to deal intelligently with objections can be a great help. Learn to handle rightly the Word of God in answering objections (2 Tim. 2:15). Read good books which intelligently defend the Christian faith. Keep a notebook in which to record objections you encounter and their answers. Dawson Trotman, the founder of a Christian service organization called The Navigators, made it a rule never to be stumped by the same question twice. Perhaps you can adopt the same practice. Such preparation will strengthen your confidence as you stand in a Christ-rejecting world with the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit.

Our goal is to clear any obstructions in the minds of others that would hinder their coming to know Christ as Lord and Savior. Such a task deserves thoughtful consideration. Are you prepared?

Overcoming Objections To The Gospel

Christians encounter many objections when sharing the Gospel. The Bible is our best source for answers. Read each question/statement below and the Scripture references. Answer each objection in your own words using the listed verses and any additional verses that may help. Indicate by a question or statement how you would redirect the conversation to a Gospel presentation.

1. “There are too many hypocrites in the church” (Matt. 6:2; 24:51; Rom. 14:12).
2. “What about the people who have never heard the Gospel?” (Rom. 1:19-20; 2:14-15).
3. “There are many ways to God” (Prov. 14:12; John 14:6; Acts 4:12).
4. “The Bible has many errors and has been changed a lot. I don’t believe it” (John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21).
5. “I am not so bad. My good outweighs my bad” (Isa. 64:6; Rom. 3:10, 23; Jas. 2:10).
6. “Why would a ‘good’ God allow suffering in the world?” (Rom. 5:12; 1 Pet. 5:10; Job 1:5-22).
7. “I’ll wait until another time. I want to enjoy myself now” (Prov. 27:1; Isa. 55:6; Luke 12:19-20)
8. “There are things I might have to give up” (Psa. 37:1-5; Matt. 6:33; Mark 8:36-37).
9. “I am trying to get some things in my life straightened out first” (Luke 5:32; Tit. 3:3-5).
10. “God is too loving to condemn anyone. I do not believe in hell” (Matt. 7:13-14; 25:41; John 3:18-20, 36; Rev. 20:11-15).

Optional Project

Research one of the Gospels, studying the various ways Christ dealt with objectors. When did He answer the objection? When did He ignore it? Be prepared to share in class any principles you learned from your study.

Lesson 12: Another Gospel, Another Jesus

“There are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:7-8 NASB). The Epistle to the Galatians is given to warn believers against human alteration of the divine message. The Apostle Paul elsewhere told about those who would come and preach “another Jesus whom we have not preached,” or proclaim “a different gospel which you have not accepted” (2 Cor. 11:4 NASB). Any who would enter heaven should take notice of this warning.

Deceptive teaching can come from “false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ” or “servants of righteousness” (2 Cor. 11:13-15 NASB). Some of these deceive others and some are themselves deceived about the truth (2 Tim. 3:13). The Lord Jesus said to beware of false prophets “who come to you in sheep’s clothing” (Matt. 7:15). We must judge religious teachers or systems as to what they believe about two major subjects: the way of salvation and the identity of Jesus Christ.

Systems of Christian Faith

Originally all believers in Christ were unified. Organizational aspects grew and spirituality declined. Control was centralized under various bishops and patriarchs with headquarters in such cities as Rome and Constantinople. Church and state merged and Christianity became an “official religion.” The Roman Empire divided into Eastern and Western branches and the church also divided along these lines. The modern “Orthodox” denominations (Greek, Russian, Syrian, and Serbian) come from the Eastern branch. The Roman Catholic Church comes from the Western branch. In both branches the gospel message has been obscured by rituals and priestcraft. The Reformation Movement in the 16th century split off many believers from the Catholic Church who felt it had become corrupt and unbiblical. From this movement came the various Protestant groups we know today. These have continued to grow and subdivide into many denominations. The greatest influence among these groups during the past one hundred years has been liberalism. Leaders of this movement have redefined verbal inspiration and the authority of the Bible. Often they have denied the deity of Christ and personal salvation by the shed blood of Jesus alone. Social and political action dominate their thinking. Millions of true believers have left liberal church systems because their leadership and seminaries have departed from the faith. This apostasy is prophesied for the end times (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1-9; Matt. 24:11). Its appearance has encouraged the formation of independent Bible churches.

Cultic Forms of Christian Faith

The term “cult” has come into use during the past fifty years to describe heretical groups, neither Protestant nor Catholic. Cults usually claim the authority of God and the Bible but distort the gospel message or the doctrine of God. Two typical examples are the Watch-tower Society, calling themselves Jehovah’s Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints, called Mormons. These groups have millions of followers world-wide. Cults do not work with any groups of believers outside their own organizations. They call people to be part of their systems rather than call unbelievers to personal commitment to Christ. They are aggressive, fast-growing, and spiritually dangerous. Truth is cleverly mixed with error. Anyone

poorly grounded in the Bible is an easy target for a cultist with a complicated organization of Bible verses, twisted in a doctrinally deceiving way.

David Breese has identified certain marks of cults.⁵ Not every group has each feature.

1. Extra-Biblical Writings. Special revelation from God is claimed. This may include writings which claim to interpret authoritatively or replace the Scriptures.
2. Salvation By Works. Cults cannot refrain from adding to belief in the Gospel as God's way of saving people. Baptism, rituals, good works, and faithfulness to the organization are typical additions which become necessary to the salvation they teach.
3. Unsure Salvation. People are kept working at various things which they are taught to believe are necessary to retain salvation.
4. False Leaders. Often the leader becomes the center of the movement, not the Lord Jesus. The writings of these leaders become as authoritative as the Bible. They claim to have unique understanding of the truth of God above other mortals.
5. Doctrinal Confusion. To one who knows the Scriptures, cultic doctrinal ideas are a confused tangle. One thing is evident: Their teachings do not harmonize with the entire Bible.
6. Special Discoveries. The leaders pretend to have been given new and exclusive insight into truth never available before. By these insights the Bible really can be understood, they say.
7. Another Jesus. To the false teacher, Jesus may be less than God, a half-god, a god who was only a man or an angel, a spiritistic medium, one of many great prophets or an ideal man. He is accepted as anything but God in the flesh.
8. Distorted Emphasis. There is often a repetition of certain ideas rather than a balanced diet of the whole counsel of God. It is also evident that neither Jesus Christ nor the Gospel is the center.
9. Organizational Control. The strongest cults exercise a powerful influence over all their members. This includes direction of their personal lives, the materials they study, and even where they live. This direction comes from a centralized, dominating headquarters.
10. Making Money. Cult leaders or organizations often enrich themselves at the expense of the people by having members sell literature or other materials. They raise huge amounts of money, which flow back to headquarters.
11. Absorbing Contradiction. New cults rarely originate anything. They take pieces of old systems and combine them in new ways for popular appeal. These combinations involve elements totally at variance with Bible truth.

Defending the Core of Christian Faith

One cannot and need not refute every detail of a false system. It is necessary, however, to counteract any departure from the central core of Biblical salvation teaching. This core may be summarized under three headings. This should be closely compared with the teachings of any group. Unless people correctly understand and believe these central truths, they are in danger of losing their souls eternally.

1. The Saving Message. The Gospel or Good News is defined in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. That Gospel centers in the cross and the One who died there for us (1 Cor. 1:17-18). People are

saved and sealed by the Spirit when they believe that message (Eph. 1:13). Any addition by works or rituals as a way of gaining heaven is under a divine curse (Gal. 3:10-14). We do not gain salvation by works (Eph. 2:8-9). In God's eyes no other gospel exists.

2. The Saving Person. Jesus Christ alone is the way of salvation (John 14:6). To have Him is to have salvation (1 John 5:12). Only the one who has received Him as Lord and Savior is authorized as being a child of God. Christ is the central person of the gospel message and His blood alone cleanses from sin (1 John 1:7). He is God the Son, the Word of God (John 1:1, 14) and directly called God (John 20:28; Rom. 9:5; 1 John 5:20; Heb. 1:8). He is the First and Last (Rev. 1:8, 17; 22:12-13; Isa. 44:6). He has the divine title "I am" (John 8:24, 58). If we do not accept this He says we will die in our sins. He is the only one by whom we can be saved (Acts 4:12; 1 John 5:12). Those who deny the Master are false prophets (2 Pet. 2:1).
3. The Saving God. The God of the Bible is one God (Deut. 6:4; Isa. 45:5; 1 Tim. 2:5). There are no other gods (Isa. 44:6, 8). He is a plural being as shown by the Old Testament name "Elohim" which is the plural of El, used over 2600 times. He exists in three personal distinctions called the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). Each is called God in Scripture but there remains only one God. This God is a personal spirit being (John 4:24) although He may appear in some visible form just as He did in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. These personal distinctions can and do interact with one another, as we see often in the New Testament (Matt. 3:16-17). At other times they are co-identified as one (John 14:8-9). These personal distinctions within the one God are equal, eternal, and unchanging in essence.

Bringing the Misled to Christian Faith

Hundreds of thousands of souls have been delivered from erroneous religious systems to become children of God. Yet persuading anyone to leave a religious system that has a strong grip is not easy. It requires the inner help of the Spirit of God and prayer that the Lord open spiritually blinded eyes. It calls for knowledge of the errors of the cultic system. Great care, tact, and patience are needed in dealing with them personally.

Some basic principles that should apply in dealing with anyone entrapped in a false system include:

1. Be Pleasant And Courteous. Why be offensive and harsh?
2. Build A Bridge Of Communication. Use informal general conversations. Show an interest in them as persons.
3. Take The Position that you both seek truth in the area of knowing God. Try to avoid the appearance of arguing "my religion against your religion."
4. Listen Attentively to them and try to find a common ground, such as a conviction that the Bible is God's Word.
5. Ask Thoughtful, Penetrating Questions rather than making sweeping statements. Questions were the method of Jesus. Take the time to study their belief thoroughly and plan your questions with the assistance of writings identifying the doctrinal errors.
6. Persuasion Is Your Goal, not disputing. You want to bring about a change of mind, not just tell people that they are wrong. Do not drop a complete statement of their errors upon them in one blow. That is more than they can absorb. A little at a time is the way to teach.

7. Personal Attacks On False Leaders Generally Are Ineffective, even counter-productive. Stay with the main issues. How can you be sure of eternal life? Who is Jesus Christ?
8. Think In Terms Of Those Needs Which A False System Does Not Meet. What is better than being sure of eternal life (1 John 5:12) and having all one's sins totally forgiven (Eph. 1:7)? Would they like to be free of a system which presses constantly for money, labors, and devotion in order to attain or retain salvation?
9. Show Confidence, but not arrogance about the way of salvation, the Word of God, and your relationship to the Lord Jesus. He greatly impressed His hearers by the authority with which He spoke (Matt. 7:28-29). Speak in such a way that it seems to others that God is speaking through you (1 Pet. 4:11). Use your personal testimony of how Christ changed your life.
10. Be Patient. Do not expect to dislodge a well-entrenched follower of a false system in a single session. Lay the groundwork for further talks.

Conclusion

Militant, well-drilled cultists, promoters, and youthful enthusiasts have swept millions into false systems. Printing presses have turned out billions of pieces of literature to advance these views. Radio has been used extensively. Cultic systems work on popular prejudices against conventional churches. They have enjoyed tremendous success in the present unstable world. They are a mark of end-time world conditions (1 Tim. 4:1). True believers need to be informed and active in counteracting them. Cultic victims need to know Christ as Lord and Savior.

Another Gospel, Another Jesus

1. According to the following Scriptures, how do we identify false religious systems?

Galatians 1:6-8

1 John 4:1-3

2 John 9

2. List the characteristics of those who teach a false religion.

1 Timothy 4:1-3

2 Timothy 3:1-7

Titus 1:10-16

2 Peter 3:16b

Jude 4

3. Why should we evangelize those entrapped in false religious systems (John 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:9; Jude 3)?

What cautions should be exercised when evangelizing those in false systems (Eph. 5:11; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 7-11)?

4. What principles should we consider when confronting those who are guilty of doctrinal error?

2 Timothy 2:23-25

James 1:19-20

What is our goal (2 Tim. 2:25-26)?

How can you prepare yourself for reaching this goal (2 Tim. 2:15)? Be specific.

5. The root of cultic errors is a faulty concept of God. How many gods exist (Deut. 4:39; 6:4; 1 Tim. 2:5)? How does the Scripture indicate the “plurality within the unity” of the godhead (Gen. 1:26-27; Matt. 28:19)?

The Bible teaches that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all equally God and ascribes to each God’s attributes and works. Match the verses listed to the appropriate Person and attribute or activity (Gen. 1:1; 17:1; Psa. 104:30; 139:7; Isa. 40:28; Jer. 23:24; Matt. 28:18, 20; John 1:1, 3; 2:19, 21; Acts 3:15; 5:3-4; Rom. 8:11; 15:19; 1 Cor. 2:11; Col. 2:3; Heb. 9:14; 2 Pet. 1:17; 1 John 3:20). Some verses may be used more than once.

	FATHER	SON	HOLY SPIRIT
Declared to be God			
Created all things			
Resurrected Jesus			
Omnipresent			
Omniscient			
Omnipotent			
Eternal			

7. The word “Lord” in the Old Testament is sometimes also translated “Jehovah” and refers to God Himself. Which of the following titles refer to Jehovah and which refer to Jesus?
- a. “The First and the Last” (1) Isaiah 44:6_____ (2) Revelation 1:17_____
- b. “King of kings and Lord of lords” (1) Revelation 19:16_____ (2) Deuteronomy 10:17_____
- c. “Mighty God” (1) Isaiah 9:6_____ (2) Deuteronomy 10:17_____
- d. “The Judge of the nations” (1) Joel 3:12_____ (2) John 5:22_____
- e. “Savior” (1) John 4:42_____ (2) Isaiah 45:21-22_____
- f. “I AM” (1) Exodus 3:14-15_____ (2) John 8:24_____

From the above verses, explain the relationship of Jesus to Jehovah God.

Why is it important to believe that Jesus is fully God (John 8:24; Rom. 10:9-10)?

8. False religions err in their view of man and the way of salvation. What is the condition of all men (Rom. 3:10-12, 23)?

According to 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, what is the gospel?

Why is it important that we believe the gospel (1 Cor. 15:2; 2 Thess. 1:8; Heb. 9:27; Rev. 20:11-15)?

9. By what basis is a man justified before God (Rom. 3:24, 28; 4:25; 5:1, 9)?

List the ways you think a false religious system might try to deny or distort each of these.

10. Select one of the false religious systems treated in Appendices A, B, and C. Study the system and then write a one or two page report addressing the following questions:

- a. What is the system’s authority?

- b. How does the system contradict God's Word on the way of salvation?
- c. How does the system deviate from a Biblical view of who Christ is?
- d. How would you approach a person entrapped in this system? What would you start with to identify a spiritual need that their system cannot meet?

Lesson 13: World Missions

“The field is the world” (Matt. 13:38). What a magnificent vision! It is one that encompasses a message “to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Rev. 14:6). There is no limitation or narrowness to a concern that tells us that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16). Jesus is the Savior of the world. He is “the light of the world” (John 8:12). He did not come “into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17). The Bible is a book of world vision and the Christian faith is a missionary faith with an urgent message for all people.

Call to Missions

1. Missions Defined. The word “missions” comes from the root word meaning “to send.” George W. Peters in *A Biblical Theology of Missions* defines “missions” as “the sending forth of authorized persons beyond the borders of the New Testament church and her immediate gospel influence to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in gospel-destitute areas, to win converts from other faiths or non-faiths to Jesus Christ, and to establish functioning, multiplying local congregations who will bear the fruit of Christianity in that community and in that country.”⁶ Missions begins with evangelism. It then moves to disciple-making, multiplication, and church-planting patterned in the New Testament mold. The Biblical missionary endeavor is not a denominational effort to win followers to a certain brand-name group, but an international effort to bring people of the world to know and follow the only God and the only Savior.
2. Missions Needed. The work of missions is essential because all men in their natural condition are lost. “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10; Matt. 18:11). In the triple parable in Luke 15 the wandering sheep, misplaced coin, and wastrel son all typify mankind and were labeled lost by Jesus. Lost men are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). They are without “hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). The entire world is “guilty before God” (Rom. 3:19) and in desperate need of salvation that comes through Christ alone. “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Jesus said, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). That perishing involves an everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:46) and a wrath that abides forever (John 3:36; Rev. 6:17; 20:14-15). “He that believeth not is condemned already” (John 3:18).

Clearly this terrifying prospect of punishment for those without the Savior includes the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of the earth. For example, over 700 million Muslims live in lands virtually untouched by the gospel. Another 700 million, the majority Hindu, need to be reached in India. Another billion are spread throughout the Orient. Europe was once the center of Christendom. Now over 300 million in those countries are considered a mission field. Tens of thousands of towns or villages have no Christian witness. South and Central America continue to be open to the gospel with another 300 million souls. Japan has over 100 million people with little witness. Countries like Turkey with 40 million people have perhaps one native Christian for every million. Many small countries could be added to this brief listing. Over one half of all the people who ever lived are alive today because of the population explosion. Most of them have never heard the gospel. This vast condition of need is the very reason for missions.

3. Missions Commanded. The Bible declares the unique Person of the only true God and the manner by which we may approach Him. This God is the Creator and Sustainer of all men (Col. 1:16-17). He is the ruler of all nations (Rom. 13:1; Psalms 103:19; Daniel 4:17, 25, 32). He is urgently concerned about the problem of all men—that of sin (Rom. 3:23). He alone is able to be their Savior (Isaiah 43:11). There is no other Savior and no other God (Isaiah 45:5, 21; Jude 25). Thus, Jesus gave His disciples the command to evangelize all men. This is often called “the Great Commission.” It occurs five times in the New Testament (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:8). It is stated in Matthew: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (28:19 RSV). Missions begin with the eternal God Himself. The greatest of all missionaries was the Son whom the Father sent. As the Father sent Him, even so He has sent us (John 17:18). Every believer is included in this missionary command.

Objections to Missions

The non-Christian often opposes missionary endeavors for several reasons. The following statements are samples of his erroneous concepts:

1. God Is In All Religions. Such a concept is certainly not in the Bible. The general state of the Gentiles (nations) is that of being “without God” (Eph. 2:12). God thundered His judgment against the polytheism, idolatry, corruption, and false gods of the heathen. Jesus noted that the religious leaders of His day traveled both “sea and land to make one proselyte” (convert) (Matthew 23:15). Their great labors were certainly not because they believed it did not make any difference. Jesus told the woman at the well that she did not know what she worshiped, for “salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). Paul told the worshipers of the many gods at Athens, religious capital of the world, that they were ignorant worshipers, not knowing the true God (Acts 17:23). He said that God commanded men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30).
2. The Heathen Are Happy. That is, they are content with their own religious concepts, and we should not bother their culture with our ideas. “The happy heathen” is a myth. Millions labor under the most depressed conditions of superstition and enslavement to idols and misery. The masses of India are certainly not happy in their wretchedness; nor the numerous animistic tribes; nor others in gospel-poor lands. The worst of conditions prevail in those countries where the gospel has not been established. Many intensely nationalistic leaders of African countries have frankly stated, “we need the missionaries.” Isaiah speaks of those who walk in darkness, dwell in the land of the shadow of death, sit in a prison house with blind eyes (Isaiah 9:2; 42:7).
3. God’s Goodness Is Sufficient. True, God is loving and kind, but if this did away with the need of missions, why did Jesus give the command to evangelize the world? If it is unnecessary to bring the gospel to the heathen, why bother to tell the heathen in our country? In fact, why should anyone have told us about the Lord? Is it not because we cannot enter the kingdom of God without being born again (John 3:5)?
4. God Will Ultimately Save All. This would be encouraging if it were true. However, it is contrary to the picture that Jesus gave when describing the majority as being on the broad road that leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13). It is contrary to His warning about fearing the one who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28). It does not explain away the warning about the second death and the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14-15).

Plan for Missions

Certainly God has not left Himself without a witness in the neglected areas of the world. His plan for missions involves a threefold witness:

1. Witness Of Creation. God has shown His handiwork to all men (Rom. 1:19-20). "The heavens declare the glory of God" and show His hand to those of every language (Psa. 19:1-4). The illiterate savage in the most backward area can realize that behind the mighty design of creation there is a Creator to whom he is accountable. For this light, he is responsible.
2. Witness Of Conscience. Written in the hearts of all men is a God-given conscience which acts as an inner moral director (Rom. 2:14-15). It becomes hardened in time and may become an unreliable guide. For this reason, it is dangerous to violate one's conscience.
3. Witness Of Men. Even when the gospel is not preached in an area, God is able to speak to some heart that is open to Him. He may bring that seeking person a considerable distance to hear one of His messengers (1 Kgs. 10:1-9; Acts 10:22). He may also bring His messenger to speak to that person in an isolated place (Acts 8:26-39). Today, the use of literature, radio, and correspondence courses has helped. Yet, we are aware of how few can be reached by such means. Nothing is as effective as personal communication of the gospel, personal follow-up of contacts, and provision of sound churches for the care of the converts. This takes believers working on the spot.

Response to Missions

1. In Old Testament Times. The Lord certainly had Isaiah in mind when He asked, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah responded, "Here am I. Send me" (Isa. 6:8). Jonah was dispatched as a missionary to the wicked city of Nineveh (Jon. 1:2; 3:1-10). There is world-wide missionary challenge in the following passages from the prophets: Isaiah 45:22; 49:6; 52:10; 56:7; Jeremiah 3:17; Habakkuk 2:14; Haggai 2:7; Zechariah 9:10; Malachi 1:11. The Psalms have a similar view (Psa. 2:8; 33:8; 66:4; 72:8, 11, 19; 98:2-4). The Messianic promise of the woman's seed was for all mankind (Gen. 3:15). All the nations were to be covered by God's blessings (Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 28:14; Num. 14:21). Israel failed in its missionary responsibility. Its failure, however, cannot be used to say that Israel was not commissioned by God.
2. In New Testament Times. The birth of Jesus brought a message of great joy to all people, not simply to the Jews (Luke 2:10-14). Early in His ministry, Jesus called the disciples to be "fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). He preached to all sorts of men, including racial outcasts, such as the Samaritans, as well as the despised Gentiles. Before He ascended to heaven, Jesus commanded His followers to go "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The Apostles began their ministry on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, where many nations were represented (Acts 2:5). They moved to the Gentiles (Acts 8-12), to Europe (Acts 16), and to other areas. All twelve of them, plus others, were missionaries throughout the world. The letters of the New Testament are filled with missionary challenge and commendation (Rom. 1:8; 15:16, 19-21; 2 Cor. 5:19-20; 1 Thess. 1:8). Missions is the heart of God's program on earth.

Challenge for Missions

In the light of the plight of Christ-less multitudes, God's great burden for the lost, and the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus, we need to face squarely the task of missions today. What is God's program in this situation? He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). That is why He sent His Son, "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). He gave Him to take away the sins of *the whole world* (John 1:29; 1 John 2:2). Here then is the challenge of missions: "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom. 10:14-15). The Christian failure in missions has been attributed to two things: (1) ignorance of the plight of the heathen and their desperate need for a messenger to tell them of the One who gave Himself for them; and (2) selfishness—we are too wrapped up in our own comforts and pursuits to bother with Christ-less multitudes. How can we overcome this? What can we do?

1. **Seek Information.** We need to be informed of the missionary situation and specific needs in all parts of the world. Various reports are available to interested believers. Missionary meetings are too often neglected by younger believers who seem to have no knowledge of the field. Keep a large world map at hand. Get to know those who are missionaries.
2. **Pray.** The Lord Jesus specifically told us to beseech "the Lord of the harvest" that He would send forth laborers because there were few (Luke 10:2). He taught that, without prayer, little could be accomplished for God. The great request of the missionary Paul was "brethren, pray for us" (1 Thess. 5:25). Most missionaries plead for prayer interest and support. We should keep special prayer lists for specific requests and intercession. We should pray for laborers, for New Testament churches to be planted, and for the Spirit of God to restrain anti-Christian forces such as communism, materialism, humanism, and Islam. We should pray privately and corporately as a church. If our church has a missionary prayer meeting we should attend. If not, we should start such a meeting to intercede for missions.
3. **Give.** The New Testament church was challenged to support workers in the field. Rising costs have tightened the situation for many missionaries. Literature and travel costs have risen. Inflation has had a destructive effect. Believers need to be informed givers, not simply those who send money in response to letters of appeal. Priority should be given to those who do not make direct financial appeals.
4. **Go Yourself.** The example of Isaiah's willingness to answer the call of God to go to a needy place suggests the right attitude. By beginning in our younger years, we can acquire language skills and prepare in other ways for a life of service for God wherever He may lead. It has been said that the best indication of a call to another field is the fact that God is presently using us where we are. God wants the very best for His service. Moreover, He wants the best years of our lives. He is worthy of it!

Our Savior came to seek us. Are we willing to have Him use us to seek others who sit in darkness?

World Missions

1. Explain why the work of world missions is needed (Acts 4:14; John 3:36; Eph. 2:1, 12; 2 Thess. 1:8-9; 1 John 5:19).
2. Paraphrase (rewrite in your own words) Roman 10:14-15.

How do these verses relate to world missions?

3. The “Great Commission” of the Lord Jesus occurs at least five times in the New Testament. Carefully study each of these and then state the major emphasis of each.

Matthew 28:18-20

Mark 16:15

Luke 24:46-49

John 20:21

Acts 1:8

What is your personal responsibility to these commands of the Lord?

4. Write a definition of “world missions” based on the “Great Commission.”
5. Name two hindrances to the task of world missions (Prov. 24:11-12; 29:18).

What should be our response to the great need (John 4:35; 2 Cor. 5:14-15, 20)?

6. Read Matthew 9:35-38. What was the Lord Jesus’ prayer request?

What moved Him to make this request?

What did Paul ask of believers (Eph. 6:18-20; 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1-2)?

7. In your opinion, what is the importance of prayer in the work of missions?

List five specific items that you can pray for world missions.

8. What part does giving play in the work of world missions (Rom. 15:24; 2 Cor. 11:8-9; Phil. 4:10-18)?

What Scriptural principles should govern our giving?

Matthew 6:19-21

Luke 16:9

2 Corinthians 8:2-3

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

What is your financial responsibility to the work of world missions?

How should you decide to whom you should give?

9. Study in the Book of Acts the “missionary call” of the men listed below. What part did God have in their call? What part did the church or other men have? What were their spiritual qualifications?

Barnabas (11:22-24)

Barnabas and Saul (13:1-4)

Timothy (16:1-3)

How would you determine the call of God to the foreign mission field?

What qualities do you think should be present in your life before you go?

10. In what ways has your concept of world missions been changed by this lesson?

What vision do you now have?

How will you commit yourself now to action in each of the following areas of involvement? (Be specific)

Seeking Information

Praying

Giving

Going

Appendix A: Roman Catholicism

The largest institution professing allegiance to Jesus Christ is the Roman Catholic Church. Over 800 million followers trust their souls to its teachings and believe it will direct them to heaven. The church's claim to have supreme authority over all true Christians is intimidating. Its rituals are impressive and often impart a "religious feeling." Multitudes live within the system solely as a matter of family or national custom. But is it possible that such a large institution could be wrong in its teachings and mislead people about the way of salvation?

Millions of committed believers in Jesus Christ believe that Catholicism is very much in error. God's Word holds the place of ultimate authority for these believers. In contrast, Catholics look to their church as the final authority. Bible-loving Christians believe that salvation is in a personal relationship with Christ. Catholics trust in their membership in the Catholic Church. Biblical Christians believe that only the blood of Jesus Christ can put away their sin and cleanse them. Catholics rely upon the sacraments of the Catholic Church and the pronouncements of its priests. Clearly, true believers and true Catholics differ greatly in their beliefs. They both cannot be right.

Claims of Authority

The Roman Catholic Church claims the right of spiritual authority over all Christians. It holds that its traditions and official dogmas are equal in authority with the Bible. It further claims absolute power to forgive sins through its priests and sacraments. The church supposedly has this complete authority because its head, the Pope, is the true vicar or representative of Christ on earth and is, therefore, supreme ruler of the church and the world. As the New York Catechism states, "The pope takes the place of Jesus Christ on earth. ... He is the infallible ruler, the founder of dogmas, the author of and the judge of councils, the universal ruler of truth, the arbiter of the world, the supreme judge of heaven and earth."

The basis of such claims is faulty interpretation of Matthew 16:13-19. Using this passage, the church asserts that Christ founded it upon Peter, whom He appointed first Pope, or Bishop of Rome, and imparted with supreme authority by giving the "keys of the kingdom of heaven." The church further asserts that its authority has continued through the unbroken chain of Popes who succeeded Peter. Let us examine these assertions.

The Catholic Church teaches that it was established through Peter when Jesus said, "You are Peter (Greek, *petros*), and upon this rock (Greek, *petra*) I will build My church" (Matt. 16:18 NASB). Rome contends that Peter was the rock upon which Christ would build. But did Christ really say that Peter was the rock? Note the difference between the two Greek words *petros* and *petra*. *Petros* is in the masculine gender and means "a small pebble." By contrast, *petra* is in the feminine gender and means "a large bedrock." Therefore, Peter was not the rock to which Jesus referred. Rather the rock here was Christ whom Peter had confessed as God (Matt. 16:16). The Bedrock of the church is Christ. Peter himself tells us this in 1 Peter 2:4-8 as does Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:11 and Ephesians 2:20.

Rome maintains that Christ gave Peter absolute authority when He said, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven" (Matt. 16:19 NASB). This authority, the church says, includes the supreme power to determine who will be admitted into heaven and who will be refused entrance. While it is true that the "keys" here symbolize authority, they do not refer to *absolute* authority as Rome

would have people believe. A simple comparison of Matthew 18:17-18 with Matthew 16:19 indicates that Christ gave “the keys of the kingdom” not to Peter alone, but to all the people of God. Moreover, the power given here was not to determine who would enter heaven. God alone has that authority (Rev. 1:18; 3:7). Rather the “keys” signify the right and power that Christ granted to His people to proclaim the offer of salvation in His Name. These keys are exercised when the door of heaven is opened to sinners through the proclamation of the gospel. Thus, Jesus did not make Peter the earthly head of the church, but instead He gave him, along with other believers, the privilege of opening the way of salvation through the preaching of the good news.

Contrast Rome’s view of Peter as Pope with what the Scriptures teach. Peter called church leaders to be examples, not lords (1 Pet. 5:3). Peter never at any time called himself “the Pope.” He did call himself an elder (mature leader) among other elders (1 Pet. 5:1). Neither the Scriptures nor the early church referred to Peter as being “Bishop of Rome.” In fact, there is no Biblical evidence that he was ever in Rome. Peter was in Jerusalem (Acts 11:2), but there James, not Peter, presided at the church council (Acts 15:1-29). Paul, not Peter, wrote the Epistle to the Romans. It was Paul who wrote many of his letters from a Roman prison. He mentions many persons in Rome but never Peter. Paul had the special ministry of being Apostle to the Gentiles (non-Jews), such as those at Rome. Peter had the apostleship to the Jews (Gal. 2:7). It was Paul who corrected Peter, not the other way around (Gal. 2:11-13). Nothing in the Biblical record makes Peter the supreme Apostle.

Furthermore, no clear record exists of any “unbroken line” of Popes ruling the church from Peter’s time. The title of “pope” was first given to Gregory the Great, the Bishop of Rome from 590-604 A.D. Though he rejected the title, he may be regarded as the founder of the papacy because his strong rule greatly increased the power of the Bishop of Rome over the church. The church has often revised the official line of Popes. For example, in 1947 it dropped Pope Donus II (973 A.D.) as non-existent, plus six others.

The claims of authority by the Roman Catholic Church are truly astonishing. “Whosoever, therefore, knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by God through Jesus Christ, would refuse to enter or to remain in her could not be saved” (Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Section 14). In the face of such assertions, many Catholics fear that breaking with their church will cause them to forfeit their hope of salvation. Yet in the first four centuries after the time of Christ, no Christian is ever recorded as having called himself a Roman Catholic. According to the Scriptures, salvation is in a personal relationship with Christ, entered by faith, not in membership in the Roman church.

Claims of Unchanging Truth

Rome teaches that it is always the same despite continuous changes and additions to its official teachings through the centuries. The following are a few of the added teachings and dates of adoption, cited from Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962, pp. 7-9).

A.D. 300 Prayers for the dead

394 Daily Mass adopted

431 Mary called “the Mother of God”

593 Doctrine of purgatory established

600 Prayer directed to Mary, dead saints, angels
 607 Title of Pope given to Boniface III
 1090 The Rosary (prayer beads) introduced
 1190 Sale of indulgences (purchasing forgiveness)
 1215 Transubstantiation (the wafer becomes Christ's body) proclaimed
 1215 Confession of sins to a priest, not God
 1220 Adoring the wafer (Host)
 1229 The Bible forbidden to the people
 1545 Tradition declared equal to Bible in authority
 1546 Books added to Old Testament (Apocrypha)
 1854 Immaculate Conception of Virgin Mary (her birth) proclaimed
 1870 Pope declared infallible in matters of faith and morals

All of these are without the slightest Biblical foundation. Yet the church says that it cannot teach error because God prevents it.

Authority: Bible or Tradition?

The Catholic Church teaches that its tradition, the collection of rulings by its leaders over the centuries, has equal authority with the Bible. However, no equality exists in practice. The church claims authority over the Scripture and exclusive right to interpret it. It says this is necessary to avoid differences in opinion. Yet there are many differences of opinion among Catholic teachers on almost all spiritual subjects. No infallible guidebook to Bible interpretation is put out by the church. Where church tradition or doctrines conflict with the Bible, tradition rules. Catholics are told that the church existed before the Bible came into being and that the church gave the Bible to the world. Rome says that it actually *selected* the books which were to be included in the Bible and confidently states that before this time the people learned from the Catholic Church, not Scripture.

Uninformed people today scarcely realize the questionable nature of such claims. The Old Testament was complete four centuries before the time of Christ and recognized as God's Word by believers. Not until 1546 did Rome presume to add a number of new books to the Old Testament and declare them inspired and authoritative. These books are called the *Apocrypha*, meaning writings of doubtful authenticity. Our Lord and the New Testament writers quoted from almost all Old Testament books without a single reference from these added writings. Jesus said, "Search the Scriptures" before the Roman Church existed (John 5:39). The accounts of the life of Jesus (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) and the letters of the Apostles and their associates were circulated by hand copies during the latter part of the first century. The Christians accepted the writings of Matthew, John, Peter, and Paul knowing they were Apostles of our Lord. The writings of James, Mark, Luke, and Jude had standing because they were associated with the Apostles. This is the entire known authorship of the New Testament. These men and their divinely inspired writings were accredited before the second century. Rome merely sanctioned what was already accepted by the early Christians. It certainly did not give the Bible to the world.

The Catholic Church's claim of exclusive right to interpret Scripture is also without foundation. God in His own wisdom has made man dependent upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit for understanding (John 16:13; 1 John 2:27). God gave no inspired interpreter to Old Testament believers. The official leaders of Israel were told by Jesus that they did not understand the Scriptures at all (Matt. 22:29; Mark 12:24). Jesus told them that they had nullified the Word of God by substituting their tradition (Mark 7:5-13), exactly as Rome has done. Jesus never quoted tradition to support His statements; He quoted the Scriptures.

How then can we be sure of the truth? We can only humbly walk with God, submit ourselves to His Spirit, and pray for His enlightenment. We must study the Scriptures carefully in our own language and make sure we have considered all that the Word has spoken on a subject. In this way we will be clear on major doctrines of Scripture such as the Person of Christ, the nature of God, and the way of salvation. God has not seen fit to give us an official guaranteed human interpreter. The authority of God is in an infallible Savior, Jesus Christ (John 14:6), an infallible Word, the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16), and an inspired Interpreter, the Holy Spirit. Scripture does not teach that men or churches are infallible.

Another Plan of Salvation

The chief test of any religious system is how it answers the question: "How can we be saved and prepared for life after death?" The Roman system of salvation requires participation in many religious ceremonies (sacraments) and endless good works. The salvation for which the Catholic strives each day is blocked by a great, constantly growing debt for sins. He must be paying continually on this debt by doing things which the church commands. Yet he never knows the extent of this debt or what must be done to pay it all. Salvation is thus the outcome of a lifelong struggle by weak and sinful human beings to earn God's favor. The sinner pays and prays while the church commands and demands.

In the Bible, grace is the undeserved favor of God. It is opposed to the idea of human works (Eph. 2:8-9). However, in the Catholic system, grace is a "sharing in the life of God" on the basis of ceremonies or works. It is a kind of merit bank which grows by doing certain things. Baptism is said to put grace into your soul for the first time and cleanse it from original sin. Grace further grows by *confirmation*, a service in which a bishop anoints you with oil and says "Receive the Holy Spirit." It further grows by participating in the Mass, Rome's version of the Lord's Supper. Prayers and good works add to this account.

Sins subtract from these deposits of grace. Sins may be either *mortal* (serious) or *venial* (less serious). One mortal sin can wipe out all your grace. How then do you obtain forgiveness in the Roman system? You confess to a priest rather than to God. Then the priest forgives you without asking God and restores you to the life of grace. He assigns certain ritual prayers (as the "Hail Mary") or good deeds. This is the *penance*. The entire procedure is called the *sacrament of penance*. The taking away of temporal punishment for sin is called an *indulgence*, which is granted in return for certain works or for gifts to the church. The church may anoint with oil persons who are sick or dying in order to increase grace further. This is called *extreme unction*. After death, the soul can look forward not to heaven but to *purgatory*, where there will be additional suffering for sins in order to be made right for God's presence. However, masses or prayers said for the dead can shorten the stay.

All of this complicated doctrine of salvation by works is without divine sanction or authority. The Bible makes no distinction between degrees of sin. All sin is serious by God's standard. No

such sacraments as confirmation, penance, or extreme unction were ever instituted by Christ nor are they ever mentioned in the Bible. The doctrine of purgatory rests upon one verse in Second Maccabees, an apocryphal book added to the Bible by Rome.

Compare the Roman Catholic way of salvation with the clear teaching of God's Word. The Bible says that people are saved when they believe the gospel or good news (Rom. 1:16; Acts 15:7). This gospel is that Christ died and paid for our sins and rose from the dead as evidence of His victory over sin, death, and hell (1 Cor. 15:1-4). One receives the Holy Spirit upon believing fully in that message and trusting the One who by it offers salvation (Eph. 1:13). One is saved by having Christ within, not by some uncertain offer of grace (1 John 5:12). Good works are a fruit of salvation, flowing out of a changed life, not a means of earning God's favor (Eph. 2:8-10; Tit. 3:5, 8). If anyone tries to alter this gospel message by adding human works or law-keeping as a means of being saved, he is under the curse of God (Gal. 1:8). Faith, not works, is the means by which sinners enter into salvation (John 3:16). That faith is in a Person to save us, Jesus Christ (John 1:12). Its basis is God's Word, not man's word (1 Thess. 2:13; Rom. 10:17). Many Catholics know nothing of the fact that God placed all our sins on Jesus on the cross and then gave all His righteousness to us as a gift (2 Cor. 5:21), or of the truth that there is "no condemnation" for the believer in Christ (Rom. 8:1), or of the blessedness of justification by faith alone (Rom. 5:1). The colossal error of the Roman Catholic salvation system is that it counts the work of Jesus Christ on the cross and His glorious resurrection as insufficient to bring salvation to the one who repents and believes the gospel message. This error is illustrated in the doctrine of the Mass.

Rome's Sacrifice for Sins

The central service that holds Roman Catholics within the spiritual control of Rome is called the *Holy Eucharist* or the *Mass* (meaning "dismissal"). Rome's interpretation of the Lord's Supper involves the idea of a miraculous change in the elements (transubstantiation) and a sacrifice that removes the sins of the participants. Rome teaches that when the priest raises the bread and wine in his hands at the altar the elements are changed into the literal flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. This action becomes once again the sacrifice of the cross, the offering of the body and blood of Jesus under the appearance of bread and wine. (This is estimated to occur about 200,000 times each day.) When the wafer (the Host) is held up by the priest it is to be adored or worshiped by the celebrants. What goes into the mouths of the communicants is the actual flesh and blood of the Son of God. This continual offering to God is called by the church an "unbloody sacrifice." It is considered to bring forgiveness of sins to those who participate. In 1215 A.D., the church made this an official teaching that one must acknowledge in order to be saved. To deny this teaching is to be accursed by God, according to Rome's Council of Trent.

This teaching is a far cry from the simple memorial feast instituted by Jesus over 1900 years ago (Luke 22:19-20). Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me." He did not say "Do this so your sins will be forgiven." When He passed the bread to His disciples and said "This is my body," He used figurative language, just as when he said, "I am the vine" or "I am the door." Jesus did not say, "This becomes my body by a miracle." In that event there would have been two bodies, one in which He lived and one in His hands.

What did Jesus mean when He said, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life" (John 6:54)? Catholic priests regularly use this verse to prove their doctrine. If Jesus meant flesh and blood literally, then all who partake of this feast will be eternally saved, for

that is His promise here. Not even Rome teaches this. In fact, the context of the verse has nothing to do with the Lord's Supper. It talks about the need to come to Him and believe in Him for salvation (John 6:35, 47).

The so-called "unbloody sacrifice" could not bring the forgiveness of sins to anyone. The Bible says "without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22 NASB). This occurred "once for all" when Jesus shed His blood on the cross. It is not to be repeated in any sense because this work satisfied God for all the sins of those who repent and come to Jesus for salvation. (Study Hebrews 10:10-14.) It is only the blood (or death) of Jesus that "cleanses from all sins" (1 John 1:7). Peter tells us that (1 Pet. 1:18-19); John tells us that (Rev. 1:5; 5:9); Luke tells us that (Acts 20:28); Paul tells us that (Rom. 3:25; 5:9). But Rome teaches its followers something entirely different. It adds to the finished work of Jesus on the cross a continuing sacrifice for sins (the Mass), along with other sacraments, as a means of gaining forgiveness.

Conclusion

Today we find encouragement in the growth of Bible studies among Catholics and a greater openness to discussion with others. This has been true especially since the Roman Catholic Church Council of 1962-1965 called Vatican II. This Council was responsible for liberalizing some traditional church practices, without affecting any basic doctrines. It is probable that more Catholics are coming to Christ now than ever in history. For this we are grateful. We must also speak with respect of many humanitarian works done by Catholic relief agencies. At the same time we must recognize that the essential doctrines of the church, especially about salvation, represent a system of salvation by works, a false gospel. Many evangelicals seem unaware of this fact. We must pursue every opportunity to share the true message of salvation with these people, just as we do with Protestants who are merely Christian in name. Here are some important suggestions in sharing your faith with Catholics:

1. Get interested Catholics involved in Bible study. They are more open to Bible study now than any time in their history. The only way they can be sure of going to heaven is explained in the Scriptures. Special emphasis should be given the books of John, Romans, Ephesians, Galatians, and Hebrews. If it helps, let them use one of their own Catholic versions. They usually have great respect for the Bible, but do not see its authority as supreme.
2. Emphasize that the Lord Jesus Christ should be the true center for believers, not any earthly church organization. Stress that Jesus alone is the Savior and that He receives all who come to Him (John 6:37). Speak of a personal relationship with the Lord. Look for a hunger which is based on a sense of need. A true relationship with him is the answer to their frequent complaints about the emptiness of an unhappy religious experience.
3. Stress the gospel offer of eternal life, forgiveness, peace, and joy. A better life now and a better hope for the future is meaningful to those in deep distress.
4. Avoid personal attacks, disrespectful remarks, and arguments. Catholics freely criticize the church but often defend it to others. Humbly share what Jesus has brought into your life. Do not do all the talking. Ask questions more often than you make statements. Remember that patience is needed when dealing with those whose minds have long been bent in a different direction. Pray much for them and ask God to remove their blindness and fear. Show them kindness and love.

5. Remember that mere knowledge of terminology does not guarantee understanding or inner conviction. Many people have asked God to forgive their sins and many know the phrase, “Jesus died on the cross for our sins.” Prayers or head knowledge will not ensure us of salvation.
6. Stick to the main issues: the sufficiency of the work of Christ and the futility of good works. Keep to the Scriptures, and avoid getting sidetracked on secondary issues, like the papacy or praying to Mary.
7. When you think a Catholic understands and accepts the gospel and is close to salvation, check to be sure that he realizes that no good works are necessary or contribute to salvation—not baptism, penance, the Mass, or anything else. Remember that it is easy at times to get a Catholic to pray but without real understanding or conviction. Be willing to build slowly and do not press for a quick decision. Avoid raising the issue of leaving the Catholic Church until they are firmly grounded and have personal convictions.

Appendix B: Mormons (The Latter-Day Saints)

The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) is the largest made-in-America religion. Up to 30,000 missionaries spread its faith throughout the world from headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah. They emphasize family life, activities for the young, assistance to the needy, and involvement of all members in active church life. Their clean-cut, polite, and earnest manner as they go door-to-door is persistent and effective. Their enthusiastic and positive testimonies are convincing, especially to people with little understanding of the Bible or those who have not had a satisfactory church experience.

These missionaries stress the need for authority today and for a modern-day prophet. They urge the need for a priesthood, as well as apostles and prophets, to act for God today. There must be a restored gospel and a restored church as a result of apostasy from the faith in the early church. They use Biblical terms but not with the historic Christian meaning. They believe that there are many gods and that it is possible for their members also to become gods. They know a different Jesus, one who was born of a sexual relationship between God and Mary. They have a different gospel, which prescribes many works for salvation.

Mormonism had its beginning in a man named Joseph Smith. He claimed that in 1820, at the age of 14, he went into the woods to pray. There, he said, God the Father and Jesus Christ (two distinct persons in bodies) told him not to join any church “for they were all wrong” and their creeds were an abomination in God’s sight. Smith claimed that an angel appeared to him in 1823 and disclosed to him the location of a buried box containing golden plates. He removed the plates from a hill near Palmyra, New York, and by 1829 translated them with divine assistance into what is called the *Book of Mormon*. Then the angel recovered the plates and they were not seen again. The church was founded in 1830 with six members. Smith was its seer, revelator, and chief prophet. As the church grew under this magnetic leader, it moved from New York to Ohio and then to Illinois, where Smith was murdered by an angry mob in 1844. Under the powerful leadership of Brigham Young, most of the church then moved to Utah where it flourishes today.

The growth of the Mormon church is phenomenal. With only 30 people in 1830, it grew to 268,000 by 1900 and to over a million by 1950. Its membership now exceeds five million. The membership is estimated to be increasing at 200,000 per year through conversions alone. This growth is fueled by the financial support of at least one million dollars daily from the church’s business income. Its commercial enterprises are estimated to produce at least a billion dollars per year. Massive amounts of money are spent on evangelism, building projects such as temples and church structures, and Brigham Young University, their top university which has over 15,000 students. Media presentations often feature the world-famous Mormon Tabernacle Choir with its 375 members. Church genealogical libraries, filled with information from all over the world, attract researchers interested in tracing their ancestry.

The Appeal and Approach of the Mormons

What is the great attraction of this movement? Why does it appeal both to those who have spent their lives in familiar denominations and to those with little church background? Despite some very strange and heretical doctrinal teachings, the Latter-Day Saints (LDS) Church grows for some of the following reasons:

1. Mormons impress others that they care about the needs of people. Any needy person within the church can obtain help from church storehouses filled with food, clothes, and other articles. Financial assistance is also available. Work of some kind is offered to every able-bodied person. People are treated with respect and there is no need to apply for government welfare handouts.
2. Mormons place great emphasis upon the family and seek to strengthen it. The church promotes its "Family Home Evening" program in which all members remain at home for prayer, fellowship, Scripture reading, and projects with their families. Church life is oriented around the family. In a time of growing divorce and family breakdown, this appeals to many, especially to those who already have domestic troubles.
3. Mormons provide activities for young people. Scout troops are welcome in the church. Many "wards" (groups of churches) have a gymnasium for athletics. LDS churches boast of the largest basketball and Softball organizations in the world. There are dances for the young people. Opportunities exist for use of talent in music, drama, and similar activities.

The Mormons' strong ministry to children and youth attract many outsiders into the church. It has been said that one-third of all converts are teenagers, and most of them are still church members at age 21.

4. Mormons involve every willing and available member as a church worker. They do not have a paid professional class of ministers. The people are the ministers and labor without pay. Boys are introduced into the priesthood at the age of 12. The church develops them as leaders. The highest call is to be a missionary for two years, which brings increased prestige within the church. Missionaries are self-supporting or family-supported. This entire emphasis on involving every member prevents casual, uncommitted association and thus strengthens the church.
5. Mormons believe that they operate under divine revelation. They consider all other churches to be wrong and an abomination in the sight of the Lord. The church claims direct authority from God and asserts that the head of the church is a living prophet who speaks for God. The Mormons believe that they alone possess a valid priesthood, one commissioned by God to act for Him. They have added books of supposedly divine revelation which they consider to have greater authority than the Bible. They have a new message for mankind called "the restored gospel," which requires many works to be done to earn God's favor. They stress the building of temples to carry on God's work. Their secret rituals (frequently patterned after Freemasonry) give initiates a sense of belonging to a unique group. Finally, the Mormons offer their people the opportunity to be gods, among many other gods.

When zealous, clean-cut young missionaries present these ideas in a persuasive way, it is all very convincing. When supported by Satanic power, it is even more potent. Such workers are disguised as "ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:13-15). How readily then many people are deceived.

The False Doctrines of the Mormons

The divinely provided means of knowing doctrinal truth is the Bible. If we are thoroughly familiar with the Scriptures, then we will avoid being deceived by the teachings of false religions. When the Apostle Paul preached to the Bereans, they took the commendable action of searching the Scriptures daily to see whether the things he taught were so (Acts 17:11). The

major doctrines of Mormonism can be proven false by comparing them with the clear teaching of Scripture. The Mormons take as their authority three books, which they consider sacred: the *Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants*, and the *Pearl of Great Price*, which includes the Book of Moses, the Book of Abraham, “The Articles of Faith,” and extracts from *History of Joseph Smith* and from Smith’s Bible translation. In addition, they accept as authoritative their living prophet (the current president of the Mormon church) and his counselors, the Council of Twelve Apostles.

In the comparisons which follow, reference will be made to the Mormons’ sacred books and the following Mormon writings: *A Study of the Articles of Faith* (1975, an exposition of the Mormon “Articles of Faith” by Apostle James E. Talmage, first published in 1899), *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (1958, compiled by Joseph F. Smith), *Journal of Discourses*, *Mormon Doctrine* (1966, by Apostle Bruce R. McConkie) and *The Gospel through the Ages* (1958, by Milton R. Hunter). It will be seen that many Mormon heresies contradict even the *Book of Mormon*, which Joseph Smith called “the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 194).

1. Are There Many Gods Or One God?

- a. *Mormonism*. Mormons are polytheists (believers in many gods). “If we should take a million worlds like this and number their particles, we should find that there are more Gods than there are particles in those worlds” (Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt in *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 2, p. 345). See also *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:20, 37. As recorded in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Joseph Smith taught that “You have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves” (pp. 346-347) and that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are “three Gods” (p. 370). The *Book of Mormon* contradicts these teachings in such verses as Alma 11:26-29, 44; Mormon 7:7; 3 Nephi 11:27; Mosiah 15:4-5. See also *Doctrine and Covenants* 20:28.
- b. *Bible*. True Christians are monotheists. Both Old and New Testaments teach that there is only one God (Deut. 6:4; Isa. 43:10; 44:6; Gal. 3:20; 1 Tim. 2:5). The only offer of becoming gods made to men was given by Satan in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:4-5). Acceptance of this lie brought death, not divinity. Joseph Smith lied when he said, “The doctrine of a plurality of the gods is as prominent in the Bible as any other doctrine” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 370).

2. Is God Changing Or Unchanging?

- a. *Mormonism*. “We believe in a God who is Himself progressive... whose perfection consists in eternal advancement—a Being who has attained His exalted state by a path which now His children are permitted to follow” (*A Study of the Articles of Faith*, p. 430). Lorenzo Snow, the fifth president of the LDS church, stated this idea concisely: “As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become” (*The Gospel through the Ages*, pp. 105-106). The *Book of Mormon* teaches that God is “unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity” (Moroni 8:18; cf. Mormon 9:9-10, 19).
- b. *Bible*. “I am the Lord, I change not” (Mai. 3:6). He does not vary (Jas. 1:17). In essence of being, Jesus the Son of God is “the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8). He was always God (John 1:1) but He came to earth “in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7). God never began His existence as a man and then progressed to godhood.

3. Does God Have A Wife, Our Eternal Mother?

- a. *Mormonism*. “Implicit in the Christian verity that all men are the spirit children of an Eternal Father is the usually unspoken truth that they are also the offspring of an Eternal Mother. An exalted and glorified Man of holiness (Moses 6:57) could not be a Father unless a Woman of like glory, perfection and holiness was associated with him as a Mother” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 516). Refer also to *The Gospel through the Ages*, page 98. Brigham Young, Smith’s successor as LDS prophet, believed that God also had a father and mother (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 9, p. 286). Mormons believe in marriage relationships in heaven.
 - b. *Bible*. There is no indication of a “Mrs. God” in the Scriptures. Jesus said that marriage relationships exist only on earth, not in heaven or in the world to come (Luke 20:34-35).
4. How Was Jesus Conceived?
- a. *Mormonism*. Christ is “the offspring of a mortal mother and of an immortal, or resurrected and glorified, Father” (*A Study of the Articles of Faith*, p. 473). “Jesus Christ was not begotten by the Holy Ghost” (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 1, p. 51). “The Virgin Mary must have been, for the time being, the lawful wife of God the Father” (Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, p. 158). This teaching of sexual union between God the Father and the Virgin Mary is contradicted by the *Book of Mormon*: “Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God” (Alma 7:10).
 - b. *Bible*. The Prophet Isaiah said that the birth of Christ would be to a virgin (Isa. 7:14). He was conceived through the miraculous touch of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18-20; Luke 1:34-35). The concept of God, who is a Spirit, having sex with human beings is completely abhorrent to the teachings of the Scriptures.
5. Did Jesus Marry And Have Children?
- a. *Mormonism*. Orson Hyde, one of the members of the first LDS Council of Twelve Apostles, made the following statements. “If at the marriage of Cana of Galilee, Jesus was the bridegroom and took unto him Mary, Martha and the other Mary, it shocks not our nerves. If there was not attachment and familiarity between our Saviour and these women, highly proper only in the relation of husband and wife, then we have no sense of propriety” (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 2, pp. 81-82)... before the Saviour died He looked upon His own natural children as we look upon ours” (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 4, p. 210).
 - b. *Bible*. There is no record in the Scriptures of any marriage or children of Jesus. John 2 records the wedding at Cana and the account has no resemblance to what this false apostle stated.
6. Will Trust In The Blood Of Jesus Bring Forgiveness Of Sins?
- a. *Mormonism*. “Christians speak often of the blood of Christ and its cleansing power. Much that is believed and taught on this subject, however, is such utter nonsense and so palpably false that to believe it is to lose one’s salvation. Many go so far, for instance, as to pretend and at least, to believe that if we confess Christ with our lips and avow that we accept Him as our personal Savior, we are thereby saved. His blood, without other act than mere belief, they say, makes us clean” (McConkie, *What Mormons Think of Christ*, p. 32). Such scoffing at sacred truth even contradicts statements in the *Book of Mormon* that forgiveness is through the atoning blood of Jesus (Mosiah 4:2). b. *Bible*. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). His death is the satisfaction or

"propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). See other verses such as Acts 20:28; Romans 3:25; 5:9; Hebrews 9:22; 10:10-14; 1 Peter 1:18-19; and Revelation 1:5. Only the blood of Jesus can wash away our sin and it can have that effect only when we place our faith in him and His work on the cross.

7. Is Salvation By Human Works Or By God's Grace Through Faith?

- a. *Mormonism*. Mormon teaching denies that we are saved by grace (the unmerited favor of God) through faith. "The sectarian dogma of justification by faith alone has exercised an influence for evil" (*A Study of the Articles of Faith*, p. 480). This even contradicts the authoritative *Doctrine and Covenants*, which states, "we know the justification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true" (20:30). "Full salvation is attained by virtue of knowledge, truth, righteousness, and all true principles. Many conditions must exist in order to make such salvation available to men. Without atonement, the gospel, the priesthood, and the sealing power, there would be no salvation. Without continuous revelation, the ministering angels, the working of miracles, the prevalence of gifts of the spirit, there would be no salvation. There is no salvation outside The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints" (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 670). All commandments must be kept (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 149).
- b. *Bible*. We are told in Scripture, again and again, that we are saved by God's grace through faith, not by human or religious works of any kind (Rom. 3:28; 4:4-6; 5:1; Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5, etc.). This salvation is in Christ alone, not through any church (1 John 5:11-12).

8. Was Adam's Disobedience Desirable?

- a. *Mormonism*. Adam made the right choice in disobeying God and eating the forbidden fruit. McConkie explained that "Adam was to introduce mortality and all that attends it, so that the opportunity for eternal progression and perfection might be offered to all the spirit children of the Father." Mormon Sterling W Still said "Adam fell, but he fell in the right direction. He fell toward the goal... Adam fell, but he fell upward" (*Deseret News*, July 31, 1965). The *Book of Mormon* confirms this teaching in 2 Nephi 2:22-25, where it says that Adam fell that men might have joy.
- b. *Bible*. Adam's act of gross disobedience is condemned by God and was the occasion of His judgment (Gen. 3:16-18). That act of disobedience brought sin into the world and death upon all mankind (Rom. 5:12). Eternal progression, with or without Adam's fall, is not taught anywhere in the Bible.

9. Is The Final Authority The Bible Or The Mormon Writings?

- a. *Mormonism*. Although Mormon missionaries liberally use the Bible in their presentations to their contacts, they spend little time studying it in their churches. This is because they believe it has been changed since it was first written. They cannot, however, show you where any fundamental teaching of the Bible has been changed. The *Book of Mormon* states that many precious things have been taken away from the Scripture (1 Nephi 13:28). Orson Pratt, a Mormon Apostle, wrote, "Who knows that even one verse of the whole Bible has escaped pollution, so as to convey the same sense now that it did in the original?" (*Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon*, p. 47). It is certainly hypocritical then for Mormons to draw proof-texts for their religion from the Bible. By contrast, Mormons deny that there have been changes in their sacred books and therefore maintain that the writings are completely reliable.

b. *Bible*. Jesus Christ considered the Old Testament authoritative and never expressed the slightest doubt in its accuracy. The Dead Sea Scrolls indicate that we have the same text now as that which was written before the time of Jesus. We possess more copies and fragments of the New Testament from the most ancient times than of any other book of that era. Our text today is accurate. By contrast, the Mormon writings have repeatedly been altered. For example, it is estimated that the *Book of Mormon* has undergone about 4000 changes since its first publication in 1830. Defenders of the *Book of Mormon* claim the book is a miracle that cannot be accounted for by human explanations. Yet overwhelming evidence exists that it contains material stolen from other sources. Ralph Foster, in *Book of Mormon on Trial* (1963), says that 27,000 words are taken word for word out of the King James Version of the Bible, although the *Book of Mormon* allegedly was written centuries before, between 600 B.C. and 33 A.D. Alma 40 parallels very closely the Westminster Confession of Faith (Presbyterian), chapter 32 (1647). The Apocrypha is another source. *View of the Hebrews*, by Ethan Smith, suggested much of the information about Indians in the *Book of Mormon* and was published seven years earlier. There are also links with the writings of Solomon Spaulding, a novelist who died in 1816. Various researchers have documented the changes in Mormon writings and the plagiarism in the *Book of Mormon* (see Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *The Changing World of Mormon-ism*, Moody Press, 1980). Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt wrote, "Convince us of our errors of doctrine, if we have any, by reason, by logical arguments, or by the Word of God, and we will ever be grateful for the information" (*The Seer*, p. 15). The information above is but a fraction of the overwhelming evidence of the doctrinal errors of the Mormon system.

How to Witness to Mormons

The opportunity to speak with Mormons frequently comes when two of their missionaries appear at the door. Other opportunities arise when you discover Mormons among your neighbors or fellow workers at the office or classmates. Those who go door-to-door usually identify themselves as representatives of the Latter-Day Saints Church and ask if they may share about their "family program." This is at the forefront of their initial approach. You may expect them to use what is known as the "golden question." This is, "What do you know about the Mormon Church?" It is helpful if you do not indicate too much knowledge or overwhelm them with literature or Scripture citations, especially at the outset. Courtesy is more effective than a superior attitude or hostility. If progress is to be made, expect it to require much time and multiple contacts. Here are some things you should remember as you witness to Mormons.

1. Know their basic doctrinal ideas and the names of their sacred books. Be prepared to ask them about their church's teaching on other churches, about the nature of God, about men becoming gods, about how Jesus Christ can save and about how sins can be forgiven. They are not anxious to discuss these matters initially.
2. You must seek to control the conversation by your questions, rather than be controlled by their approach. Prayer is a good beginning and ending. Stick to the major doctrinal areas and do not let them change the subject, sidestep, or try to find out what you believe. You have agreed to talk in order to let them explain what they believe.
3. Speak of Jesus as much as possible and make Him central to your discussion. There is still power in that Name, even though they believe in "another Jesus" (2 Cor. 11:4).

4. Since all false religion is Satanic in origin, keep in mind that your battle is not with them as persons but with the powers of darkness (Eph. 6:12). Avoid personal attacks on the church and their leaders or prophets. Avoid arguments and try to be calm as you discuss things. Thoughtful exchange is better for gentle persuasion and the sowing of doubt in their minds. If you show respect for their sincerity, they are more likely to do the same for you.
5. Remember that they use Biblical terms with entirely different definitions than we do. Therefore, make sure that terms such as “the gospel,” “eternal life,” and “born again” are defined exactly. When you give your personal testimony define precisely what you mean by the terms you use. Then they will not be able to say, “We believe the same thing.” Properly understood, they do not believe the same things as orthodox Christians.
6. Insist on looking at verses they use in context.
7. When they quote from the Bible as being authoritative during their presentations, ask if they believe that it is the very Word of God and is to be trusted. They do not because of supposed errors in translation and other changes. If the Bible is unreliable, then how can they use it for proof of their doctrine? Ask them to show you examples of what they consider to be errors.

Appendix C: Jehovah's Witnesses And The Watchtower

Those now calling themselves Jehovah's Witnesses and officially known as The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society operate in over 100 countries. They reach millions of people through one of the largest printing operations in the world. They began over 100 years ago in Pennsylvania through the teachings of Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916). He rejected his Presbyterian and Congregationalist background but was influenced by the Seventh-Day Adventists. He agreed with them in their rejection of the doctrine of eternal punishment (hell). He was also attracted to the idea of looking forward to the second coming of Christ at a certain date, though the Adventists had falsely prophesied the Lord's return in 1843-44.

Russell founded Zion's Watchtower in 1879 and began to think of himself as God's spokesman on earth. His account is shown in the following quotation:

"The truths I present, as God's mouthpiece, were not revealed in visions or dreams, nor by God's audible voice, nor all at once, but gradually, especially since 1870, and particularly since 1880. Neither is this clear unfolding of truth due to any human ingenuity or acuteness of perception, but to the simple fact that God's due time has come; and if I did not speak, and no other agent could be found, the very stones would cry out" (*The Watchtower*, July 15, 1906, p. 229).

Russell interpreted Christ's parable in Matthew 24:45 about a "faithful and wise servant" who ruled over the household of his master (an illustration of any believer's faithful service) to refer to himself (*The Watchtower*, March 1, 1896). He saw himself as the source of spiritual food, light, and truth to all believers. In 1927, J. F. Rutherford, Russell's successor, declared that the Watchtower Society itself, not Russell, was the faithful servant of Jehovah. This is the position the group takes today. Followers of the Watchtower believe their organization is the headquarters for God's theocratic kingdom on earth and the only reliable source of truth. All other Christian organizations are classified as part of "Babylon" and considered to be apostate. Any literature or utterance not from the Watchtower Society is considered demonic in origin and not to be believed.

The organization's absolute authority over the beliefs and lives of its members is shown in these statements:

"... the Bible is an organizational book and belongs to the Christian congregation as an organization, not to individuals, regardless of how sincerely they may believe that they can interpret the Bible. For this reason the Bible cannot be properly understood without Jehovah's visible organization in mind" (*The Watchtower*, October 1, 1967, p. 587). "We all need help to understand the Bible, and we cannot find the scriptural guidance we need outside the 'faithful and discreet slave organization'" (*The Watchtower*, February 15, 1981, p. 19). "If we are to walk in the light of truth we must recognize not only Jehovah God as our father but his organization as our 'mother'" (*The Watchtower*, May 1957, p. 274).

The Watchtower Doctrinal Position

1. The Godhead

- a. *Watchtower Viewpoint*: The organization denies that one God eternally exists as Father, Son, and Spirit. "Satan is the originator of this doctrine" (*Let God Be True*, 1952, p. 101). "It came from Babylonish paganism c.[about] 2200 B.C. and was brought into the Christian

church about the second century" (*Make Sure of All Things*, 1957, p. 386). God's one and only proper name is Jehovah. The Holy Spirit is the invisible active force of Almighty God, not a person.

- b. *Biblical Answer*: Read Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Matthew 3:16-17; John 14:16-20. Though there is only one God (Deut. 6:4; 1 Tim. 2:5), this God is a plural unity. The Old Testament name for the one true God is *Elohim*, a plural noun. The "persons" of the Godhead interact with one another in spite of being one substance. Father, Son, and Spirit are not the same, yet each is called God.

2. Jesus Christ

- a. *Watchtower Viewpoint*: Jesus Christ is a created individual, the second greatest personage in the universe, the first and only direct creation of his Father, Jehovah (*Make Sure of All Things*, 1957, p. 207). Jesus Christ is not Almighty God but is "a god" (John 1:1 *New World Translation*). b. *Biblical Answer*: Read Revelation 1:8; 21:6-7; 22:12-16; Isaiah 44:6; 48:12; Hebrews 1:8, and many other verses. Both Jesus and Jehovah God are called "the First and the Last." Both are the "I AM." We must believe this truth or die in our sins (John 8:24).

3. Christ's Bodily Resurrection

- a. *Watchtower Viewpoint*: Jesus Christ did not rise in a body from the dead. He was raised a spirit and did not go in a human body to heaven (*Let God Be True*, pp. 40-41, 276). His body may have disappeared into gases. Believers will never see the glorified Jesus. "Since no earthly men have ever seen the Father, neither will they see the glorified Son" (*Let God Be True*, p. 186).
- b. *Biblical Answer*: Read Luke 24:36-39, where the resurrected Jesus denies that He is simply a spirit without a body Jehovah's Witnesses interpret 1 Peter 3:18 to mean that Jesus was raised a spirit creature. However, the verse indicates that He was raised *by* or *through* the Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:11). Our own bodies are to be *transformed* to be like His glorious body (Phil. 3:21). When Jesus returns, every eye will see Him (Rev. 1:7; 19:11-16). The word "coming" is not used in the New Testament of any invisible presence (compare 1 Cor. 16:17; Phil. 1:26 with 1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23).

4. Assurance Of Eternal Life

- a. *Watchtower Viewpoint*: No Jehovah's Witness can be sure he now possesses eternal life or "has been saved" or is now forgiven of sins. Before he can be pronounced fit for salvation, his faithfulness to Jehovah and to the Watchtower organization must be tested on earth. There are two classes of people who will be saved. The first group is the 144,000 in Revelation 7, also called "the anointed" class. These alone will live in heaven and rule over those on earth. Only these are born again. The "other sheep" or "great crowd" will live on earth forever. Thus, they do not need to be born again. They will not be declared justified until the end of the millennium when their works are reviewed. This will be based in part upon obedience to the Watchtower Society, demonstrated by faithfulness in literature sales and witnessing. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross is not sufficient of itself to put away sins. "His atonement provided the redemptive price whereby mankind by obedience and service could gain perfect human life with its rights and earthly prospects" (*Let God Be True*, 1952, p. 114)

b. *Biblical Answer:* God's Word says that we can know we *have* eternal life (1 John 5:13; John 5:24; Rom. 5:9-10), *have* forgiveness (Eph. 1:7-8; Col. 1:14) and are going to heaven (John 14:1-6). The sacrifice of Jesus alone makes us right with God (Heb. 9:22; 10:10-12; Rev. 1:5). Nothing in the Bible restricts the new birth to one class of believers.

5. The Gospel Message

a. *Watchtower Viewpoint:* The gospel or good news of the kingdom is to be preached until the end comes (Matt. 24:14). The good news concerns the approach of Armageddon, when all God's enemies are slain, and the millennium which follows. Russell said Christ was invisibly present from 1874 to 1914 (*New Heavens and New Earth*). At that time Christ set up His kingdom headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, to rule through the Watchtower Society until Armageddon. Rutherford said Christ set up His kingdom in 1918.

b. *Biblical Answer:* The true gospel is stated in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 and is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). When men believe it, they are sealed with the Holy Spirit of God (Eph. 1:13). By faith in the blood of Jesus we are saved (Rom. 3:25; 5:9). Our good works, even religious activities, have no part in saving our souls. They are a fruit of salvation (Eph. 2:8-10; Tit. 3:5, 8). The good news has nothing to do with Armageddon or the millennium.

The Watchtower and Its Use of the Bible

The Watchtower Society holds that the Bible is God's Word and is authoritative. However, it discourages its members from reading or discussing the Bible without following Watchtower doctrinal guides. In this way, the organization prevents independent study under the guidance of God. Furthermore, its members are not taught to study the Scriptures *in context* and then to compare with other Scripture on a subject. This leaves them open to the Watchtower's false teaching.

Jehovah's Witnesses are taught that there are many errors in most translations or versions of the Bible. Some of these errors supposedly result from efforts made to eliminate the name "Jehovah" or to support the doctrine of the Trinity. The organization once used the King James Version, which is still acceptable, though defective, in the Witnesses' eyes. They developed their own version, called the *New World Translation* (NWT). The New Testament portion was first introduced in 1950.

Most Watchtower doctrinal errors can still be exposed using this translation. However, the NWT seriously twists many verses to make them fit Watchtower doctrines. For example, in Colossians 1:15-17, the *New World Translation* adds the word "other" (in brackets) before the word "things" in an attempt to make the Lord Jesus a created being who then created "all other things." The NWT renders John 8:58 as "before Abraham came into existence, I have been" to conceal the fact that Jesus uses the divine name "I AM" (Exod. 3:14; John 8:24). In John 1:1, the NWT reads "the Word was a god" to make it appear that Jesus is a second and inferior god to Jehovah. The fact is that the exact order of the words in the Greek is "God was the Word" (*Theos en ho Logos*).

The Watchtower and Prophecy

Man has a great curiosity about the future. Thus, he is susceptible to deceivers or false prophets who claim to show him things to come. Biblically untaught people are easy marks for religious groups who selectively use Scripture to advance their systems of thought. Prophecy is a great attraction, and the Watchtower Society makes use of this appeal.

As already stated, the Watchtower organization claims to be the “faithful and wise servant” of Matthew 24:45 and thus God’s only spokesman on earth. Today’s Witnesses are unaware that the Watchtower first taught that the faithful and wise servant was Russell himself, not the Society. In fact, neither is the case. Matthew 24:45-51 is an appeal to all believers to be watchful for the Lord’s return and to be wise servants in the light of His coming. No organizational intermediary is suggested.

The Society also talks out of both sides of its mouth about its prophetic role. The organization denied that it was an inspired prophet in some statements (*The Watchtower*, December 15, 1973, p. 738). Thus it could utter falsehoods while professing to seek greater light. When confronted by false prophecies, it could say that mistakes are only human. On the other hand, it says that everything it presents is “directed from heaven” (*The Watchtower*, April 1, 1972, p. 200). It says that it is the prophet of God proclaimed in Ezekiel 33:33 and Matthew 24:45, and that men must take heed accordingly. If this were indeed true then no mistakes or false prophecies would be possible according to Deuteronomy 18:21-22 and Jeremiah 29:8-9.

The organization has taught its people to believe that God has acted or will act on dates which they predict. When the predictions failed, the prophecies were explained away as misunderstandings. Modern Witnesses have no idea how often this has happened. Consider, for example, the following items listed by year:

1874: “Our Lord, the appointed King, is now present since October, 1874 A.D. according to the testimony of the prophets” (*Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 4, 1897, p. 621).

1914: “The date of the close of that battle [Armageddon] is definitely marked in Scripture as October, 1914. It is already in progress, its beginning dated from October, 1874” (*Watch-tower Reprints*, January 15, 1892, p. 1355). “The battle of the Great Day of God Almighty now in progress” (*Watchtower Reprints*, September 1, 1916, p. 5951). As it turned out, World War I did not produce Armageddon with the subsequent return of Christ. The prophecy was then interpreted to mean that it was an invisible event in which Christ set up His kingdom with headquarters in Brooklyn, with Armageddon still in the future. This paralleled the explanation of the Seventh-Day Adventists about their own failure of prophecy when Christ’s return was predicted first in 1843 and then 1844. It was said to have occurred in an invisible passage of Christ from one sphere of heaven to another.

1925: “The great jubilee cycle is due to begin in 1925. At that time the earthly phase of the kingdom shall be recognized ... therefore we can confidently expect that 1925 will mark the return of Abraham” (*Millions Now Living Will Never Die*, 1920, p. 89). “The date 1925 is even more distinctly indicated by the Scriptures because it is fixed by the law God gave to Israel” (*The Watchtower*, September 1, 1922, p. 262). “The year 1925 is here. With great expectations Christians have looked forward to this year. Many have confidently expected that all members of the body of Christ will be changed to heavenly glory during the year” (*The Watchtower*, January 1, 1925, p. 3).

1940: The excitement of World War II generated many prophetic ideas and the Society joined in the speculation. “The year 1940 is certain to be the most important year yet, because Armageddon is very near” (*Informant*, May 1940, p. 1). “The kingdom is here, the King is enthroned. Armageddon is just ahead. The glorious reign of Christ that shall bring blessings to the world will immediately follow. Therefore, the great climax has been reached” (*The Messenger*, September 1940, p. 6). “The near future will bring and is already hastening to bring

to them Armageddon, the battle of the great day of God Almighty" (*Consolation*, October 29, 1941, p. 11).

1975: "According to trustworthy Bible chronology, six thousand years from man's creation will end in 1975 and the seventh period of a thousand years of human history will begin in the fall of 1975" (*Life Everlasting in Freedom of the Sons of God*, p. 29). This prophecy failed when the end did not come in 1975. This failure was explained by the idea that Adam and Eve were not born the same year, although *The Watchtower* of May 1, 1968, said the opposite. The failure of this prophecy caused hundred of thousands to leave the Society. A further aftermath was a rift at Bethel, the Brooklyn headquarters, which caused the purging of several top leaders, including Ray Franz, nephew of Watchtower president Frederick Franz.

A final note must be offered on the Society's claim that the 144,000 of Revelation 7 is an elite group of Jehovah's Witnesses. A simple reading of Revelation 7:4-8 identifies this group as a remnant group of Jews converted to Christ in the "last days." That there will be a national return of many in the nation of Israel to Christ is taught in Romans 11:25-28; Zechariah 12:9-14; 13:1; Ezekiel 36:24-32; 37:11-14. Even Isaiah 43:10, from which Society members derive the name "Jehovah's Witnesses," plainly identifies the witnesses as a believing remnant of Jews (see vv. 1, 3, 15, 22).

The Zeal of the Jehovah's Witnesses

Any group which has its people on the streets and at the doors seven days a week has a highly motivated membership. How is this achieved? What keeps the members going?

They believe that the Watchtower Society is the only group on earth that is pleasing God and doing what He desires. They reason that all other Christian groups belong to "Babylon," meaning apostate Christianity. They ask: "Who else goes about witnessing for Jehovah? Who alone fights to preserve the name Jehovah as God's only true name? Who else is united in doctrine and testimony? Who alone proclaims the good news of the approach of Armageddon and the coming kingdom of God? Who else vigorously opposes the pagan doctrine of the Trinity and the false idea of hell?" So they have the "we alone are right" mentality.

They are systematic and effective in entangling people in their movement. They employ three basic steps. They begin with friendly talk about world conditions and lure the unwary listener into buying one of their magazines or books. From then on, they will call on him with an abundance of patience seeking to pull their "prospect" deeper into the Watchtower teachings. Their next step is to move into his home with a weekly "Bible study." This is designed to indoctrinate their prospect in the Watchtower teachings and to bring him to be an obedient Watchtower follower. Finally, they cordially invite him to a "Kingdom Hall." Here the convert meets 104 times a year for "spiritual food" pre-digested for easy assimilation by the so-called "channel to God." Behind this "channel" are the Brooklyn leaders who control every aspect of their followers' lives. Eating and drinking from the Watchtower table, the person ceases to think for himself and begins to think, understand, and live the "Watchtower way."

The zeal of the Jehovah's Witnesses and their effective tactics have resulted in a powerful organization with a world-wide impact. Yet, the Society is not without its weaknesses. The foremost weakness is that it is a false system and thus, in the end, can never prevail against the truth. Moreover, their zeal is not according to knowledge. The most fundamental concepts of the organization will not stand the close examination of Scripture nor will its "scholarship" stand against honest or impartial investigation. Once members are aware of the false

prophecies and promises of the past, they leave the lies, cover-ups, and false explanations. The Society can give no assurance of eternal life unless members remain true to the Society in this life and through the millennium. It offers only insecurity. Finally, the iron dictatorship of the organization over its members' lives, beliefs, and associations crushes their spirits. The people have little joy, only endless labors.

Speaking to Jehovah's Witnesses

Many Watchtower members are being won to Christ by believers who are willing to spend time talking with them and who are informed about the doctrines and current happenings in the movement. Prayer and persistent effort will pay off. Bear in mind the following simple guidelines in your conversations:

1. Things To Do:

- a. Be courteous and gentle, not hostile. Take the role of a seeker of truth, not one who "knows it all."
- b. Ask thought-provoking questions rather than making dogmatic statements. Be patient.
- c. Refer to God as Jehovah (the only name they accept).
- d. Agree wherever you can. Define terms carefully. Avoid arguments.
- e. Use the Bible, preferably, the King James Version, to prove your point or to check what they say. Have them read, always noting the context. Remember that Jehovah's Witnesses believe literature they do not produce is demonically influenced.
- f. Try to separate the Jehovah's Witness to whom you are speaking from the Watchtower Society. Politely try to raise doubts in his mind about what has been taught so inconsistently and falsely. Be ready to continue the dialogue with further contacts.
- g. Share how Christ has changed your life, forgiven your sin, and given you joy (of which they know very little).

2. Things To Avoid:

- a. Do not use the word "trinity" or argue this question initially. Stress that you believe there is only one God, not many gods.
- b. Avoid arguing initially the deity of Christ since they are most prepared here. If asked who Jesus is, reply, "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, but I do not believe He is the Father."
- c. Refrain from arguing about hell and eternal punishment. If asked about this, refer them to 2 Thessalonians 1:9 and do not try to define everlasting destruction. In time you can use Revelation 14:11; 20:10; Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29. They do not consider Luke 16:19-31 to be a statement about life hereafter.
- d. Do not attack them personally or their leaders.
- e. Avoid emphasizing that you are "eternally secure." This is misunderstood by them as egotism and a license to sin. However, you can show from Scripture that a person can be assured properly of eternal life on the authority of God's Word.

Members of the Witnesses can only be shown the truth by patient and careful study of the Scriptures. There is no quick solution.

Notes

1. Quoted in *Principles of Spiritual Growth* by Miles J. Stanford (Lincoln, Nebraska: Back to the Bible, 1966), p. 43.
2. Arthur W. Pink, *Spiritual Growth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1972).
3. William MacDonald, *Lord, Break Me* (Kansas City, Kansas: Walterick Publishers, 1972).
4. Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert; History of Negev* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publications Society of America, 1969), p. 31.
5. David Breese, *Know the Marks of Cults* (Victor), 1975.
6. George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), p. 11.

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To God be the glory.