

FAITHFUL MEN · A LIBRARY OF CHRISTIAN CLASSICS

Basic Christian Training

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(contributing writer, 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

The following suggestions will make this study profitable.

1. Pray To God. Ask God to help you understand His Word. Claim the promise of Psalm 119:130: “The entrance of thy Words giveth light, it giveth understanding unto the simple.” It is impossible to truly understand God’s Word without God’s help (2 Corinthians 2:14).

2. Prepare Before Class.

- a. Answer Homework Questions. Complete all items of the Study Guide as directed. If you have trouble with a question, pass on to the next question.
- b. Read the Notes. Read and reread the lesson. Underline key thoughts, mark anything you do not understand or that you have questions about. Make notations on the wide margin at the side of each lesson.
- c. Look Up Key References. If time permits read *all* Scripture references from a modern translation such as the New American Standard Bible. A typical reference is written with the name of the book followed by the chapter number and verse number which are separated by a colon (example: Colossians 3:23). Most Bibles have a table of contents that lists the starting page number for each book of the Bible. After finding the page, locate the appropriate chapter and verse.

3. Attend Class Regularly. There is a time for small group interaction as well as a lecture period. Your questions and comments will encourage others to share.

4. Save Your Notes And Materials. These will help you in your further study and you may wish to share them with others.

Lesson 1: A Gospel Panorama

“The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1). Thus begins the inspired account of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus. The essential core of Christian faith—the greatest message ever heard by man—is this: “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and...was buried, and...rose again the third day” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). It is summarized in John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” It is good news indeed, for that is what the word “gospel” means. The way has been opened for man to come to God, and He has commanded that this message be proclaimed to every creature on the face of the earth (Mark 16:15).

What do we know about the gospel? Its source is God, not man. It is the gospel of God (Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:2, 9). Its central theme is a living Person. It is the gospel of God’s Son, our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 1:3, 9; 15:19). Its purpose is to bring men to God. It is the gospel of our salvation (Ephesians 1:13). Its objects are the undeserving. It is the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24). Its duration is forever. It is the everlasting gospel (Revelation 14:6).

No one can afford to disregard its life-or-death message. God calls upon men to obey the gospel and warns them of judgment if they do not (2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17; Romans 10:16). Since believing (or faith) is the required response, there is an urgent necessity to make it known (1 Corinthians 9:16; Acts 1:8). Anyone who seeks to alter the message is under a curse (Galatians 1:7-9). This is particularly true of one who teaches that works or rituals must be added to believing the gospel for salvation.

Such a message from God did not burst suddenly upon the world scene without any prior indication. Man’s need for salvation from sin and death was evident from the beginning of history, as shown in the first chapters of the Bible. God’s remedy by means of a promised Deliverer is also set forth as early as Genesis 3:15. The blood sacrifices of old anticipated the final, once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the cross (Hebrews 10:1-4, 10-12). The Old Testament promised a New Covenant or Testament which would be greater than the old (Jeremiah 31:31-33). God’s Deliverer was to be for all mankind (Isaiah 42:1, 6). Prophecy and fulfillment thus interlock in one Lord, one faith, one salvation (Ephesians 4:4-6). There is only one way to God (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

Separation from God

Man was made for God—for His pleasure and glory (Revelation 4:11; Isaiah 43:7). God’s eternal purpose was for man to bear His likeness and thereby reveal His glory (Genesis 1:26-27; Romans 8:29). God placed man upon earth with the power of choice rather than as a controlled robot. Man was free to love and obey God or not to do so.

1. **Man’s Testing.** He was placed in a beautiful garden and enjoyed fellowship with God. There was only one restriction imposed to assure continuation of that fellowship. Man was forbidden to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The opportunity was there to obey or disobey, to believe or not to believe God’s Word (Genesis 2:15-17).
2. **Man’s Disobedience.** The Devil, in the form of a serpent, contradicted God, and said man would not die if he ate of the forbidden fruit. Man believed that lie rather than the word of the God who loved him. The act of disobedience brought about a fatal change called the

Fall of Man (Genesis 3:1-7). The result was immediate spiritual death, which is separation from God's fellowship (Genesis 3:8), and ultimately physical death, in which man's soul is separated from his body (Genesis 5:3-5).

3. **Man's Problem.** The consequences of this disobedience were not confined to the first man. Sin and death had now entered the human race through him (Romans 5:12). Man's nature was altered so that he became an opposer of God. Man became a sinner both by nature (Ephesians 2:3) and by practice (Romans 3:23). The wages of that sin was death (Romans 6:23). All sin is punishable by death (Ezekiel 18:4). Man, therefore, is now "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1, 5). This death is present *spiritual* death, which is separation from God. Death remains a constant testimonial to the terrible price of sin (Hebrews 9:27; James 1:15). Beyond the physical death, which separates the soul from the body, is the second death, which separates the soul from God eternally (Revelation 20:11-15). Even in the present life, sin is ultimately the cause of all trouble, sickness, pain and alienation from the life of God.

Substitution for the Sinner

The Scriptures tell us that God loved His fallen creatures (Ephesians 2:4-5; 1 John 4:10). Yet He was faced with a moral difficulty in saving them from spiritual death that would become eternal. God is absolutely righteous, which is to say, entirely just. Thus the penalty for sin must be paid (Exodus 34:7). Yet God is also merciful and loving, earnestly desiring the salvation of His fallen creatures (2 Peter 3:9). How can perfect justice and loving mercy be reconciled?

1. **God's Solution.** Through the Lord Jesus the way was found for the righteousness of God, on one hand, to be satisfied in the payment of the debt of sin. Yet the love of God was satisfied, on the other hand, in the saving of men from eternal death. The method was substitution, whereby the penalty would be paid by another on man's behalf (Isaiah 53:4-6). Christ would be the great Sin-Bearer (1 Peter 2:24; 3:18). The Son became a man because the payment demanded the life of man (Acts 2:22). He was sinless that He might be free from death's claims upon His own humanity (2 Corinthians 5:21). His life was of infinite value that it might provide a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:6). God's heart went out to all men (1 Timothy 2:4). It is notable that only God can be a Savior of man (Isaiah 43:11; 45:21). Jesus satisfied that demand (Matthew 1:21-23).
2. **God's Unveiling.** The plan of God was revealed in seed form in the early chapters of Genesis. The efforts by our first parents to cover their sin by the works of their own hands is seen typically in their fig-leaf clothing (Genesis 3:7). It was a provision that did not cover their nakedness and sin before a holy God. He provided the skins of animals as a proper clothing (Genesis 3:21). This substitution could only come when blood had been shed. Animal sacrifices were thus begun. The next generation provided a further illustration. Cain offered God the fruit of his work in the fields while Abel offered a blood sacrifice. God accepted the latter but rejected the offering of Cain. Cain's offering typifies human works as an approach to God (Genesis 4:3-5). Those who seek acceptance by God on the basis of meritorious works are following what is called "the way of Cain" (Jude 11). The way to God is by blood sacrifice, not human works. Further illustration is found in the most important of Jewish feasts, the Passover. At its institution, before the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, an unblemished lamb was taken for each household and sacrificed. The blood was applied to each dwelling as protection against Divine judgment upon all the firstborn. By this blood sacrifice, God passed over, or spared, these households from death (Exodus 12:3-14, 21-27).

The sacrificial system of the Old Testament continued this teaching. These sacrifices were shadows of that which was to come, Christ's death on the cross (Colossians 2:17). The previous sacrifices could never take away sin, although they anticipated and illustrated the sacrifice which would do so (Hebrews 10:1-4). The one sacrifice for sins forever was that of the Lord Jesus on the cross. This was what put away sin for the believer (Hebrews 9:12-14; 10:10, 12). Thus we see that God, from the beginning, provided a basis of faith for salvation. The fulfillment of the plan was in the coming of the Son of God Himself (Hebrews 1:1-2). This was the hidden wisdom of God kept from the forces of evil through the preceding ages (1 Corinthians 2:7-8).

3. **God's Way.** Since the Lord Jesus in His sacrifice on the cross is the only way to God, how were Old Testament believers saved? They were saved on exactly the same basis as we are; that is, by grace, through faith, without meritorious works (Ephesians 2:8-9). They died in faith, not having seen the fulfillment of Old Testament promises of a final Deliverer, the Messiah. Yet they were persuaded that the promises were true and embraced them (Hebrews 11:13). God counted their faith for righteousness (Romans 4:3; James 2:23). He reckoned the work of the Lord Jesus to their account just as He does to ours (2 Corinthians 5:21). Although the details of the message differed, the gospel also was preached to Old Testament people (Hebrews 3:16-4:2; 1 Peter 4:6). They believed God and showed the reality of that belief by obeying Him. John the Baptist continued this preaching before Jesus began His public ministry. He told people to repent and believe the gospel (Mark 1:15). The Lord Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 4:23; 9:35). To receive Him as King was to enter His kingdom. Hence He told them that the kingdom of God was in their midst when He stood before them (Luke 17:21 NASB).
4. **God's Satisfaction.** God the Father is well pleased with His Son (Matthew 3:17). He is satisfied with the complete sufficiency of that work on the cross, which settles the debt of sin and makes us acceptable in God's presence. "It is finished" (John 19:30). No more sacrifice for sins is needed, nor are our iniquities remembered any more (Hebrews 10:17-18). God is favorably disposed toward us because of the Lord Jesus (1 John 2:1; Hebrews 2:17). The Lamb of God has fully paid for the sins of the world (John 1:29; 1 John 2:2). His resurrection has displayed to the world the full approval of God concerning all He accomplished (Acts 2:22-24).

Salvation for the Believer

Each person must come to God for salvation as an individual, receiving Christ as Lord and Savior in the present age (John 1:12-13). Today, response to God brings people into one of two groups: the godly or the ungodly. They are members of different *spiritual families* with different fathers, different fruit and different destinies.

1. **Children Of Disobedience** (Ephesians 2:2; 5:6). The nature of their reaction to God marks this description. Their future is indicated by the companion phrase, "children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). Their true father is shown by the expression "children of the devil" (1 John 3:10, 8).
2. **Children Of God** (Romans 8:16-17; Galatians 3:26). They might also be called the "children of obedience" because of the expression "obedience of faith" (Romans 16:26). Their response of faith is to "obey Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:2 NASB). This obedience is unto the gospel. Since they are of the *line of faith*, they are called children of Abraham (Galatians 3:7). The Lord Jesus said that Abraham's children "do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39).

The transformation of life causes them to be called “children of light” (John 12:36; 1 Thessalonians 5:5). They are not saved by good works, but they are saved unto good works (Ephesians 2:10; Titus 3:8). The design of salvation was that those who had been dead in sins might live unto righteousness (1 Peter 2:24).

The major difference between the two families is in their faith. The children of disobedience, following Cain, have faith in their own efforts as they live before God. They will not obey the gospel and come to God on the basis of the finished work of Christ alone. They trust in their own goodness, ideas and way of life. In contrast, the children of God have come to the point where they know they need a Savior. They have repented of their sins (Luke 13:3; 15:7; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19). They have turned to God in faith (Acts 20:21; 26:20). Their faith is in the blood of Christ alone to save them (Romans 3:25). His blood alone can cleanse us from all sin (1 John 1:7; Revelation 1:5).

Conclusion

The salvation of man was in the mind of God before the world was created. He desired fellowship with those who were willing to love and obey Him by choice. The beginning of disobedience did not take Him by surprise. The Lamb of God was set aside, even slain, in the mind of God before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:19-20; Revelation 13:8). When the fullness of time was come God sent forth His Son (Galatians 4:4). The One who had spoken in many ways and through many prophets now spoke to man through His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2). The gospel message tells man that Christ has died and paid for his sins, meeting every claim of God's justice. The Son has risen from the dead for man's justification. God offers eternal life to all who will come to Him through faith in His Son. To receive the Son and to have Him is to have eternal life (John 1:12; 1 John 5:12). The wrath of God abides on the one who does not believe (John 3:36). Have you obeyed the gospel? Do you now walk as a child of obedience, a child of light and a child of God?

Study Guide

1. What do you learn about God's purposes for man in the following verses (Genesis 1:26-27; Isaiah 43:7; Romans 8:29; Revelation 4:11)?
2. What opportunity did Adam have to please God (Genesis 2:15-17)? What does Adam's response to this test tell you about his faith in God's Word (Genesis 3:1-7)?
3. Use the following verses to define sin (Isaiah 53:6; Matthew 5:28; Romans 3:23; 1 John 3:4; James 4:17).

How does Adam's response to God reflect the Bible's definition of sin (compare Genesis 3:1-7)?

What is the condition of all men since the time of Adam (Romans 5:12)? Why?

4. God's justice demands that the penalty of sin be paid. What was the spiritual penalty established by God at creation (Genesis 2:17; Ezekiel 18:4)?

What happens if a person dies physically in this condition (Revelation 20:11-15; Hebrews 9:27)?

5. What does the following passage reveal about God's mercy and His justice (Exodus 34:6b-7)?

What solution did God use to reconcile His loving kindness and His justice (1 Peter 3:18; Acts 4:10-12)?

What is unique about the Savior in Isaiah 43:11? How did Jesus satisfy that requirement (Matthew 1:21-23; Hebrews 1:8)?

6. Paraphrase (rewrite in your own words) 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 and explain how this passage summarizes the Gospel message.

7. What was one reason for God veiling His redemptive plan until it was completed (1 Corinthians 2:7-8)? How then were Old Testament believers “saved” (Hebrews 11:13)?

8. What is the relationship between salvation and doing good works (Ephesians 2:8-10)?

How does the life of Abraham demonstrate this concept (Romans 4:1-5; James 2:18-23)?

Is salvation possible on the basis of works (Titus 3:5-8; Hebrews 9:22)? Why or why not?

9. A person's response to the Gospel determines membership in one of two spiritual families. Match the following references with their respective family, indicating variations in the titles where given (John 8:44; Galatians 3:7; Ephesians 2:2-3; 5:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:5; 1 John 3:10).

Children of Disobedience

Children of God

How does one change family membership (Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; John 1:12; 5:24)?

10. Briefly explain *how* and *when* you became a Christian. If you have not yet received Jesus Christ, what do you feel is holding you back?

Lesson 2: Survey Of Christology

He walked among men and His was the greatest life ever lived. His spotless character, unflawed from any standpoint, brought tribute even from His enemies. His life was unique. No imperfect man could have invented Him. No skeptic can reasonably explain Him. More has been written about Him than any other on & in history, yet on earth He wrote nothing of which we have a record. He had greater impact on history than any other person. He caused it to be divided into periods called B.C. and A.D. (before Christ and *Anno Domini*, the year of our Lord). Yet He took no part in politics and commanded no earthly army. He became the most controversial man in history, bitterly opposed, mindlessly persecuted and violently slain. Yet He preached nonviolence and forbade retaliation, vengeance or the sword. He said, "My kingdom is not of this world." His chief credential was His moral supremacy. The span of all He was, and is, and has done, stretches from an eternity past, through earthly life, to infinity.

1. **His Names.** He was called *Jesus*, "for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). *Jesus* means "God [Jehovah] saves." He was the divine *Savior* (Titus 2:13; Isaiah 43:11). This *Savior* was *Christ the Lord* (Luke 2:11). As *Christ* or *Messiah*, the Anointed One, He was the promised Deliverer (John 4:25-26). He often referred to Himself as the *Son of Man* (Luke 19:10), expressive of the humanity to which He stooped. But He was also *Son of God*, which His enemies understood as a declaration of deity (John 10:33, 36). He was the *Word of God* (John 1:1, 14), the *Lamb of God* (John 1:29), *Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End, First and Last* (Revelation 22:13). Supremely He is called *King of kings* and *Lord of lords* (Revelation 19:16).
2. **His Eternal Past.** He was not a created being but the Creator of all things (John 1:3, 10; Colossians 1:16-17; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Hebrews 1:2, 10). From all eternity, He was with God and was God (John 1:1-2). The expression "begotten" is not used of Him in the sense of birth. "Only-begotten" (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18) means "unique," as is illustrated in Isaac, who was not an only child (Hebrews 11:17). "First born" describes Him in the sense of priority, as is evident in Colossians 1:18 and Revelation 1:5. The Lord was from eternity (Micah 5:2; Isaiah 9:6; Proverbs 8:22-23). As the "I Am," He was before all things (John 8:58; Exodus 3:14). He shared the Father's glory before the world was (John 17:5).
3. **His Old Testament Appearances.** The Lord Jesus did not first appear in the New Testament. The Lord expounded in Moses and the prophets the things concerning Himself (Luke 24:27, 44). He was the theme and fulfillment of Scripture. He fulfilled hundreds of prophecies, including His place of birth (Micah 5:2), manner of birth (Isaiah 7:14), and manner of death (Isaiah 53). He was the fulfiller of promises concerning a prophet greater than Moses (Deuteronomy 18:18-19), a priest who would minister forever (1 Samuel 2:35), and a king, greater than David, whose throne would endure forever (2 Samuel 7:12-13). He would fulfill the promises portrayed in the sacrifices and feasts, such as the Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7). It is evident that we have in the Old Testament visible appearances of God, usually as an angel or messenger of the Lord. These are called *theophanies*. The actions and works of the Angel of Jehovah are clearly that of God, not a created being. Examples are Genesis 22:11-18; 32:1-30 (cf. Hosea 12:4-5); Exodus 3:2-6 (cf. Mark 12:26); Joshua 5:13-15; Judges 6:11-12; 13:18-22. We further see Christ in the types. A type is an illustration in the Old Testament of spiritual truth in the New Testament, especially of the Messiah. The brazen serpent in Numbers 21 pictures Christ on the cross as the object of

regenerating faith (John 3:14-16). The smitten rock of Exodus 17:6 and Numbers 20:8-12 was the crucified Savior (1 Corinthians 10:4). Melchizedek pictures Christ as the Great High Priest (Genesis 14; Hebrews 5-7).

4. **His Coming As Man.** “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). The incarnation (in-flesh-ment) is this: “He appeared in a body” (1 Timothy 3:16 NIV). When the one God took upon Himself humanity, both divine and human natures were marvelously joined in a single person. Divine attributes were veiled but not surrendered. His humanity was complete. Yet He was without sin (Hebrews 4:15). The union is seen in Philippians 2:6-11; Romans 1:3-4; 9:5; Hebrews 2:14. The Gospel accounts do not always match in emphasis or sequence of events since they approach the subject differently. The Lord Jesus is presented in *Matthew* as King of Israel, in *Mark* as the Perfect Servant, in *Luke* as the Son of Man (emphasizing His humanity), and in *John* as Son of God (emphasizing His deity). He was miraculously conceived in the womb of a virgin by the Spirit of God (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:21; Luke 1:34-35). The Child grew in all normal ways (Luke 2:52). We have only one incident of His childhood recorded (Luke 2:42-51). His first 30 years were spent in Nazareth, Israel, except for His birth in Bethlehem and brief stay in Egypt during His infancy.
5. **His Public Inauguration.** The Messiah was to be heralded by one who went before Him to *prepare the way* spiritually (Isaiah 40:1-5). John the Baptist was the fulfillment of that prophecy (Matthew 3; Mark 1:1-11; Luke 3:2-18; John 1:19-36). His ministry was a personal call to repentance, without which men cannot be saved (Luke 13:3). The Lord Jesus began His public ministry by *accepting baptism* from John, although the prophet felt the Savior should be the baptizer (Matthew 3:14-16). The Lord did this only to “fulfill all righteousness.” He alone needed no repentance. Upon His baptism, *the Spirit of God* visibly *anointed Him* for ministry and the voice of the Father was heard praising His Son. The “years of obscurity” were over. He *called the twelve disciples* to be with Him, and began a dramatic itinerant ministry of about three years.
6. **His Temptation And Transfiguration.** The Lord Jesus ministered in Galilee, Judea and beyond Jordan, never leaving Israel. Of the many events in the period, two particularly should be noted in their relationship to the glory of His person. He was subjected to Satanic *temptation* during an intense 40-day period of fasting in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). The three areas of this temptation involved appeals to hunger, to spiritual pride and to tempting God by presumptuous action. His successful resistance was evidence of His sinless character. A spectacular manifestation of His divine glory was seen by three disciples on the Mount of *Transfiguration* (Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-9; Luke 9:28-36). There they saw His glory, which was the Glory of God shining through as a great Light. His face gleamed as the sun. Again the voice of the Father was heard proclaiming delight in His beloved Son. Both the temptation and transfiguration displayed the absolute uniqueness of Jesus.
7. **His Miracles And Teaching.** Like Moses, Elijah and Elisha in an earlier day, the Lord Jesus did many mighty works. He pointed to these works as a ground of belief (John 14:11). Although miracles can be counterfeited, they are usually seen as occurrences totally beyond any known natural laws. Nicodemus believed the miracles of Jesus proved He came from God (John 3:2). His miracles were varied. He *healed* instantaneously a wide range of afflictions and handicaps (the lame, blind, paralyzed, crippled and leprous). He

demonstrated *power over nature* (walking on the waters, hushing a storm). He *created materials* (feeding the 5,000 and turning the water into wine). He *commanded the evil spirits* to leave the bodies of their victims. He *raised the dead* (Lazarus, the son of the widow of Nain and Jairus' daughter). His miracles manifested deity and fulfilled Scriptures. They also displayed His compassion for the suffering. He did not perform them to draw crowds or to impress the curious. He often asked the ones cured not to tell anyone.

His teaching method was marked by frequent use of parables. These are brief stories of men or natural events which illustrate spiritual truth. His famous Sermon on the Mount has no equal anywhere (Matthew 5–7). It astonished His hearers (Matthew 7:28–29). His powerful discourses, especially those in John's Gospel, are beyond anything that ever came from man, especially those which include the "I Am" statements. He charged His disciples to faithfully keep His teachings, and warned that there would be divisions within homes and families because of them (Luke 12:51–53).

8. **His Opposition.** All that is good and righteous is expressed in the Lord Jesus. But good is opposed by evil. The Bible shows that resistance was headed by a fallen spiritual being called "Satan" or "the Devil" (Revelation 12:9). Satanic opposition sought to slay the infant Jesus, resisted Him throughout His ministry and finally led the plot to eliminate Him (Luke 22:2–4). Satan variously used others to wickedly oppose Christ.
9. **His Death, Resurrection, Ascension.** More space is given to the sufferings and death of Christ in the four Gospels than in any other portion. This is a central issue. Without the death of Christ there could be no forgiveness, salvation and hope in the coming life—the heart of the Gospel proclamation. His sacrifice was a prophetic fulfillment of Isaiah 53, Psalm 22 and other Scriptures. The Lord Jesus foretold His death many times to His uncomprehending disciples (Matthew 16:21; 17:9–12, 22–23; 20:18–19). The bold prediction that He would rise again was heard by His enemies and made the basis of requesting a Roman guard over His tomb (Matthew 27:63–66). Christ later rebuked His disciples for not believing the Scriptures or His own Word (Luke 24:25–27). In view of His coming death and its significance to salvation, He instituted a memorial supper on the final night before His crucifixion (Matthew 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19–20). The betrayal by Judas fulfilled Scripture, even to the price paid (Zechariah 11:12–13). His final prayers and agony in a garden, the plotting of enemies, the flight of His disciples and the mockery of His trial complete His last hours.

The Roman governor could find no fault in Him, but yielding to public pressure, condemned Him to carry His cross to the hill called Calvary or Golgotha. The details of His sufferings and "seven last words" are given in moving descriptions. The final cry, "It is finished!" (John 19:30), celebrated the completion of His saving work. In a mysterious way, the wickedness of man had been used in the eternal purpose of God to save those who would believe, though He was put to death by men. Yet amazingly His sufferings were substitutionary and He fulfilled Scripture as the one afflicted by God (Isaiah 53:4). His death was in the company of two thieves and burial in the tomb of a rich man, also fulfilling prophecy (Isaiah 53:9). The Roman guard and sealed tomb with the great stone did not prevent His rising on the third day, just as He predicted (Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20). He appeared to several hundred disciples over a period of 40 days before being received up into heaven before their eyes (1 Corinthians 15:6; Acts 1:3–9). The pierced hands, offered to "doubting Thomas," left no doubt. Christ had risen indeed (John 20:25–28).

10. **His Second Coming And Future Kingdom.** Linked with the promises of His resurrection and return to Heaven, was this word: "If I go... *I will come again*" (John 14:3). The Lord often spoke of this. The disciples asked, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming?" (Matthew 24:3). The Old Testament predictions of Messiah's coming fall into two groups: (1) those in which He was to suffer and be rejected, (2) those in which He was to reign. Often these separate events seemingly merged as one (Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-21). This often puzzled the prophets (1 Peter 1:10-12). Now it is much clearer. The first coming literally fulfilled all Scriptures regarding the suffering Messiah. The second coming will match the Scriptures with an equally literal fulfillment, namely, an earthly reign of peace and righteousness (Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:18-25). The events of the second coming are as follows: (1) Living and dead believers are caught up into the heavens, meeting Christ "in the air." This is commonly called "the Rapture" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). (2) The period called "the Great Tribulation" begins on the earth (Revelation 7:14). (3) Following the Tribulation, Christ returns with the believers, in glory and judgment. This is commonly called "the Revelation" (Revelation 19:11-16). (4) The Revelation is followed with a thousand-year earthly reign of Christ (Revelation 20:4-6).

The "Kingdom of God" or "Kingdom of Christ" (the terms are used interchangeably) has also puzzled believers. His Kingdom represents a rule over His people. There is *& present aspect* in that believers are now in the kingdom (Colossians 1:13). The kingdom was present in the person of Christ when He was on earth (Luke 17:20-21 NASB; 11:20; Matthew 12:28). There is also a *future aspect*, in which we look for a coming visible reign (Acts 1:6; Revelation 11:15). There will be new heavens and a new earth (Revelation 21:1; Isaiah 65:17). The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14). Every knee will bow to Him (Philippians 2:10-11).

At present He is the center of Heaven's worship (Revelation 5:8-14). In a coming day there must be a final judgment. All has been committed into the hands of the Son of God (John 5:22). He will judge the lost for their sins at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15). He will judge the believers for their life and service at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

Conclusion

Skeptics often question the basis of the truths here set forth. They say that we cannot be sure that Christ is historical. Yet the Jewish historian Josephus and such Roman writers as Tacitus, Suetonius and Pliny wrote of Him within the first 100 years of His earthly life. The reliability of the New Testament documents as genuine copies of the originals has been challenged. Yet no writing of the ancient world can approach it in documentation. Thousands of manuscripts, not to mention fragments, are available—some within a few years of the originals (i.e., the fragment of John's Gospel now in the library at Manchester, England). By contrast, an interval of 1000 years exists between the original composition and our oldest copy of all major Greek and Roman writers. Moreover, there are only a handful of old copies of these well-accepted historical and literary works. Yet none are seriously questioned. No work has ever been examined so critically, intensively and endlessly as the New Testament. Yet no work has ever been so thoroughly confirmed in many details by historical investigation and archaeology. Our greatest reason for confidence, however, remains in the Word of God itself. The *written Word* is confirmed in its multiple prophetic fulfillments. The *living Word*, our Lord Jesus, compels us

to faith in the magnificence of His person. Beyond Him there is no place to go (John 6:67-68). He is the heart of true Christian belief.

Study Guide

1. How are the names/titles of Jesus Christ in the following verses expressive of His position, character, work?

Matthew 1:21

Luke 2:11

Luke 19:10

John 1:1, 14

John 1:29

John 10:36

Revelation 19:16

Revelation 22:13

Which is your favorite name/title? Why?

2. Paraphrase (write in your own words) Colossians 1:16-17.

How long has Jesus Christ existed (John 1:3, 10; Isaiah 9:6; Micah 5:2)? If someone told you that Christ was the first creation of His Father, what would you say?

3. Read Hebrews 1. Explain how the following verses indicate that Jesus is God:

vv. 2, 3, 10

v. 6 (compare with Luke 4:8)

w. 8

vv. 11-12

4. What are some attributes of deity ascribed to Jesus in the following verses?

Matthew 28:18, 20

Mark 2:5-7

John 1:1; 17:5

John 5:22, 27

John 6:64

Hebrews 13:8

5. What offices were predicted for Christ (Deuteronomy 18:18-19; 1 Samuel 2:35; 2 Samuel 7:12-13)?

6. Since Jesus was fully human, in what ways would you expect Him to be like you are?

Matthew 4:2 Luke 2:52

Mark 4:38

John 4:6

7. How was Jesus Christ different from other men?

Matthew 1:23 John 7:46

Luke 7:22

John 8:46

8. What was Christ's purpose in coming to the earth and how did He fulfill Scripture in doing it (Mark 10:45b; Isaiah 53)?

When was the death of Christ planned (1 Peter 1:19-20)? Who was *ultimately* responsible for Christ's death (Acts 2:23)?

9. What would have been the result if Christ had not risen from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:14-19)? Write a brief paragraph explaining, in your opinion, the importance of Christ's death and resurrection in regard to your own salvation.
10. What hope is laid out for the Christian in John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; and Revelation 10:6-9?

What position will Christ have over those who reject Him (John 5:22-23; Revelation 20:11-15)?

Lesson 3: The Lordship Of Christ

Who is Jesus Christ to you? He raised the question, “Whom do men say that I am?” (Matthew 16:13; 22:41-42; Mark 12:35-37). Then He made the question personal. “Whom do you say that I am?”

He is the Lord. That was how the disciples spoke to Him hundreds of times in Scripture. They never addressed Him as Jesus. It would have been unthinkable. They called Him Master, not only in the sense of teacher (*rabbi*, *didaskalos*), but also in the sense of commander (*epistates*, *despotes*). They were slow in coming to the realization of His deity, even when He made clear statements (John 14:8-11; John 8:24, 58) or pointed to such verses as Psalm 110:1 (Matthew 22:41-45). He let them know that He was the controller of the eternal destiny of every man (Matthew 7:21-22). Despite limitations of their understanding, they confessed that Jesus was Lord and they followed Him even when others turned away (John 6:66-67).

The word “Lord” is used in three senses: *position*, *ownership* and *rule*. The prophet saw “the Lord high and lifted up” (Isaiah 6:1). The verse is applied in the New Testament to Christ (John 12:41). That is His *position* as the enthroned one. Paul writes, “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof” (1 Corinthians 10:26). That is His *ownership* of all that is on this planet. Peter responded to the Lord’s command to again launch out to the sea. He said, “Master, we have toiled all night and taken nothing. Nevertheless, at Thy word I will let down the net” (Luke 5:5). That is His *rule*.

His Position as Lord

1. **Proclaimed.** “Jesus Christ, He is Lord of all” (Acts 10:36), said Peter to the Roman officer who came to know the way to God. The Jesus who had been crucified was more than an anointed Deliverer. He is “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). He is Creator of all things (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). Angels and authorities are subject to Him (1 Peter 3:22). He reigns “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named” (Ephesians 1:21). He is the blessed “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 17:14; 19:16). All will fall down before the throne of God to worship Him (Revelation 4:10-11; 5:12-14).
2. **Rejected.** It is a remarkable thing that the omnipotent Creator would permit rebellion under any circumstances. This remains one of the mysteries of the counsels of God. Rebellion began first in the spirit world with Satan desiring to be equal with God (Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:13-17). It spread to other angelic beings (2 Peter 2:4). It was brought to earth among men (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12). It brought a sad admission from God. “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me” (Isaiah 1:2). Dissatisfaction with God-appointed leaders was seen by Him as rejection of the One who gave them (1 Samuel 8:7). When God sent His Son, they also rejected Him (Isaiah 53:3) and killed the Prince of Life (Acts 3:15).
3. **Acknowledged.** The ultimate purpose and glory of God is not dependent on man’s submission to God any more than the existence of the atom depends upon our belief in it. The segment that rejects Him is small in a vast universe. The winds and the waves obeyed Him on earth (Matthew 8:27). The demons were subject to His word (Mark 1:27). Legions of angels stand ready to act at His command (Matthew 26:53). Millions of human beings have freely submitted to His authority in response to His loving sacrifice on the cross. His

enemies will be brought to praise Him (Psalm 76:10). The hosts of hell will some day join those in heavenly places in bowing the knee to Jesus Christ, confessing Him as Lord (Philippians 2:10-11). Jesus said, "You call Me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am" (John 13:13).

His Ownership As Lord

1. **Stated.** Everything is owned by God (Psalm 50:10-12), His right by creation. The Lord lamented that even the ox and ass knew their owner, but His people did not know to whom they belonged (Isaiah 1:3). As the clay in the potter's hand, they were His to do with as He pleased (Jeremiah 18:6). Furthermore, men belong to God by redemption through the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18). He died for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). He bought the false teachers who rejected Him (2 Peter 2:1).
2. **Accepted.** One becomes a child of God by choice through receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (John 1:12). Henceforth the believer is not His own but is bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). He has recognized that he is not capable of being his own master, any more than he is capable of saving himself. He confesses Jesus as Lord, just as Thomas did (John 20:28). There is no Biblical support for any such concept as "I accepted Jesus as my Savior but not as my Lord." The expression "Lord Jesus Christ" or "Jesus Christ our Lord" occurs many more times than "Jesus our Savior." To accept Jesus is to accept the Lord. One may not see all the implications of the Lordship of Christ when saved. One may sadly fail to carry out his Master's will. One may stumble and fall. But a true believer would not refuse His Lordship at the point of coming to Him, or deliberately separate it from His Saviorhood.
3. **Evidenced.** The Master questioned why people call Him "Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say" (Luke 6:46). It is not real in His eyes. To cry "Lord, Lord" in eternity, with proof of great works will not gain admission, if one refuses to do God's will. He will reply, "I never knew you" (Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 13:25-27). Refusal to obey God's word on the part of one who claims to be a believer is the mark of a liar (1 John 2:3-4). The child of God confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and shows by his life that the confession is a true one.

His Rule as Lord

What must we do? Many have accepted Jesus as Lord in word only. Others have called themselves Christians without even this formality. There has always been resistance to His reign (Luke 19:14, 27). Society has developed the concept of the autonomous man, self-directing and independent of outside control. It has gained ground in influential places in the form of a movement called selfism or "me-ism." People are told, "You are supreme and what you think or feel is what matters. What is important is feeling good about yourself." Such concepts as self-realization, self-discovery, self-love, self-development, self-enjoyment and self-image are paraded and packaged under many forms.

Scripture teaches that we are called to God's will, not self-will; God's government, not self-government; discovering God, not discovering self; loving God, not loving self; God as center, not self as center. The Scripture model is not "Me first," but "God first, others next and me last." Many persons today are like the Greek mythological character Narcissus. He fell in love with his own reflection in water and wasted away because he could not fulfill his love of self. Moral collapse in the end time is characterized by men who are "lovers of self (2 Timothy 3:2). Today there is greater worship of the creature than of the Creator (Romans 1:25).

The necessity of receiving Christ as Lord must be translated into life and practice. To progress in Christian life there must be realization that we have given up self-ownership. The Macedonians “gave themselves to the Lord” (2 Corinthians 8:5). After reckoning ourselves as being dead to sin (Romans 6:11), we are to yield ourselves to God (Romans 6:13). We are to present our bodies a living sacrifice to Him (Romans 12:1-2), that we might experience the transformation of life that belongs to the one whom God rules. The knowledge of His supremacy should bring us to the spiritual purpose “that He Himself might come to have first place in everything” (Colossians 1:18 NASB). We must say in the words of the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy will be done” (Matthew 6:10). These are the areas where His control should be evidenced:

1. **Priorities.** “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). Christ will not be second in anything and yet work effectively in our lives.
2. **Body.** We are bought with a price and that purchase includes the very body in which we live (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). It is His temple.
3. **Possessions.** He is Lord of all He has given us (1 Chronicles 29:14). We are the managers or stewards (1 Corinthians 4:2). Possessions, talents and time belong to Him, all on loan to us.
4. **Relationships.** He commands us to love one another as He loved us (John 15:12). It is the mark of being a disciple of the Lord Jesus (John 13:35). The love is sacrificial, not sentimental. We need to care for others, as He did. We remember that He was morally separate from sinners (Hebrews 7:26), yet He ate with them (Luke 15:2). Both love and holiness must govern our dealings with others. The Scripture forbids “friendship with the world” (James 4:4) or what it represents (1 John 2:15-16). We also must have proper order in home relationships (Ephesians 5:22-25; 6:1-2).
5. **Business, Home And School Affairs.** Whether employee or employer, we are called to be honorable and just (Ephesians 6:5, 9; James 5:4). We are to do everything as unto the Lord (Colossians 3:23).
6. **Speech And Thought Life.** He should be Lord of tongue and mind. He is willing to speak through us, if we let Him (Matthew 10:20). We are to be swift to hear but slow to speak (James 1:19). We are not to speak ill of others (James 4:11). He looks within our thoughts and detects defilement (Matthew 15:19-20).
7. **Hopes And Ambitions.** What will stand the test of His eternal evaluation (1 Corinthians 3:11-15)? We are to “seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1). What earthly things are eternally important?

The following checklist may help us to focus on areas where we need to improve:

Does every day begin with a fresh commitment of my body to Him?

Does every other interest take second place to His interests?

Does every decision consider Him first?

Does every commitment line up with my commitment to Him?

Does every relationship have His approval?

Does every activity enable Him to be present?

Does every area of my life come under His rule?

Conclusion

There can be no proper growth in a believer until there is a stepping out of self, until self-enthronement is succeeded by Christ-enthronement. Defective consecration or incomplete devotion to God lies at the root of the sickness in many lives of believers and in many churches. The Lord says, “My son, give Me thine heart” (Proverbs 23:26). This is the governing center of our being. Here Christ must rule as Lord. It is the key issue in Christian direction, indispensable to the abundant life.

Long ago there was a suggestion by man's greatest enemy that God was depriving us of the best by placing His will ahead of ours (Genesis 3:5). Generations have paid a terrible price because someone listened to this slander against the One who loves us with an eternal love. Our future depends upon believing that submission to God's will, to the Lordship of Christ, to the reign of the Eternal One, is essential to our eternal good.

Study Guide

- 1. What do you learn about the position of Jesus Christ in the following verses (Ephesians 1:20-21; Colossians 1:18; 1 Peter 3:22; Revelation 4:10-11; 5:12-13)?
- 2. List persons or things that have acknowledged or will acknowledge the Lordship of Christ: Matthew 8:27; Matthew 26:53; Mark 1:27; Romans 14:9; Philippians 2:10-11.
- 3. How was the Lord received when He came to the earth (John 1:10-12)?

What was the basic objection of the citizens of Luke 19:14, 27, and how does this apply to those who reject Christ today?

- 4. What is the significance of the confession of Thomas in John 20:28?

What must a person acknowledge in order to be saved (Romans 10:9-10)?

In your opinion, is it sufficient for salvation to accept Jesus as Savior, but reject Him as Lord? Explain.

- 5. Is it possible to say Jesus is Lord and still not be saved (Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 6:46; 13:25-27; 1 John 2:3-4)? Explain.
- 6. Paraphrase (rewrite in your own words) Romans 12:1-2.

In this passage, what actions are required for practical Lordship?

- 7. In the left column below construct a profile of a person who practices the Lordship of Christ. In the right column indicate the actions of those who do not practice Lordship.

Area of life	Practices the Lordship of Christ	Does not practice Lordship
General walk	Colossians 2:6	Ephesians 2:1-2
Sexuality	1 Corinthians 6:18-20	1 Corinthians 6:9-10
Speech	Colossians 4:6	Colossians 3:8-9
Job performance	Colossians 3:23-24	Colossians 3:22
Family relationships	Colossians 3:18-21	Colossians 3:19, 21

- 8. How would you respond to someone who says he is a Christian but whose life does not show any evidence of practical submission to the Lordship of Christ?

9. Revelation 3:20 speaks of Christ knocking at the “door” of our heart. What is the first step in making Christ the Lord of your life? What “rooms” in your “house” have you yet to open up to Christ in a practical way? Explain. What action do you intend to take?
10. In your own words explain what personal lordship means to you.

Lesson 4: Buried In Baptism

There are many differences in church traditions and practices of baptism. Godly men differ. Yet baptism remains a basic command of the Lord Jesus for all His followers. Baptize them “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,” He said (Matthew 28:19 NASB). Believers are to be baptized when they are saved (Mark 16:16). The first Christians were faithfully taught this and regularly obeyed (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 36-39; 9:18; 10:47; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 22:16). It was their *first step of obedience*. New believers thus often exposed themselves to persecution. They had become Christians and were willing to take this step of public identification in response to the command of the One they confessed as Lord and Savior.

Are There Other Baptisms?

The Scriptures listed above refer to what has been called *believer's baptism*, the subject of this lesson. This is to distinguish it from other uses of the word baptism, such as these:

1. **Jewish Ceremonial Purification** (Luke 11:38-39; Mark 7:4; Hebrews 6:2; 9:10). In the Old Testament, priests were purified in this manner. Later, eating and drinking vessels were thus washed, and hands were ceremonially dipped before eating. Proselytes, who were converts from among the Gentiles, were baptized to cleanse from defilement.
2. **John's Baptism Of Repentance** (Mark 1:2-4; Luke 3:3-4; John 1:31; Acts 13:24). This was Israel's call to national repentance. As Messiah's forerunner, John was to “prepare the way of the Lord.” This baptism was not the same as Christian baptism (Acts 19:3-5). It did require submersion in water (Matthew 3:16; John 3:23). The Lord Jesus was baptized by John, although He needed no repentance, that He might “fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:14-15). Christ's baptism by John launched His public ministry.
3. **Christ's Baptism Of Suffering** (Luke 12:50; Mark 10:38-39; Matthew 20:22). He was afflicted with the judgment of God for our sins (Isaiah 53:4; 1 Peter 3:18). When He died on the cross for our sins He was submerged beneath the waves of God's wrath (Psalm 42:7).
4. **Spirit Baptism** (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16). This was prophesied by John and initiated at Pentecost (Acts 2). Its purpose was to place believers in the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). Expressing it differently, it joins us in union with Him, placing us “in Christ.”

We will not attempt to deal with miscellaneous uses of the word “baptism” in connection with *fire* (Matthew 3:11-12; Luke 3:16-17), *Moses* (1 Corinthians 10:2) and *the dead* (1 Corinthians 15:29), as they are foreign to the purpose here.

Who Should Be Baptized?

There is no evident record of anyone in the New Testament receiving believer's baptism apart from at least professing faith in Christ. Baptism prior to salvation is a practice in many churches, and has been for centuries, but one cannot find such a policy in Scripture. In the Bible the order is first faith, then baptism. We see this in Christ's command: “Make disciples ... baptizing” (Matthew 28:19 NASB); “believeth and is baptized” (Mark 16:16). At Pentecost Peter told those seeking salvation to “repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 2:37-38). The Ethiopian eunuch confessed his belief *before* Philip baptized him (Acts 8:36-37). The Corinthians believed and then were baptized (Acts 18:8). We are saved by

believing the gospel (Ephesians 1:13; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4) of which baptism is not a part (1 Corinthians 1:17). Repentance and faith in Christ must come first (Acts 20:21).

What About Infant Baptism?

Although there is no explicit references to infant baptism in the New Testament, it has been the practice of many churches for centuries. Historically, these churches have baptized infants either (1) to secure the salvation of the infant from hell, (2) to begin the process of salvation which was to be “sealed” by “confirmation” at a later date, or (3) to impress upon the parents or “godparents” of the child, through the baptismal/dedication service, the importance of raising the child for Christ. The idea that the lack of baptism would condemn an infant to Hell is, of course, a horrifying thought about God. Moreover, the concept of infant baptism as a part of a salvation process whereby the infant obtains grace is equally indefensible from Scripture. The baptismal/dedication service, however beautiful, is also foreign to New Testament practice. Nevertheless, many arguments for infant baptism have been advanced from the Bible.

1. **Proof Texts Often Cited.** Mark 10:13-16 and Matthew 19:13-15 are often associated with infant baptism. The mothers brought their children to Jesus and He said, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.” Jesus did not baptize the infants, however. He blessed them. Had the disciples practiced, together with their Master, the baptism of infants for salvation, they would scarcely have been trying to drive them away. As someone has said, “We see Jesus here, but no water.” Matthew 18:2-6 is another favorite text. Jesus said, “Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” His object lesson was a little child, whom He set in the midst. But the example was the necessity of lowliness, not baptism. Another text is 1 Corinthians 7:14. Children of believers (either or both parents) are here called “holy.” The word means “separated” and refers to the position of privilege in which a child of believers is placed. However, this position is not secured by baptism, neither does it require baptism. No one is said in Scripture to be “born into the church” because of Christian parents. Salvation springs from the new birth, not natural birth (John 1:13; 3:5-7).
2. **Argument From Circumcision.** Jewish children were circumcised on the eighth day after birth (Luke 1:59), initiating them into the Jewish nation. Hence it is argued from this that Christians have a right to baptize their infants. Colossians 2:11-12 is cited, which refers to the circumcision of Christ. Yet this is a reference to His death, whereby He was able to remove sin. There is no authorization to baptize an infant in this passage.
3. **Argument From Household Baptism.** The salvation of Lydia (Acts 16:14-15), the Philippian jailor (Acts 16:30-33), Crispus (Acts 18:18), Stephanas (1 Corinthians 1:16; 16:15) are occasions where households are said to have believed and been baptized. It is supposed by some that “there must have been infants” in these homes, or those too young to believe. Moreover, it is supposed that such were included in the baptisms, although there is no statement to this effect in the passages. It is just as reasonable to suppose, however, that only those of sufficient age to understand and believe the message of Christ were baptized (as in Acts 16:34).

What Does Believer's Baptism Signify?

Water sometimes is associated with cleansing, but the believer can only be cleansed by the blood of Christ. The significant likeness or figure in baptism is death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5). Christ died for our sins and rose again for our justification. In salvation, God reckons all this to our account and places us "in Christ." We have died with Him and have been resurrected with Him in the eyes of God (Colossians 3:1-3; Romans 6:6-11). Baptism then is the figure or illustration of what has already taken place as far as the believer is concerned. The believer symbolically passes through death, burial and resurrection in the waters of baptism. Thus the believer is identified with Christ, whose death, burial and resurrection were on his behalf. He thereby confesses that he is one with Christ. Baptism is called an "appeal to God for a good conscience" (1 Peter 3:21 NASB). The believer is publicly saying, "Christ did all that was necessary for my salvation on the cross. I have believed it in my heart. I am expressing it outwardly in this way as He commanded. I identify with Him." This identification should carry with it the commitment to live what might be called a "baptized life," one in which we walk with Him.

We need not debate words which are not used in Scripture about baptism, but which have often been used by men. These include "sacrament, rite, ceremony, initiation, ordinance, seal of grace, purifying symbol, pledge."

Does Baptism Save?

A tremendous number of churches teach what is called "baptismal regeneration," meaning that baptism in water actually regenerates (causes the new birth) and brings remission of sins. What Scriptures do they use?

1. JOHN 3:5. The expression "born of water and of the Spirit" might suggest that regeneration came from water baptism. First, note that the word "baptism" is not mentioned. Water does not always mean baptism. In John 7:38-39 it is used as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The connective word between water and the Spirit (*kai*) is not an ordinary connective and can properly be translated "even." Thus, it would read "water, even the Spirit." John 3:6, 8 clearly indicates that one is "born of the Spirit." Others believe that water refers to the Word of God. John 15:3 speaks of cleansing by the Word. Ephesians 5:26 speaks of the water of the Word and 1 Peter 1:23 says that the new birth is by the Word. Another use is when the Lord speaks of the water of eternal life (John 4:14). Two descriptions of the new birth in John 3 mention the wind and the serpent of brass. Neither is like water baptism. The wind in its blowing is invisible, unpredictable and intangible. Nothing in this suggests a baptismal service.
2. TITUS 3:5. This verse refers to "washing of regeneration," but again the word "baptism" is not used. The parallel expression is "the renewing by the Holy Spirit." Further, the word "washing" is not from the Greek word *baptismos*, but rather from *loutron*, used of bathing.
3. 1 PETER 3:21. The statement, "even baptism doth also now save us," seems to support salvation by baptism. The following phrase weakens this idea by adding that it does not cleanse but is rather a response of conscience. The setting of the verse speaks of the waters of judgment in Noah's day destroying the earth and lifting the ark of safety (v. 20). In the illustration, Christ is the ark of safety. He went through the waters of death in our place and we pass through the same with Him. Thus He is the figure, likeness or picture of safety and salvation from judgment. We are safe in Christ, not in water baptism.

4. MARK 16:16. The expression “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” seems to make baptism an essential for salvation. Yet this would ignore the next phrase, “he that believeth not shall be damned.” It does not say “he that is not baptized shall be damned.”
5. ACTS 22:16. This verse says “be baptized and wash away thy sins,” seeming to teach that remission of sins is by baptism. If this were true then it would deny that remission is only by the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7; Hebrews 9:22). The verse is part of Paul’s account of his conversion. Ananias exhorted Paul to be baptized but also told him that he was to call on the name of the Lord (cf. Romans 10:13). Baptismal waters do not wash away sins (Revelation 1:5).

The Bible teaches that water is not our savior as can be seen in the following examples: (1) The thief on the cross was saved without water (Luke 23:43). (2) Paul did not always baptize those he led to Christ, an inexcusable lapse if this brought new birth (1 Corinthians 1:14-17). (3) Jesus Himself did not baptize, though He was the Savior (John 4:2). (4) The Gentiles received salvation and the Holy Spirit *before* they were baptized in water (Acts 10:44-48).

How Is One Baptized?

1. **Mode.** The first Christians baptized by immersion (submersion). The practice of pouring or sprinkling seems to have arisen in the second century and to have become widespread about the thirteenth century. However, the *practice of baptism* in Scripture points to immersion as seen in the examples of John (Matthew 3:16; John 3:23) and Philip (Acts 8:38-39). The *symbolism of baptism* likewise demands immersion. Burial with Christ (Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:4) is better reflected by going totally beneath the waters than by sprinkling a few drops on the head. “A drop is as good as an ocean,” it is sometimes said, but a drop hardly signifies a burial. The *meaning of the word baptism* implies immersion or dipping beneath the water, since the root meaning is simply “to dip.” Had the Spirit of God intended to indicate sprinkling, another word (*rhantizo*) would have been used. Thus, practice, symbolism and meaning point to baptism by immersion.
2. **Formula.** The formula or pronouncement at baptism is “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19 NASB). The words “in the name of Jesus” or “in the name of the Lord” (or variant forms) are used in Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48. They seem to be an abbreviated reference, especially to distinguish it from John’s baptism (Acts 19:3-5).
3. **Baptizer.** The baptizer should come from the ranks of the believers, representing the Lord and then the church. No qualifications are given. Ordination of clergymen as a class of persons differing from the so-called “laity” was not practiced in the New Testament.

Why Is Baptism So Important?

We may ask ourselves at this point, “If baptism does not wash away our sins, or join us to the church, or secure our salvation, then why is it so important?” Consider the following:

1. **Baptism Is An Inseparable Part Of The Great Commission.** Personal obedience to the Great Commission dictates that we obey the Lord in baptism and that baptism be taught and practiced among our disciples. We thus obey the injunction to teach “all things whatsoever I [Christ] have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).
2. **Baptism Is A Witness To The World.** Baptism is one of the most effective witnesses of our faith to family and friends.

3. **Baptism Is A Witness To Other Believers.** Since baptism is an outward and public demonstration of the believer's identification with the person and cause of Christ, it is thereby also an identification with other believers. In some countries where believers are persecuted severely for their faith, believers are wary of a Christian who is not willing to make a public stand through baptism.

Conclusion

We are commanded by Christ to be baptized. From the first days of Christianity, believers in Him have submitted to baptism. As we are commanded to lead a moral life of good works, to remember Him in the Breaking of Bread, to witness to our faith in Christ and to meet with fellow believers, so we are to be baptized. It is not necessary for salvation, but it is necessary for obedience. We should further demonstrate the reality of our confession of faith by leading a "baptized life."

Study Guide

1. What value did Christ place on baptism (Matthew 28:19-20)?

How does John 14:21 relate to the above passage?

(Read Acts 2:41; 8:12, 36-39; 10:47-48; 16:14-15, 30-33; 18:8 for questions 2-4.)

2. In New Testament times what was the normal response of a new Christian?
3. What commitment is required prior to believer's baptism?
4. How soon after conversion were believers baptized in New Testament times?

For what reasons might a person *delay* his response of baptism today?

5. Countless arguments have been waged as to the mode of baptism (immersion, pouring, or sprinkling) to be followed. From the context of Acts 8:36-39, what mode of baptism was commonly used in New Testament times?
6. According to 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, what is the basic message of the Gospel?

Comparing this passage with Romans 6:3-6 and Colossians 2:12, how does the rite of baptism portray the basic message of the Gospel?

7. Paraphrase (rewrite in your own words) Galatians 2:20. What does this verse say about living the "baptized life"?
8. From questions 3 and 6, would baptism of an infant or an unbeliever have any value? Why or why not?

Look up the word "baptism" (or variant forms) in a concordance. Is "baptism" ever used in reference to infants?

If a person was baptized as an infant or prior to receiving Christ, should he be baptized as a believer? Explain.

9. Some groups teach that believer's baptism is *necessary for salvation*, quoting Mark 16:16.

How would you refute that teaching using Acts 10:44, 47-48 (cf. Romans 8:9)?

What alone washes away our sins (Hebrews 9:14, 22; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 1:5)?

10. Check one of the following responses:

- a. I have been baptized since I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.
- b. I have not been baptized since I became a Christian, and I would like to talk to one of the church leaders about being baptized.
- c. I still have some questions about believer's baptism and would like more information.
- d. Other comments:

Lesson 5: Eternal Salvation

“MY SALVATION SHALL BE FOREVER,” declares the Lord (Isaiah 51:6b). Our great God and Savior has begun a work in His people and “will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6 NASB). The Lord Jesus has obtained eternal redemption for us (Hebrews 9:12). The life which is in God is eternal (John 1:4; 5:26; 1 John 1:2). It is that very life which is imparted to man in salvation (1 John 5:11-12). Eternal life is freely given to those who hear His Word (John 5:24), believe in the Son (John 3:15-16) and “eat His flesh and drink His blood” (meaning to appropriate the merit of His work on the cross, John 6:56). Eternal life is the gift of God (Romans 6:23; John 17:2). This gift was costly to God, requiring the sufferings and death of His Son. It cannot be earned by devotion or discipleship, for then it would not be a gift but the obligation of God to the deserving (Romans 4:4). Nothing in these Scriptures indicates that eternal life is a life in which a person temporarily shares, dependent upon his good behavior. There is no doctrine of “temporary” eternal life—a contradiction in terms.

It is impressive to note the verses which speak of a believer's salvation as an assured and uninterrupted continuity. We are born again “to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:4-5). Note the unbroken chain: “whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified” (Romans 8:30). Not even things present, or things to come, can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39). When we are given eternal life by the Lord Jesus, nothing can pluck us from the keeping hand of God (John 10:28-29). No condition is inserted such as “if the sheep follow” or “if they keep themselves in His hand.” No man has the right to add such conditions to this declaration of the Word of God. Keeping power rests with God and not man. He is able to keep (Jude 24). He is able to confirm to the end (1 Corinthians 1:8). He is able to guard (2 Timothy 1:12 NASB). He is able to save completely and forever (Hebrews 7:25 NASB). Salvation is forever because its completer and perfecter is our all-powerful God.

Perfection Of Eternal Salvation

Consider the saving work of Him who is “the author and perfecter of faith” (Hebrews 12:2 NASB).

1. **Perfect Birth.** Salvation must be forever when we are born into the family of God. The Lord Jesus told Nicodemus that one must be “born again” to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3-7). We are born again when we truly believe on the name of the Son of God (John 1:12-13). There is no teaching in Scripture which calls upon us to be born again *and again* in order to be a member of God's family. As physical birth occurs only once, so also does spiritual birth.
2. **Perfect Sacrifice.** The book of Hebrews makes clear that in contrast to the many sacrifices of the Old Testament the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross forever settles the question of the believer's sins. This work is perfect, forever and “once for all,” to which nothing can or should be added on our part. “We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10). “But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever sat down on the right hand of God” (Hebrews 10:12). “For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14). There is nothing in these verses to indicate that the application of this perfect work to our souls is

conditioned upon continuing good behavior. The believer rests upon Christ's finished work, plus nothing.

3. **Perfect Union.** Salvation does not bring us into membership of a local church. It brings us spiritually into the very body of Christ, a union with the Son of God. The Holy Spirit baptizes us into Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12:13) and makes us members of Him (1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 5:30). So intimate is this union, that to persecute believers is to persecute Christ (Acts 9:4-5). Our identification with Him in God's mind is such that we are made alive with Him, raised with Him and seated with Him now in the heavenly (Ephesians 2:4-6). Our being joined to Christ is the spiritual pattern for the marriage bond (Romans 7:4; Ephesians 5:31-32). Nothing can separate us from His love and care (Romans 8:35-39). He says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).
4. **Perfect Work Of The Spirit.** The work of the Holy Spirit in Old Testament times and through the period of the gospels differed from His present work in the Body of Christ. The Spirit came upon and departed from men (1 Samuel 16:14). Removal of His Spirit was feared by David (Psalm 51:11). Praying for the giving of His Spirit was encouraged by the Lord Jesus (Luke 11:13). Yet the Lord made clear that a new and different work of the Spirit was to come after His departure. Before He was glorified, the Spirit "was not yet given" (John 7:39). The Spirit later would be given by the Lord Jesus to *abide forever* in the believer (John 14:16-17). This was realized upon the Day of Pentecost, the beginning of a new age (Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-18, 33). No true believer now can be without the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9b). When we truly believe the gospel message, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, which is the earnest or guarantee of our redemption (Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:22). This anointing of the Spirit *remains* in all true believers (1 John 2:27). Thus every believer is sealed by God and is guaranteed an eternal redemption and inheritance.
5. **Perfect Advocate.** There is no record of anyone in the Bible, apart from the Lord Jesus, who never sinned or failed. What happens when a true believer sins? Certainly he needs to confess and forsake his sin (Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9). There is also a need for a representative before a holy God. The role of the Lord Jesus as our Great High Priest is to be before the Father as our Advocate (literally, "one alongside to help"). In this role He speaks to the Father in our defense (1 John 2:1). He is constantly at the right hand of God, making intercession for us (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 9:24). He is able to save forever (or completely) those for whom He intercedes (Hebrews 7:25-28). There is no mention of this advocacy being conditional upon our good behavior. How could we be lost in the courtroom of Heaven with such an Advocate as this?
6. **Perfect Preservation.** Any salvation which depended on the faithfulness of man would have the mark of doom upon it from the beginning. The weakness of the flesh is well known (Romans 6:19). That which was begun in the Spirit will not be made perfect by our flesh (Galatians 3:3). It is reassuring, therefore, to hear the words of our Savior. "This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:39-40). The Lord is the keeper of our souls. This is constantly stressed in the New Testament (John 10:27-30; 1 Corinthians 1:8; Philippians 1:6; Jude 24-25; 1 Peter 1:5). Not one of these verses indicate any dependence upon human faithfulness.

Problems Of Eternal Salvation

It is understandable that many devout believers have difficulty in accepting the doctrine of eternal salvation. Their objections fall under three general headings.

1. **Failure Of “Converts.”** Some people maintain that salvation must be conditional because some individuals who once professed to be Christians (including preachers) have failed morally, turned away from God and even ended by outright rejection of the Lord. If people turn back to the old life, or if they rebel, how can they hope for salvation? To answer this question one must first ask whether everyone who professes to be a Christian is indeed saved. The possibility of lifeless profession of Christ is evident in the New Testament. Jesus told the parable of the wheat and the tares growing together (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-42). The tares were never the children of God. To return to a sinful life after knowing “the way of righteousness” is likened to a dog returning to his vomit and a sow returning to wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 2:20-22). The dog and sow returned to natural habits because they never were turned into sheep of Christ by the Spirit of God. The Lord Jesus in a coming day will denounce those who come to Him pleading their deeds to claim a relationship with Him. He will say, “I never knew you. Depart from Me” (Matthew 7:23). It is significant that He will not say, “You once knew Me but went away from Me.” Saving faith differs from pseudo-faith. A childhood prayer, a raised hand, a walk forward at a church meeting, a baptism or an active role in a church does not assure one of salvation. It is not mere *profession* which is secure forever but *genuine salvation*! Habitual sins such as immorality, strife, anger, drunkenness and jealousy are warning signs. “They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21). There are sure tests of the reality of saving faith in such verses as 1 John 2:3-6, 15; 3:6-10, 14; 5:2-4. If we are not subject to the Lord Jesus and His Word, if we practice sin, if we love the world and do not love the people of God, then we say in vain that we know Him. God says we are liars (1 John 1:6; 2:4). No regeneration has ever taken place.
2. **“License To Sin.”** Some reason that if people were sure of eternal salvation, they would be spiritually complacent. They would then be free to “sin all they want.” This is a serious misunderstanding and misrepresentation of this doctrine. A true sheep of Christ desires to follow the Master and not to take advantage of His love and grace. The child of God is taught in Scripture that God has ways of dealing with erring children. One way is the discipline or “chastening” of the Lord (Hebrews 12:5-11). Correction differs from being ejected from the family of God. God also deals with wandering children by allowing loss of joy, peace, testimony, power in prayer and fruitfulness in this life and loss of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ in the next. No sheep of Christ should be complacent in a wayward condition.
3. **Scriptures Which “Conflict” With Eternal Salvation.** Some seek to refute the doctrine of eternal salvation by citing Scriptures that seem to contradict such a teaching. However, doctrine is properly founded upon the whole of Scripture and not the part. God’s Word will not be found to contradict itself when all verses are properly harmonized. Many verses must be examined which seem to teach that those who once identified with Christians later fell away and lost their salvation. We will look at the major passages which seem to conflict with the doctrine of eternal salvation.
 - a. “Falling Away.” Sometimes passages which speak of persons “falling away” are taken to mean that true believers can lose their salvation. However, “falling away” (*apostasia*)

primarily is a defection from the faith by those who once professed to be Christians. In particular, it involves denying the deity of Christ and redemption that is solely through His shed blood on the cross. Such persons do not necessarily leave the church. Many remain and become teachers within its ranks. Others defect. “They went out from us, but they were not of us” (1 John 2:19). The epistle of Jude describes such persons so well that it has been called “The Acts of the Apostates.” Such men creep in unawares. They are “ungodly” (v. 4), waterless clouds (v. 12) and “have not the Spirit” (v. 19). Plainly they are not true believers, although they may have a “form of godliness” (2 Timothy 3:5). Further description of such men is found in 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Peter 2:1, 15-22; 1 John 2:18-22 and 2 John 7-9. A different word than *apostasia* is used when describing those who fall from grace (Galatians 5:4), fall from first love for Christ (Revelation 2:4-5) and fall from steadfastness (2 Peter 3:17). These involve a failure in believers, but not a “fall from salvation.”

- b. Conditional Clauses. Several Scriptures speak of salvation with an “if” clause attached. The “if” is understood by some to mean that salvation is retained only if we continue to live in a certain way. More careful study will indicate that it rather means that the salvation is not genuine in the first place, being disproved by a life that is not in accord with Scriptural standards. The book of Hebrews contains many “conditional” verses which question whether salvation is genuine. The book is addressed to a group of Jewish people which consisted of both regenerate believers and non-regenerate, wavering followers. The latter were in danger of turning back to the temple sacrifices and away from sole reliance on the blood of Christ. Each of the various warnings is addressed to the waverers who were ready to depart from a dim hope in Jesus which had not resulted in regeneration (2:1-3; 3:6, 12, 14; 4:1; 12:25). Other passages which speak of continued reliance on Christ are 1 Corinthians 15:1-2 and Colossians 1:22-23.

The section in Hebrews 6:4-6 has troubled many. The description might seem to be of Christians if it were not for two things. There is no mention of *sealing* or *indwelling* by the Spirit but a partaking in the Spirit's ministry (v. 4), which can be true of one who goes along without being saved. Moreover, in verse 9 the writer says that he is persuaded “better things of you and things that accompany salvation,” indicating that the previous description is not applicable to true believers. If this passage proves that a sheep can be lost, then it proves too much, for then it would be impossible for people ever to be renewed to repentance if they have fallen away. The offense here is defection from dependence on the blood of Christ alone for salvation—not ordinary failures.

Another serious warning is in Hebrews 10:26-39, dealing with those who “sin willfully.” By comparing v. 26 with v. 39 we will see that the “we's” differ. The willful sinner of v. 26 has turned from the only acceptable sacrifice and “trodden under foot the Son of God” (v. 29). The contrasting group is in v. 39. “We are not of them who draw back into perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” Genuine believers do not draw back from the cross of Christ as their only hope. Saving faith is enduring.

- c. Various Parables. Details of certain parables are sometimes used to support the doctrine of probational salvation. However, proper Bible interpretation demands that the details of a parable be interpreted in light of the parable's broader teaching. Four parables commonly used to teach probational salvation are examined below:

1. The Sower (Luke 8:4-15). *Problem:* There are those who “for a while believe.” *Explanation:* It is also said that they had no root. What is it that they believe? Demons also believe, but they are not saved (James 2:19). The parable deals with the condition of the heart of those who hear God’s Word. Those who hear with an honest and good heart, and believe, are saved and bring forth fruit accordingly.
2. The Steward (Luke 12:41-48). *Problem:* The faithless manager was not looking for the Lord’s coming and was “appointed his portion with the unbelievers.” *Explanation:* Every man is a steward of God concerning all that is given him. This is no indication that the faithless one was a believer who lost his salvation.
3. The Law of Forgiveness (Matthew 18:23-35). *Problem:* It is said that if we do not forgive others, God will not forgive us. The wicked servant was delivered “to the tormentors.” *Explanation:* There is nothing to indicate that the unforgiving one was saved. The general lesson is fairness to others in light of God’s grace.
4. The True Vine (John 15:1-7). *Problem:* “If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” *Explanation:* The subject of the passage is fruit-bearing, which necessitates abiding fellowship with Christ. The burning of the fruitless branches by men, as often done in the fields, is not the fire of eternal judgment for the lost.
- d. Miscellaneous Passages. Passages which speak of shipwrecked faith (1 Timothy 1:19-20), erring faith (1 Timothy 6:10, 21) and overthrown faith (2 Timothy 2:18) are often used to refute eternal salvation. However, these verses may be considered as involving erring believers or false professors. “The Lord knoweth them that are His” (2 Timothy 2:19). Often we cannot be sure of another’s salvation in the face of a confused life. We would not know that Lot was a saved man from the Genesis account, but we are told so in 2 Peter 2:7-9.

Believers may lose their reward by suffering loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ and still be saved, though their life work is “burned” (1 Corinthians 3:15). This doubtless was in the apostle’s mind when he spoke of the danger of being a “castaway” or disqualified (1 Corinthians 9:27). This did not mean that Paul feared losing his salvation. He was confident about his salvation (2 Timothy 1:12; 4:7-8).

Conclusion

The Scripture is clear that saving faith continues until life’s end and is not merely the act of a moment. Saving faith differs from superficial belief, mental assent to a doctrine, ritual prayer or various practices of salvation by formula. True faith will never repudiate Christ and His saving work as man’s sole hope. It will result in a good life and not a sinful one. It is not the person who merely says he has faith that is saved, but the one who demonstrates the reality of faith in his life (James 2:14-24). The one who professes faith without this reality cannot be assured of any “ticket to heaven.” Instead, he may face the Lord in a coming day and hear the dreadful words, “Depart from Me. I never knew you!” In contrast, the true sheep of Christ can say, “The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom” (2 Timothy 4:18a NASB).

1. As Believers, What Are Some Of The Things From Which Christ Has Saved Us (Matthew 1:21; Romans 5:9; 6:14, 17-18; Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 2:1-6)?
2. What has God done about our sins (Isaiah 1:18; Psalm 103:12)?

On what is forgiveness of sins based (Ephesians 1:7)?

3. When and where were our sins put away (1 Peter 2:24)?

Did this involve *all* our sins, or just the sins we committed before we were saved (Hebrews 9:24-28; 10:10-14)?

4. What do we receive when we believe on the Son (John 5:24)? Is this something we receive immediately, or only when we die? Explain.

Define the word “eternal” and describe its limits.

5. Once we are saved, how are we kept saved (John 6:39-40; 1 Peter 1:4-5; Jude 24)?

In “Safety, Certainty and Enjoyment” (Appendix A) how does George Cutting demonstrate from Scripture that our safety depends on God, not ourselves?

6. What is our relationship to God as Christians (1 John 3:1-2)?

How did we enter into that relationship (John 1:12-13)?

What can separate us from that relationship (John 10:28-29; Romans 8:35-39)?

7. How does the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer indicate that the believer’s salvation is eternal (John 14:16-17; Romans 8:9b; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30)?

8. Paraphrase (rewrite in your own words) 2 Timothy 1:12b.

From this verse and 4:7-8, 18, what confidence did Paul have regarding his eternal salvation?

9. What does 1 John 5:11-13 indicate about our ability to know we have eternal salvation?

10. How would you respond to the following statements and what Scripture would you use?

“You can’t know you’re saved until you die.”

“I know my life doesn’t show it, but I know I’m saved because I prayed to receive Christ when I was eight years old.”

“If I can’t lose my salvation, I guess I can sin all I want.”

“This teaching of eternal salvation can’t be true because I know a preacher who ran off with the church organist.”

Lesson 6: Church Life

It is deeply moving to find in Scripture the truth that Almighty God loves and cares for each person in His vast creation. The Psalmist expressed his delight with the thought that he was intimately and personally known by God even before birth (Psalm 139:13-17). This loving care caused God to give His only begotten Son that each one might be saved from perishing (John 3:16). As individuals we must receive the Lord Jesus (John 1:12). The new birth is as single an event as physical birth (John 3:5). Even growth and development depend upon personal response to God. These thoughts may tempt us to believe that we are solitary believers in the eyes of God, living individualistic lives. This is far from the Scriptural picture.

To be one of the children of God is to be a member of His family (1 John 3:1; Ephesians 3:15). We are collectively “the people of God” (1 Peter 2:9-10; Revelation 21:3). God sees us as a colony of heaven upon earth, while citizens of another kingdom (Philippians 3:20). Biblical references to the followers of Jesus Christ are overwhelmingly in the plural. These include such terms as “believers” (Acts 5:14), “disciples” (Acts 9:1), “saints” (Ephesians 1:1), “brethren” or “brothers” (James 2:1) and less frequently, “Christians” (Acts 11:26) [It should be noted that, in the Bible, we are never called “laymen” or “laity,” meaning “common people,” or distinguished from what men call “the clergy.”] Most New Testament letters are addressed to groups of believers. We are seen as living together in a unity with one another and with Christ (Ephesians 2:5-6, 21-22). We are meant to function together, not as separated parts (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). In apostolic times, the Lord added daily to the fellowship of believers those who were saved (Acts 2:47). This fellowship was called the *ekklesia*, translated into English as “church.” This was a practical, local and functioning body of believers. The plan and purpose of God is for each believer to be a part of such a fellowship.

Definition Of The Church

The word “church” conveys many thoughts which are remote from the true meaning of *ekklesia*. Some think of it as *a building*. “The church is on the corner.” It is thought about in terms of *services* or a sum of various meetings. “We go to church on Sundays.” It is sometimes seen as activity-oriented or a group of *functions*. “We have always been very active in church.” Frequently, it is conceived as an institution or *organization*. “We belong to the Roman Catholic Church.” These ideas have grown around the word church without any reference to Biblical meaning.

The first part of the word *ekklesia* means “out of and the second part” is related to the verb “to call.” It is literally a *called out company* or gathering. The same word is used in Acts 19:32, 39, 41 for a mob called together to cry out against the preaching of the disciples. It was the ordinary word for an assembly or gathering of people. The word is taken up by the Lord and applied to the calling together of people by God to Himself. He *calls us out of darkness* into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). We are called *into the kingdom* of God’s dear Son (Colossians 1:13). *Ekklesia*, as it applies to believers in Christ in the Bible, refers to the people of God—not buildings, services, functions or organizations.

Two Aspects Of The Church

In Scripture there are two aspects of the *ekklesia*—the church, universal and local. The universal church means the whole of those who have come to Christ since Pentecost, both living and dead, including those of every tribe and nation. When the Bible says, “Christ also

loved the church and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25), it speaks of the whole. This is also true of references to the church as His Body (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4) of which He alone is the Head (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18). It is evident that such have never been together in one place or part of one earthly organization. As a divine unity, it exists in the mind of God at this time and therefore is sometimes called "mystical." This is the one, true church founded upon the New Testament apostles and the prophets, of which Jesus Christ Himself is the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20). The Holy Spirit alone makes us members by joining us in union with Christ (1 Corinthians 6:17; Ephesians 5:30). Such a conception was a mystery in the times of the Old Testament and the four Gospels (Ephesians 3:4-5). Jews and Gentiles were not then brought together on equal terms (Ephesians 2:11-16; 3:6). The church of Christ was yet to be built (Matthew 16:18). It was formed by the baptism of the Spirit in joining believers to Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13) beginning on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5; 2:4; 5:11). The church of Christ differs from Israel as the congregation (or church) in the wilderness (Acts 7:38). The Jew, Gentiles and Church of God today are distinguished from one another (1 Corinthians 10:32). The nation of Israel is how described by God as "not My people" (Romans 9:15; Hosea 2:23). All believers in Christ, in the Biblical sense, and none other, are the people of God now.

Being a part of the universal church does not excuse one from being active in a *local church*. Those who first believed in Christ were baptized and added to the local fellowship in Jerusalem (Acts 2:41). They were together with the other believers, participating in their common life (Acts 2:42-44). Churches were rapidly established in neighboring areas (Acts 9:31; 15:41; 16:5). They spread to other provinces of the world such as Asia (1 Corinthians 16:19), Macedonia (2 Corinthians 8:1) and Galatia (Galatians 1:2). They were called the "churches of Christ" (Romans 16:16), "the churches of God" (1 Corinthians 11:16) and the "churches of the saints" (1 Corinthians 14:33). Sometimes they were designated by the city in which they met, such as Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2), or as the residents of that city, "the church of the Thessalonians" (1 Thessalonians 1:1). For perhaps two centuries, they apparently had no public buildings of worship, and commonly met in homes (Romans 16:5; Colossians 4:15). They had a simple leadership structure among the saints, called the "overseers" and the "deacons" (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1), both in the plural. Single leadership was not the pattern among these early churches in terms of continuing government. Leaders were to be respected and obeyed (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12). We are not only to be subject to Christ. We also need to be subject to church leaders.

All members of the universal church are true believers and the same should be true of the local church. Yet this is often difficult since profession of faith in Christ does not always equal true conversion. The Lord Jesus taught that tares or weeds would exist along with the wheat in the sphere of profession (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43). Profession without reality will be rejected by Him in a coming day, whether the individuals belonged to a local church or not (Matthew 7:21-23).

Characteristics Of The Church

People often think of the church in terms of an auditorium with a speaker, or an organization with a headquarters and a hierarchy of officials. Biblical teaching emphasizes entirely different concepts.

1. **Unity** (Ephesians 4:3-6). The church is one, and there should be no division or faction in its local manifestation. Every effort should be made to maintain this spiritual unity (Ephesians 4:3). That which divides believers within the fellowship is to be avoided (1 Corinthians 1:10;

11:18; 12:25; 2 Corinthians 12:20). This is particularly true of false doctrine (2 Peter 2:1). People who cause division are to be warned and then avoided (Titus 3:10).

2. **Diversity** (Ephesians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 12:11). Each member has a contribution to make, although in a differing way. The contribution of different parts is brought out in the figure of the church as being like a human body (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Romans 12:4-5). Each believer within the unity of the church is like a part of the body. Christ is the head of the body. He assigns spiritual gifts at His discretion (1 Corinthians 12:13). When Scripture speaks of desiring certain gifts, this refers to the local church as a whole placing special value on some gifts within its midst (1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1), not on the personal ambitions of an individual. The important thing is that each member has a gift and an assigned function within the body (1 Corinthians 12:27). Each member is important. Each should have proper opportunity to function. Each should be respected. All do not have the same gift.
3. **Interdependence** (Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Corinthians 12:21-24). We need one another and are not made to function alone. The purpose of the major gifts is to build up other believers so that they can join in the ministry. They are not to remain spectators, individualists or paralyzed parts. All believers are called to function in local churches.
4. **Worship** (1 Peter 2:4-5). We have a high and primary call to praise and adore our wonderful God (John 4:23). This function is brought out in the figure of the church as a Temple or House of God (1 Corinthians 3:9, 16-17; 1 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 2:22). The people of God in the Old Testament offered worship at a special tent called the tabernacle in the wilderness and then at the temple in Jerusalem. Later He ceased to dwell in temples made with hands (Acts 6:48), an important distinction between the nation of Israel and the church of Christ. God's house is now a spiritual one, made up of living stones, which is to say, Spirit-indwelt believers. Our sacrifices are no longer animals. They are now dedicated bodies, material gifts and personal praise. All believers in Christ are priests, not just "the clergy," a word which comes from the Latin word for priest (1 Peter 2:5, 9). God's church must have worship as a primary function and this consists of pouring out praise to God, not simply listening to a sermon or repeating words in unison from a book.
5. **Affectionate Relationship** (Ephesians 5:23-27; 2 Corinthians 11:2). This is particularly brought out in the figure of the church as a bride. The people of God since Pentecost are likened collectively to a beautiful woman, engaged to a great Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ. He loves His bride with a surpassing affection and seeks to have her presented to Himself in purity. By contrast, the nation of Israel is likened to a divorced woman (Isaiah 50:1). The church must see that she has a near and dear relationship to the Lord Jesus and has a central role in His present and future purposes. He has nothing but good in mind for His Bride. The church must have eyes always centered in her Bridegroom.
6. **Other Characteristics** might be mentioned. There is growth, not paralysis or decay (Acts 6:1, 7; 12:24; 19:20). There is life, not deadness. There is holiness, not corruption (1 Corinthians 3:17; 1 Peter 1:15-16). There is doctrinal purity, not apostasy (1 Timothy 1:3, 10; Titus 1:9-10; 2 Peter 2:1-3; Revelation 2:13-14, 20). The teachings of love, life and light, by which we manifest Christ, must radiate from a truly Biblical local church.

Function Of The Church

What is the church called to do in its local function? Certainly it must take seriously the work which is called the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). This is to preach the gospel everywhere (evangelize) and make disciples. The pattern is seen in Acts 2:40-42. People heard the gospel proclaimed, they believed, were baptized and then entered into active church life. This life and function consisted of a fourfold pattern: the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers. We would express this as meaning: solid Biblical teaching, meeting with other believers in church services, remembering the Lord in the communion service and praying jointly with fellow believers. Why is breaking of bread or communion mentioned in this list? It appears to have been central to the early church meeting (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-33). This pattern should not suggest that God is interested in form without spiritual life. The religious observances of the Jews in Scripture came under God's condemnation precisely because they ceased to have true life and meaning.

The early church won people out of the deadness of the religion of that day by love in action (Acts 2:45) and by bold proclamation of the Word of God (Acts 4:13, 29, 31). As believers were scattered under intense persecution, their faith was spread out of the dynamic character of their life and witness. This did not mean that there were not imperfections in them. Sometimes they were criticized for being carnal or led by human desires (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). Some were asked to examine their own lives to make sure they were Christians (2 Corinthians 13:5). Some were rebuked for bad doctrine (Galatians 1:6-9; 3:1-3). When Christ was seen walking among the churches, He both commanded and criticized (Revelation 2-3). Nevertheless, the churches spread throughout the civilized world and the Christian faith became dominant. Whatever they were lacking, there was life in the churches. Moreover, God was working out His plan.

Future Of The Church

The glorious future of the church of Christ is to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air at His return (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Then we will be changed, in our bodies and in other ways (1 Corinthians 15:51-54). We will be with Him and we will be like Him spiritually (1 John 3:2-3). We will be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Ephesians 5:27). The church will be the eternal object lesson in heaven of the grace of God to the poor creatures He raised to such dazzling heights of glory (Ephesians 2:7).

Study Guide

1. In the New Testament the term "church" is used in both the universal sense, referring to all Christians throughout the world and throughout history, and the local sense, referring to a specific group of Christians in one geographical area. Which of the following passages refer to the universal church and which refer to the local church?

1 Corinthians 10:32

Ephesians 5:25

1 Thessalonians 1:1

Galatians 1:1-2

Colossians 1:18

2. Describe the universal church and its members (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15-16).

3. Paraphrase (rewrite in your own words) Acts 2:42.

From this verse and Matthew 28:19-20, what are the principal activities of the local church?

4. What is the purpose of Christian fellowship (Proverbs 27:17; Ecclesiastes 4:9-10; Hebrews 10:24-25)?

5. How would you answer someone who says, "I don't need to go to church; I can worship God just as well in my own living room or at my cabin at the lake with my family"?

6. What spiritual leaders has God provided for the local church (Philippians 1:1) and what qualities of character must they possess (1 Timothy 3:1-13)?

What are the responsibilities of the spiritual leaders of the local church (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-5)?

7. What is the individual believer's responsibility to the spiritual leaders in his local church (Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:5)?

In what ways are you obeying these Scriptural commands?

8. What personal function does each believer have in the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-17)?

Why has God given each believer spiritual gifts (Ephesians 4:11-16)?

What proper attitudes should you display in the local assembly (Ephesians 4:2-3; John 13:34-35)?

9. In your opinion, at what point does a person cease to be a "meeting attender" and begin to be a functioning member of the local church? Which are you? Explain.

10. If you moved to another town, on what basis would you choose a local church? What Scriptures would you consider?

Lesson 7: Overcoming Temptation

One of the common experiences of mankind in the moral realm is the recognition of a strong pull or attraction in the direction of doing what we know to be wrong. Sometimes we resist successfully. At other times we give in. That urge or appeal to do wrong is called “temptation.” Our ability to understand and resist it successfully, by the power of God, has a profound effect on our progress as believers. It spells defeat or an overcoming life.

The Meaning Of Temptation

In Bible usage temptation has more than one meaning.

1. **Testing** or proving of man by God in the area of faith is one meaning (Genesis 22:1; Exodus 15:25; 16:4). The trial of faith may be direct, as in the case of the command by God to Abraham to offer Isaac. It may be indirect, in the difficulties and persecutions in life (James 1:2-3; 1 Peter 1:6; 4:12). Testing is not for the purpose of giving God information, but rather to prove the reality of our faith.
2. **Challenging** or provoking God by man is a negative use of this word (Exodus 17:7; Acts 15:10; 1 Corinthians 10:9; Hebrews 3:8). One tempts God by expressing doubts about His love or power, by un-scriptural actions designed to force His hand and by presuming upon His grace by continued rebelliousness. Such actions can provoke God’s anger (Psalm 106:29; Isaiah 5:25).
3. **Enticement** or allurement to do what is wrong in God’s sight is the meaning which most commonly comes to our minds (James 1:14; Galatians 6:1; 1 Timothy 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 3:5). This is the subject of the present lesson. God never directly tempts man in this manner (James 1:13), although He permits Satan to do so. He also permits, at times, the Devil to test or harass believers (Job 1:12; 2:3-6).

When the Psalmist pleads for God to try him and see if there is any hurtful way within, he appears to convey the first meaning (Psalm 139:23). When the Lord Jesus is invited to cast Himself down from the pinnacle and then be rescued by the angels, he declines to tempt God (Luke 4:12). This is the *second* meaning. The so-called Lord’s Prayer includes the phrase, “Lead us not into temptation” (Matthew 6:13), and is followed by the phrase “but deliver us from evil.” Thus it is clear that the *third* meaning is in view. Each usage of the word must be carefully distinguished. It is encouraging to read this from God’s Word: “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, Who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:13 NASB). God uses temptation for His own purposes and for the good of man. By it He manifests faith and integrity, develops traits of character—such as patience—and often stops the mouths of the enemies of God.

Three Sources Of Enticement

The attack upon man comes from three directions. It is helpful not to confuse them or to overlook an area where we may be vulnerable.

1. **The Devil** is a personal, active agent of evil, enticing or seducing man from a path of following God. He is called the Tempter (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5). The word “devil” means “slanderer” or “accuser.” He slanders God to man (Genesis 3:5) and slanders man to God (Revelation 12:10). The word “satan” means “enemy” or “adversary,” because he

is the enemy of both God and man (1 Peter 5:8). The origin of this evil one is suggested in Ezekiel 28:12-19 and in Isaiah 14:12-14. The Devil operates by casting doubt on God's Word (Genesis 3:1); oppressing people physically, mentally and spiritually (Acts 10:38); and leaving a path of destruction which merits the name *Apollyon* or *Abaddon*, meaning "destroyer" (Revelation 9:11). This deadly ministry can influence man in such a way as to cause him to lose his soul. The Devil is a murderer of souls (John 8:44).

2. **The World** is that alluring system of values, morals and ungodly influences which draws the unwary away from God and into its orbit. This use is not to be confused with the same word sometimes used to mean planet earth or its inhabitants. The evil world system has Satan for its prince or leader (John 12:31; Ephesians 2:2). This system is held by him as a baby in its mother's arms (1 John 5:19). To be friendly with it is to be an enemy of God (James 4:4). Believers are in it in the sense of living there (John 13:1), but not of it in personal participation or conformity (John 15:19). Those who are born again are said to have overcome the world (1 John 5:4).
3. **The Flesh** is used as an expression in three different ways in the Bible. It refers to mankind generally (Acts 2:17), to the human body (John 1:14; 3:6; 6:51) and to lustful desires or cravings that go beyond proper limits set by God (Galatians 5:16, 24; James 1:14; Ephesians 2:3). It is this third sense that is in view here. Natural desires are taken beyond proper bounds when the flesh takes control. For example, sex, which is legitimate within marriage, becomes fornication outside of marriage. Eating to meet the needs of the body becomes gluttony when we live to eat, stuffing to the point of obesity. The deeds of the flesh are described as "immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envyings, drunkenness and carousings" (Galatians 5:19-20 NASB). Persistence in such things is a mark of those who will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:21).

The Two Natures—The Flesh Against The Spirit

The believer in Christ is quite aware of a personal struggle, often intense, between the desire to do right and the temptation to do wrong. "The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please" (Galatians 5:17 NASB).

The believer is saved, but unfortunately, his nature is not. It has not been changed by the new birth. "Nature" is the inclination, disposition, character or capacity for doing something. The old nature, which tends to sin as surely as a dog tends to bark, is the disposition of man from birth. It is inherited from Adam (Romans 5:12). By nature, man tends to lust and indulge the desires of the flesh and the mind (Ephesians 2:3). Sometimes this nature is called "the old man" (Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:9) or the "carnal mind" (Romans 8:7). This nature is a source of evil (Mark 7:21-23). It is shaped in iniquity (Psalm 51:5). It is hostile to God and cannot please Him (Romans 8:7-8). Nothing good can come from it (Romans 7:18).

When we are born again we receive a new nature, not a rehabilitation of the old one (2 Peter 1:4). We are made a "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17) and a "new man" (Ephesians 4:24). There is a divine seed implanted which cannot sin because it comes from God (1 John 3:9). Since the old nature is neither removed, nor improved, there is an understandable strife between the two natures, as outlined in Romans 7:15-23. It is important for the new nature to gain the ascendancy over the old one. To do this, we must draw on the power of God, nourish the new nature in every way and starve the old one in terms of gratification in any form. The Apostle

Paul speaks of buffeting his body to keep it in subjection (1 Corinthians 9:27). This is an expression for self-discipline.

Two Illustrations Of Enticement

The temptation of the first human beings is a case history of the three routes by which man is assaulted. (Note 1 John 2:16.) When the forbidden fruit was dangled before Eve's eyes by the Tempter (Genesis 3:6), it was seen to be "good for food" (the lust of the flesh), "pleasant to the eyes" (the lust of the eyes or the world), and "desired to make one wise" (the pride of life or the sin of the Devil).

The temptations of the Lord Jesus follow a similar pattern. He was first tempted, when hungry, to make bread from stones, an appeal to the *flesh* (Matthew 4:3). He was next invited to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple that He might be rescued by angels, an appeal to the *pride of life* (Matthew 4:5-6). He was finally offered the world in all its glory as a reward for worshipping the Devil, or the attraction of the *world* (Matthew 4:8).

Victory Over Enticement—What God Has Done

No temptation confronts man but what our Lord Jesus Christ has already conquered, thus making provision for our victory.

1. **Defeat Of The Devil** was accomplished by the Lord Jesus at the cross (John 12:31; 16:11). Satan's power over believers was broken (Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14). We are never told to fear the Devil. Rather we are told to resist him, and then he will run away (James 4:7). He certainly would not do this if he still held power over the believer. We are warned, however, not to give him opportunity against us, since he will cleverly exploit it (Ephesians 4:27). Although he can tempt, deceive and attack believers, he can be withstood by the power of God through the blood of the Lord Jesus (Revelation 12:10-11).
2. **Defeat Of The World** is a further accomplishment of our Lord. He said, "Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). He has utterly condemned it (John 12:31; 1 Corinthians 11:32). For this reason we must maintain a moral separation from it (2 Corinthians 6:14-17). This does not mean isolating ourselves from non-Christians (Matthew 11:19). It means rather to abstain from defilements, compromise and unequal relationships. We are not to love the world (1 John 2:15). We are to overcome it by faith (1 John 5:4).
3. **Defeat Of The Flesh** was assured when the Lord Jesus broke its power at the cross (Romans 6:6). There He condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3). We were once slaves of sin but are now free (Romans 6:20-22). Christ is the "double cure" of sin in the believer. He saves us both from its guilt and its power. We are not helpless victims of irresistible lust. We have the enablement of God to overcome fleshly desires which would cause us to sin.

Victory Over Enticement—What We Must Do

Victorious provision by our Lord always requires *personal appropriation*. The foes therefore continue to attack. Every temptation has a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13). It is always good to pray in time of temptation, realizing the weakness of the flesh (Matthew 26:41). We need to draw on the enabling power of the Spirit in order to overcome. Wise actions will help us in avoiding certain temptations (1 Corinthians 7:5). Overconfidence in our own flesh is a dangerous attitude and must be shunned (Philippians 3:3). The Scripture lays out for us the path of victory.

1. **Reckon** or “count yourself dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11 NIV). Our minds must be oriented to realize that we died with Christ, our Great Substitute, on the cross and all that pertained to the old life died with Him there (Colossians 3:3). A dead man is not attracted to sin.
2. **Yield** or “offer yourselves to God, as those who have returned from death to life, and offer the parts of your body as instruments of righteousness” (Romans 6:13 NIV). We are told to offer our bodies as living sacrifices to God (Romans 12:1). The river of the Spirit can then flow through a controlled life (John 7:38-39). “Live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of your sinful nature” (Galatians 5:16 NIV).
3. **Resist** the Devil, we are exhorted (James 4:7). We must pray and make use of the Word of God (Matthew 4:1-11). Active spiritual warfare, calling for our participation, is as much a part of victorious living as resting in Christ’s victory over our enemies and appropriating His power. Both active and passive measures should be employed.

Provision For Failure

1. **Claim Christ’s Assistance.** A Christian, though he may *sin less*, is not *sinless*. Therefore, the Bible says, “If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). The next verse states that Jesus settled the sin question when He died on the cross for *all our sin*—past, present and future. Now Jesus is our Advocate, Lawyer, and Counsel before the Father to plead our case when we sin.
2. **Confess To God.** Our fellowship with God is restored by confessing our sin (1 John 1:9). The word “confess” means “to say the same thing as another” or “to agree with.” When we confess a sin we are agreeing with God that the thing we have done is wrong. It is not enough to merely agree with the fact that we have sinned, but we must also specifically state what sin we have actually committed.
3. **Claim God’s Forgiveness.** Accept God’s complete forgiveness and cleansing. Once a sin has been acknowledged and forsaken, failure to accept God’s forgiveness is to call Him a liar, for He has promised forgiveness on those terms. Continual dwelling on a past sin can become the occasion for future stumbling.

Conclusion

Temptation is a fact of life for every Christian. He faces the formidable trio of the Devil, the world system, and the flesh. In spite of this, the Lord Jesus has called us out of darkness to walk in the light, live in victory, bear fruit abundantly and to manifest a transformed life. Christ has made this possible by defeating our enemies on the cross and becoming the Captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10). As our Captain He desires to lead us in triumph, and through us spread “the fragrance of the knowledge of Him” everywhere (2 Corinthians 2:14 NIV). Moreover, Christ has provided us with four invaluable resources to meet the great challenges of spiritual battle: the Holy Spirit living within us (Romans 8:9,11), Christ Himself interceding in heaven for us (Hebrews 7:25), the Word of God feeding us and fighting for us (Ephesians 6:17), and prayer—opening the lifeline to God for us (Hebrews 4:16). Even with so great a leader and such resources, spiritual victory still demands that we follow and obey the truth. It does not spring from mere intellectual knowledge of Bible information. It does not find its roots in subjective spiritual experiences apart from the directive Word of God. To call Jesus “Lord” and feel no responsibility to do what He says is false profession at the worst and

hypocrisy at the best (Luke 6:46). Obedience is the test of spiritual reality (1 John 2:3-4), the test of our love for Him (John 14:15-21) and the way of spiritual growth.

Study Guide

1. Contrast the origin, nature and purpose of trials (James 1:2-12) with the origin, nature and purpose of temptations (James 1:13-15 NASB).
2. Identify the source of temptation in the following verses and identify the characteristics of each source.

Ephesians 6:11-12; 1 Peter 5:8

Romans 12:2; 2 Timothy 4:10; 1 John 2:15-16

Mark 7:21-23

3. What is the ultimate basis of our own victory over temptation (John 12:31-33; Romans 6:6)?
4. Two well-known passages on temptation are Genesis 3:1-6 and Joshua 7:20-21. In your opinion, where does temptation end and sin begin in each passage? What progression do you notice in each case?
5. Contrast Genesis 3:1-6 with Matthew 4:1-11. What similarities and differences do you see concerning the temptation and the results?
6. Paraphrase (rewrite in your own words) 1 Corinthians 10:13.

What do you learn about limits and provisions in this verse? How do you account for temptations that seem too great for you to bear?

7. Read Romans 6. Does a Christian *have to sin*? What is your responsibility?
8. What are some preventive measures you can take to overcome temptation? Psalm 119:9-11

Matthew 26:41

2 Timothy 2:22

James 4:7

9. What would be an example of making "provision for the flesh" (Romans 13:13-14)?

What principle do you see in Acts 19:19? How have you applied this principle in your own life? What was the result of the action these believers took (Acts 19:20)?

10. What should we do when we fail (1 John 1:9)? What does this involve (Psalm 32:1-5)? Is this provision a license to sin (Romans 6:1-2)?

Lesson 8: Appointment With God

“AS THE DEER PANTS FOR THE WATER BROOKS, so my soul pants for Thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God” (Psalm 42:1-2 NASB). “I shall seek Thee earnestly; my soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh yearns for Thee” (Psalm 63:1 NASB). Thirst for God and yearning for His fellowship was the stirring cry of the Psalmist in his devotion to the Holy One. What greater communion could there be than with the Lord of life and glory? What higher privilege could we have than a divine encounter—time with God? It has been well said that if you love someone, you will spend time with him. We who profess to love the Lord can hardly dispense with spending time alone with Him. The rush of daily living relentlessly squeezes our lives in a vise of clamoring demands. We are consumed by “busy-ness” and thus fail to lay hold of our riches in Christ. Our daily walk requires an appointment with God, set aside as a sacred trust and not to be lightly broken. If we have made it, He will be waiting.

Time And Place

1. **When Should We Commune With Him?** In every time of trouble He is near (Psalm 20:1; 46:1). There is no time when we cannot call upon our Father. Yet stated times have long been the practice of the godly. These may be as frequent as morning, noon and evening (Psalm 55:17; Daniel 6:10). They may even occur at midnight (Psalm 119:62). However, we tend to grow busy during the day, and weariness drains our strength at night. The best preparation for a day is to ensure that we have seen the face of God before we see the face of man. God’s men often sought Him early. “In the morning, O Lord, Thou wilt hear my voice; in the morning I will order my prayer to Thee and eagerly watch” (Psalm 5:3 NASB). “He awakens Me morning by morning. He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple” (Isaiah 50:4b NASB). “I rise before dawn” (Psalm 119:147 NASB). It was in the morning that the children of Israel were summoned by the Lord to gather the manna, the heavenly bread which was to sustain them throughout the day (Exodus 16:21). The best of all beginnings is the one which is with God.
2. **Where Should We Meet With Him?** God is available everywhere. Our task is to find a place to meet with Him without interruption or distraction. In His earthly life, our Lord sought such a place. “In the early morning, while it was still dark, He arose and went out and departed to a lonely place, and was praying there” (Mark 1:35 NASB). He often prayed alone in the hills (Matthew 14:23). On our part, a room or kitchen corner may do as well as a mountain top. The need is to be alone with Him for personal attention.

Purpose Of Meeting

What are we to seek? Supremely, we want to seek Him. Communion with God is primarily for the purpose of deepening our roots in Him, rather than completing study projects. Ideally it should be a time of appreciation, fellowship and a warming of our hearts, as well as instruction. It can strengthen us by giving us great thoughts about God. It can provide guidance concerning His will for our lives. It is good to linger before Him and to refuse to leave until we have truly met Him and had His blessing (Genesis 32:26). Nothing we can do for God or do for others will take the place of this blessing. Therefore, we should not rush into and rush out of His presence. The Enemy of our souls will violently oppose and hinder our efforts to maintain a disciplined devotional life. He knows it is a benefit in the lives of the devout and its absence is a detriment in the lives of spiritual drifters.

Fellowship with God is a two-way street. When we meditate upon the Word of God, He speaks to us. When we lift our hands in prayer, we speak to Him. Both are a part of time with God. Even silent waiting upon Him can be helpful in hearing His voice.

1. **Listen To God.** The Lord Jesus said that man must live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). If this be true, then God must be given the opportunity to speak to our souls, to grip our very being with Himself, with His will, with His ways. To avoid undisciplined, irregular skipping from place to place in the Bible, we need to read chapters and books of Scripture consecutively. We need to read slowly, thoughtfully and with careful consideration of the parts as well as the whole. It is particularly helpful if we take time to meditate on some thought or verse in which God is speaking to us (Psalm 119:15,23, 48, 78, 97). Reading through a section at a leisurely pace, even twice over, will help to settle it in our minds. This will prepare us to ask various questions about the passage: What does the passage say? (Observation) What does the passage mean? (Interpretation) Check the meaning of difficult words you do not understand. How does this passage apply to my life? (Application) Always remember that conformity to the character of Christ is God's objective in our lives (Romans 8:29).

Stephen Olford notes four significant purposes of the daily devotional time.¹ These are spiritual health (1 Peter 2:2), spiritual cleansing in a world of defilement (Psalm 119:9; John 15:3; 17:17), spiritual counsel (2 Timothy 3:16; Psalm 73:24) and spiritual conflict (Ephesians 6:17). The effective intake of the Word and its personal application are aided by a devotional notebook in which we note the date, text and key verse in which God spoke to us and then the application or spiritual insight. An application is most helpful when it is specific rather than general. God opens the eyes of those who are ready to obey whatever He would show them (Psalm 119:18).

2. **TALK TO GOD.** Prayer is drawing near by faith to speak to God in honesty and simplicity. It should not be formal or a mere repetition of certain forms (Matthew 6:7). Keeping our words fresh and conversational maintains reality and honesty before God. An excellent beginning is to speak in praise and adoration of God's personal excellencies (worship). This should remind us of the need to learn more of His attributes. We can express our gratitude for His many blessings, both spiritual and material (thanksgiving). We are invited to bring the needs of others before Him (intercession). Here it is helpful to have a prayer reminder list which is kept updated. This can be divided so as not to attempt covering every request every day. One system (from Olford) uses the first letter of the days of week as a key. Monday for missionaries, Tuesday for thanksgiving for blessings and answers to prayer, Wednesday for workers in the local or national scene, Thursday for tasks in the ministry or on the job, Friday for *family*, Saturday for saints (believers) in their special needs and Sunday for sinners or those needing to be saved. Some believers keep a place for answers to their prayers. There is often need of confession. Finally, remember to petition for personal needs regardless of how small or large they seem (Philippians 4:6-7).

Pointers To Remember

1. Have a regular time and quiet place. Schedule the time and stick to it. Be able to pray aloud without disturbing others. Start with a small amount of time (20 minutes) and gradually increase it.
2. Have all the needed materials (Bible, notebook, pen) ready before retiring. Devotional books are stimulating, but are not to be used as a substitute for independent, consecutive

study of Scripture. Have a plan for going through the Bible. Do not attempt to read more Scripture than can be spiritually digested. A dozen verses or a chapter is usually sufficient.

3. Go to bed early. Late hours rob us of freshness when rising. Get up promptly. Do not roll over for a few more minutes of sleep. Get up, wash and be alert.
4. Ask God to speak to you and to manifest His presence.
5. Be expectant, believing and listening for God. Shut off mind-wandering by a deliberate act of the will. Think of the Lord, rather than being preoccupied with self.
6. Do not hurry God. Meditate on what you are reading. Pause in your prayers and listen for God.
7. Jot down thoughts in your devotional notebook. Make notes for further study or for a prayer list. Plan to share your thoughts with a friend or prayer partner.

Olford says that devotional time with God “is absolutely vital to a life of sustained spirituality, effectiveness and love. It is the barometer of the Christian life.”² May we ask: Have you made an appointment to meet with God each day? Do you keep it faithfully? Can you be victorious in your spiritual life without time with God?

1. What priority of the Christian life is indicated in Psalm 42:1-2? Why is this necessary for a growing relationship with the Lord?
2. Why do we need regular time with God?

John 15:3

1 Peter 2:2

Romans 12:2

1 Samuel 1:19a

Psalm 143:8

3. Describe the activity of Mary in Luke 10:38-42. What was Jesus' evaluation of her actions?

Describe the attitude and actions of Martha as she hosts Jesus in her home.

How did Martha's spiritual insensitivity limit the value of her service? What must come before service (Luke 5:15-16)?

4. What are some ways in which we indicate that we often value service/activities above our fellowship with the Lord? What should you do when you sense this is happening in your life?
5. What are some good times to regularly “sit at Jesus' feet” (Daniel 6:10; Psalm 119:147-148)? What are the distinct advantages of the different times of the day (compare Psalm 1:2)?
6. When the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, God provided manna, “the bread from heaven,” for their food. How frequently were they to gather the manna? What happened if they waited until later in the day (Exodus 16:21)? What applications can you make from this passage regarding spending regular time with God?

Where did Jesus go to spend time with the Father (Mark 1:33-35)? Why do you think He chose the early morning for this time alone with the Father?

7. What are some things we can do in our time alone with God?

Psalm 5:3

Isaiah 50:4b

8. What are some hindrances to an effective time alone with God?

Proverbs 6:9

Luke 10:41

Psalm 66:18

How would you deal with these in your life?

9. Paraphrase (rewrite in your own words) Psalm 63:1. How does this express your own desire to know Him?

10. Do you have a regular time for daily fellowship alone with God?

How much time would you estimate that you spend alone with God in a devotional way each day? each week?

What is the best time(s) of the day for you to meet with God?

“With God’s help, I desire to spend at least_____minutes a day alone with God, from _____ to_____ (state time of day).” SIGNED_____

Lesson 9: Eating The Word Of God

“MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). This is an amazing statement by the Lord Jesus, quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3. The subject is God’s provision for His people. God has provided more than earthly food. He has given us the Scriptures. In the Old Testament, from which Jesus quoted so regularly, and the New Testament, which is the fulfillment of much that is written in the Old, we have the Bible as the completed Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21). It is a book in which “Thus saith the Lord” and like expressions recur constantly. God speaks in the first person or through His representatives. The Word of God is alive and active (Hebrews 4:12). It lives and abides forever (1 Peter 1:23). Its glories are sung in Psalm 119. Since the Bible is God’s communication to man, the instructional manual by man’s Owner and Maker, we ought to diligently consult it every day we live on earth. This constant attention and obedience is precisely what is commanded in the Bible (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

Bible Benefits

The transforming power of the Word of God in the lives of those who study it with reverent obedience is evident in countless instances. Consider the many ways in which this remarkable volume works in the lives of those who draw upon its resources:

1. **Salvation.** The new birth is brought about by means of the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23). When implanted, the Word brings us to a salvation that is “through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15). It is to be believed and shared with others.
2. **Spiritual Food.** The prophet spoke of eating the Word, receiving it inwardly into his soul (Jeremiah 15:16). It is compared to milk (1 Peter 2:2), to honey (Psalm 19:10; 119:103) and to strong food or meat (Hebrews 5:12, 14). Spiritual life is sustained by nourishment from the Word.
3. **Growth.** As it ministers to our souls, the Word builds us up in our most holy faith (Acts 20:32). Spiritual development requires the food of the Word (1 Peter 2:2).
4. **Wisdom.** The value of education is exalted on every hand and from it people hope to gain wisdom. Yet the Scriptures can make us wiser than our enemies and give us more understanding than worldly teachers (Psalm 119:99-100).
5. **Cleansing.** The world is filled with moral pollution. The great purifier of mind and heart is the Word (Psalm 119:9; John 15:3). It protects us from sin (Psalm 119:11).
6. **Guidance.** Knowing what to do and where to turn is a constant problem. The Word is light unto our way (Psalm 119:105).
7. **Comfort** or encouragement in our difficulties and sorrows comes from this never-failing source (Psalm 119:28, 50, 76; Romans 15:4).
8. **Joy** in a world of sorrow can be ours through the Word (John 15:11).
9. **Blessings** upon those who take heed to obey the Word are dramatically evident in Scripture (Deuteronomy 28:1-8). Success, by God’s standards, will be the portion of those who continue in the Word and observe its precepts (Joshua 1:8).

Varieties Of Bible Intake

Proper diet from the Word can come to us in many forms. When we pray for God to open our eyes (Psalm 119:18) and the Holy Spirit is our divine instructor (John 14:26), we can eat the bread of God by taking it into our innermost being. The growing believer practices these disciplines:

1. **Hear** the Word (Proverbs 28:9; Luke 19:48). Before the invention of printing and the easy availability of Bibles, most people could only listen to the Scriptures at a church service. We must cultivate the habit of listening attentively when God's Word is proclaimed. We must think carefully about what is being said. We can improve our retention by taking notes and then comparing or otherwise discussing their content with others.
2. **Read** the Word (Deuteronomy 17:19; Revelation 1:3). Use some systematic plan rather than random selection. Go through the Bible at a definite rate each day. It is a combination of blessing, privilege and duty to know the contents of this book completely, rather than parts here and there. Both Old and New Testament must be mastered.
3. **Study** the Word (Acts 17:11; Proverbs 2:1-5). This is more than reading through a passage. This is digging into it. Write down key thoughts. Ask questions or share thoughts with others. Look up things you do not know. In particular, apply it personally. Effective Bible study is application-oriented.
4. **Memorize** the Word (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Psalm 37:31; Proverbs 7:1-3). The surest way to hide God's Word in our hearts is to memorize it. We will forget almost all of that which we hear and most of what we read, but we can retain 100% of what we memorize, if we review regularly. When we need to call to mind a key verse for the sake of our own soul, or in ministering to others, the memorized Word is invaluable. The Lord Jesus quoted from memory in resisting temptation (Matthew 4:1-11). Small cards with significant verses are widely available to help in Scripture memorization.
5. **Meditate** on the Word (Psalm 119:15, 23, 48, 78, 148; Philippians 4:8). To meditate is to ponder, muse and converse with yourself silently or aloud. It is a time of reflection upon some truth or some aspect of the person of God. It has been likened to the calm and leisurely way in which a cow chews its cud. Meditation can come after our morning study in which we have felt that a certain verse has particularly spoken to our hearts. Write thoughts down. Share them with someone.

Our attitude in approaching the Word has a great deal to do with effective intake. The devout student of the Word is committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, to His Word for regular study and to application of that Word to the daily life. There is firm expectance of gradual learning and growth, rather than magical effects from spasmodic rushing to Scripture in emergencies. There is understanding that intake of the Word is a spiritual interaction with God, not mechanical exercises or academic dissection by an observer sitting in judgment on God's Word.

Bible Study Method

There is no particular method of Bible study suggested in the Word itself. However, the believer with a dynamic relationship with the Word usually has the following:

A TIME set aside on a daily basis

A PLACE of study, free from distraction

A PLAN to consecutively study all Scripture

A GOAL of personal conformity to Christ Submission to Christ, eagerness to learn and regular study of the Word will yield results in most cases, without special instruction. It is helpful to use the three following questions in approaching the Word. Answer them in order as you read the text.

1. **What Does It Say?** Observe carefully the facts of the passage. Note the characters, details, actions, and doctrinal emphasis. Underline important words in your text and make notes on a separate paper. Take plenty of time and concentrate.
2. **What Does It Mean?** To interpret correctly you must understand the meaning of what you have read. Make sure of word definitions and check when you are in doubt. Ask why this incident is included in Scripture. Note the effect of certain actions or words. What is God's attitude in this? What doctrine is set forth? What is the significance of this teaching in the lives of believers? What went before this section and what went afterward? This is called *context*. We do not want to insert an idea which is out of place with the context. Try not to linger too much over what you do not understand. If necessary make note of questions for future study. Then set these aside and concentrate on what you *do* understand.
3. **How Will I Apply It?** This question has to do with application of the Word to your personal life or your understanding of God. Application is the fruit of your study. It brings you to face what you intend to do about what you have read. Bible study is intended to change us, to bring us into conformity with Christ and to a fuller appreciation of God. Information without application is a miscarriage of the intended purpose of Scripture. Look for promises, warnings, commands, examples, sins and encouragements or truths about the character of God. Earnestly beseech God to speak to you through His Word while you study. Wait on God when necessary and do not rush in and out of His presence. Write down each day what you have learned in a notebook or devotional diary for future study and reference. Use the personal pronoun "I" when you write an application. Use a verb of action to indicate what you intend to do. Eliminate weak or impersonal observations about Scripture from your study. Do not be an avoider. God is willing to be your Teacher if you truly want to learn at His feet.

Bible Study Tools Or Aids

There are more helps for Bible study today than at any other time in history. The Bible alone is sufficient, when the Spirit is our guide, but we can gain from study aids. Here is a brief word about several of them:

1. **Basic Versions.** Seek to carefully determine what the Bible says, in words that you can understand. In the English language, many readers still prefer the King James Version (KJV). Lately a revision of this has been made available, with out-of-date words eliminated (New King James Bible). Others prefer such translations as the New American Standard Bible (NASB), New International Version (NIV), and the New English Bible (NEB). Many of these translations are also available in reference editions with study notes, commentary, cross-references, concordance or maps. A new believer, however, probably should begin with a basic text.
2. **Paraphrased Bibles.** There are other Bibles which are not exact translations but paraphrases. These include the *Living Bible*, *Phillips*, *Today's English (Good News)* and

Amplified editions. Study from one good translation and refer to paraphrases or other translations for comparison as a study help.

3. **Concordance.** This is an alphabetic index of words in the Bible which helps locate passages and cross-references on any subject being studied. The meaning of words from the Hebrew and Greek languages, in which the Old and New Testament were originally written, is also given. Concordances by *Strong* and *Young* are excellent.
4. **Dictionaries.** An ordinary English dictionary helps you to gain deeper understanding of unfamiliar or key words in the text. Bible dictionaries, such as *Unger's* or *The New Bible Dictionary*, are helpful for general background and brief explanations of many topics, Bible names and books.
5. **Other Helps.** Maps and some information on geography and history are often available in Bibles. A Bible atlas or Bible geography is used by many students. Bible encyclopedias, such as *International Standard* or *Zondervan* are fuller versions of Bible dictionaries. Simple Bible courses can help with background material, doctrinal and book studies.

A good readable version of the Bible and a few simple study aids are all that are necessary at first. When buying any Bible study tools, one should be very careful to avoid cult material and all books written by those with liberal or critical attitudes toward the Bible.

Conclusion

Where do you want to be in your understanding of God's Word one, five, ten years from now? Will you be a child, adolescent or adult? Will you be able to eat the "strong meat" of the Word—or will you still be drinking milk (1 Corinthians 3:1-3)? "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for some one to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For every one who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil" (Hebrews 5:12-14 NASB).

The choice is ours. If we are new in the faith, or immature, let us "long for the pure milk of the Word" that we may grow up in the Lord (1 Peter 2:2 NASB). If we are more mature in the Word, let us go on to "solid food," training our spiritual senses for discernment.

Study Guide

Each morning this week we will do a devotional exercise using passages related to different aspects of the Word of God. This will prepare us for the discussion on "Eating the Word," and it will reinforce last week's lesson on "Appointment with God." The following order is suggested to help in our preparations:

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. After completing your devotional time each day answer the questions on the back of this study guide relating to that passage.

Daily Schedule

Day 1—Psalm 19:7-11

Day 2—Deuteronomy 11:18-21

Day 3—2 Timothy 2:14-19

Day 4—Psalm 119:9-16

Day 5—Psalm 1

Day 6—James 1:22-25

Day 7—REVIEW

Sample Worksheet

Passage: Galatians 1:11-17 Date: June 10, 1976

Title: Not According to Man (v. 11)

Summary: Paul shares how he received the gospel directly from God and not from “flesh and blood.”

Application: Lord, help me to read the word freshly for myself. I will study the notes of men (commentaries, etc.) only after original investigation of the word itself.

1. Day 1—Psalm 19:7-11. What do the different names for the Word of God suggest to you? What characteristics of the Word are mentioned? What effect can the Word have on your life?
2. Day 2—Deuteronomy 11:18-21. What different areas of life are suggested by the words “heart,” “hand,” frontlets,” “doorposts,” “gates”? From this passage, how is the Word best learned?
3. Day 3—2 Timothy 2:14-19. What problem is set forth in vv. 14, 16, 17, 18? What is the solution in v. 15? Name four reasons to be a student of the Word of God.
4. Day 4—Psalm 119:9-16. What attitudes and actions are displayed by the Psalmist? How does one “hide” the Word in his heart?
5. Day 5—Psalm 1. Describe the “blessed man” of this Psalm. Why is he successful? What must he avoid?
6. Day 6—James 1:22-25. How is the Word like a mirror? What action is required? What is the relationship between obedience and spiritual self-deception?
7. Day 7—REVIEW. What have you learned about the importance of the Word of God in your life? What attitudes/actions will you change as a result of this study?

Passage:

Date:

Title:

Summary:

Application:

Passage:

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Lesson 10: Teach Us To Pray

Those who are drowning, dying, endangered or distressed seldom have difficulty in crying out to God. It is as natural as breathing. Nor does there seem to be as much an inclination to mechanical repetitions or formal prayers uttered by rote. In these circumstances prayer is not a boring duty hurriedly observed while a conscience is eased. There is simply a desperate utterance to God born of a deep burden of personal need that only He can meet. "O God, please help me!" is the cry of those no longer too busy, too self-sufficient, too faithless to pray. They seek no one to teach them how to pray. They simply pray. Christians commonly confess that their prayer life is the weakest part of their regular spiritual life. They admit that success in spiritual work is dependent on prayer and that failure is associated with its lack. Yet, though almost all pray, there are few men of prayer.

The Lord's School Of Prayer

The disciples sensed this lack in themselves. "Lord, teach us to pray," they said, "as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1). The request came on an occasion when they watched Him at prayer—He who was a man of prayer. They sensed His constant reliance upon it day by day. He arose early before day to seek the Father's face (Mark 1:35). At times He prayed all night (Luke 6:12). He prayed for their welfare and that of others (John 17). Prayer was not an emergency measure with Him but a way of life. He wanted them to pray and said they should do so without wearying or giving up (Luke 18:1). His school of prayer was in session by example and by word every day. He said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you" (Matthew 7:7). The force of the appeal is expressed in the sense of continuing action with rising intensity. Ask, and keep on asking. Seek, and keep on seeking. Knock, and keep on knocking. He illustrated this teaching with the story of a beseeching friend persistently knocking on a door at midnight (Luke 11:5-9).

God has always invited believers to call on Him freely (Jeremiah 33:3). The Lord Jesus broadened and intensified this, linking it to His own person. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you ... ask and ye shall receive that your joy may be full" (John 16:23-24). The invitation is almost unbelievable, but God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). To disbelieve what He says is to make Him a liar (1 John 5:10). God is true though every mortal man is a liar (Romans 3:4). R. A. Torrey wrote, "Praying is going to the bank ... that has the largest capital of any bank in the universe, the Bank of Heaven."³

Conversing With God

What is prayer? Here are various popular, but incorrect views. Some see prayer merely as a psychological activity. Certain medical centers have noted the effect of prayer upon the emotional well-being of terminally ill patients, the remission of certain diseases and the hastening of healing. They consider it as having a psychosomatic effect upon the body. Others view prayer as an emotional crutch. They would say, "If you think it helps you, that's fine." Some class prayer as superstition. They have little knowledge of the God of the Bible. To them prayer is like the practice of magic—it works the same whether it be used by the witch doctor, the priest or the religious faker. Others talk *at* God rather than *with* God. Thus some "say their prayers," merely as a rote exercise. None of these ideas hold to a concept of communication

with the true God in an intelligent way, bringing about the release of His power. These views do not recognize God as One who hears, intervenes, and acts as a result of prayer.

Prayer is a direct conversation with God, based upon the revelation of Himself in Scripture, with spiritual principles or laws governing access and response. It is a lifting up of the soul to God (Psalm 25:1), a crying out with deep feeling (Exodus 2:23; Psalm 5:2; 18:6). Cameron Thompson has written, "Prayer is the spreading out of our helplessness and that of others in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ before the loving eyes of a Father who knows and understands and cares and answers. Prayer is the breathing and panting of the spirit after God. It is a taking hold of the willingness of God, rather than an overcoming of His reluctance."⁴ Prayer has been called "the key that unlocks God's treasure house." It is not a matter of acquainting Him with our needs, for He knows them even before we ask (Matthew 6:8; Luke 12:30). It is not a matter of altering His eternal purposes, but of praying in harmony with them. He chooses to work through our prayers just as He chooses to work through our faith. Prayer is, in fact, an activity of genuine faith. Amazingly, it is the means by which we are permitted to take hold of God (Isaiah 64:7). Sometimes we are prone to think of prayer only as asking. Yet it has a wider scope. What conversation or fellowship could be devoted totally to asking? Here are the major aspects of prayer.

1. **Adoration.** "Enter ... His courts with praise," we are told (Psalm 100:4). What better way to come into God's presence? "Praise the Lord," or its Hebrew equivalent, *Hallelujah*, is a characteristic phrase of the Psalms. Jesus taught the Samaritan woman that God seeks worshipers (John 4:23). Worship is concerned with what God is in Himself, not what He *does* for us, a distinction lost to most believers. It involves giving to God, rather than receiving from God (Psalm 96:8). Mary sang, "My soul doth magnify the Lord" (Luke 1:46). To magnify is to make large, to speak proudly about (Psalm 34:3). Study His attributes to give substance to your praise.
2. **Thanksgiving.** The companion to praise when we enter God's presence is thanksgiving (Psalm 100:4; 95:2). In spite of the Lord's many blessings, the unsaved world lives in a state of ingratitude (Romans 1:21). Jesus healed ten lepers at one time, but only one gave thanks. He asked, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?" (Luke 17:17). We should review our many blessings when we come before the Lord and "name them one by one." There are physical blessings of health and daily necessities and spiritual blessings in the Lord and in the fellowship of His people. There are even difficulties, yet God is working in them for our blessing (Romans 8:28). We are told "in everything give thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:18; cf. Ephesians 5:20). Thanksgiving prepares the way for further blessings.
3. **Confession.** Our God is a holy God, and whatever defiles our thoughts or actions is a hindrance to fellowship and likewise our prayers (Psalm 66:18). These sins are to be confessed and forsaken (Proverbs 28:13). We must be honest with God about failure to do what we should have done, as well as sinful thoughts or actions. The Psalmist pleaded, "Search me, O God, and know my heart" (Psalm 139:23). We need to have clean hearts in order to walk with the Holy One. Nearness to God increases awareness of sin (Isaiah 6:5). When you have honestly confessed your sins and failures, *accept His forgiveness* (1 John 1:9).
4. **Intercession.** Concern for others and a conviction that prayer changes things will drive us to God in prayer. Intercession has been called "prayer with names on it." Moses was a

mighty intercessor with God. We are clearly left with the impression that his prayers had something to do with sparing his sister Miriam and the nation of Israel from the judgment of God (Numbers 12:1-13; Exodus 32:7-14). Our Lord Jesus Himself continues daily to intercede for us at the Father's side (Hebrews 7:25). The New Testament letters are filled with intercessions for churches and individuals. Earnest intercessors have prayer lists which they systematically take before the Lord. The hordes of unconverted people about us, the sick and the suffering are in need of our prayers. Other great needs, such as laborers for world missions, should also occupy our attention (Matthew 9:37-38).

5. **Petition.** Daily needs are to be brought to the Lord (Matthew 6:11), but we are not to be preoccupied with worry over them (Matthew 6:25-34). Spiritual issues are important, such as asking for understanding of His Word (Psalm 119:34) or seeking deliverance from iniquity or the oppression of man (Psalm 119:133-134). We need guidance on the path of daily duties and in important decisions. He who knows the sparrow's fall and numbers the hairs of our heads does not consider any matter too small for prayer (Matthew 10:29-31).

Conditions Of Prayer

Prayer must be according to truth, according to the principles, conditions or laws of prayer. These are set down in Scripture and may vary from what we imagined, felt or learned from childhood days. When we pray according to the truth of God, we may confidently expect God to respond. It is well to remember that prayer is a privilege conferred by God. It is not a right. God accepts the humble and contrite spirit, not the demanding and complaining spirit (Isaiah 66:2; Psalm 51:17). Pride or arrogance in any form is exceedingly offensive to Him (1 Samuel 2:3; 15:23). Consider these ways in which prayer is our blessed privilege.

1. **The Privilege Of God's Child.** Believers are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus and in no other way (Galatians 3:26). All of God's children are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. All unsaved people are children of disobedience and wrath (Ephesians 2:1-3). We can enter God's presence boldly, but only through the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19). It is not the right of every man. Jesus said that it is not right to give the children's bread to outsiders (Matthew 15:26; Mark 7:27). Prayer must be *in Jesus' name* (John 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-26). No one can come to God except through Him (John 14:6). God is glorified in His Son. This does not deny the right of God to respond to any man if He chooses, but that right belongs to God—not man. *In Jesus' name* is not a magic phrase tacked to the end of a prayer. Rather, it indicates the ground of our approach, that we are bringing before Him that which is in accord with His character and desires, insofar as we are able to determine. Ideally, praying *in Jesus' name* is inviting the Spirit of Christ to control all that we pray to God. Let us come boldly (Ephesians 3:12)!
2. **The Privilege Of The Believing.** A man has very little faith in God when he only comes to him in prayer after first trying everything else and having it fail. The one who prays with wavering doubts about the truth of God's promises concerning prayer dishonors Him. He is called a double-minded man. "Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord" (James 1:7). The Lord reproached the faithless disciples who failed to appropriate His power (Matthew 17:17; Luke 9:41). Doubt short-circuits the mighty works of God (Matthew 13:58). Faith as small as a mustard seed when placed in the right object, God and His Word, is mountain-moving faith (Matthew 17:20). The Lord would sometimes ask people if they believed He could do what they asked. When they said "Yes," He replied, "According to your faith be it unto you," and the believers saw the result (Matthew 9:28-

30). "All things are possible to him that believeth," He said to a pleading father, seeking the healing of a child. The father replied, "Lord I believe; help thou mine unbelief (Mark 9:23-24). Jesus delivered the child, even as He answered the man's prayer. The centurion knew little about prayer, but his faith was in the right person (Luke 7:2-10). It is impossible, not difficult, to please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6). Do you expect an answer? If not, do not bother to ask. Let us come believing with the prayer of faith (James 5:15).

3. **The Privilege Of The Willing.** God's good and perfect will blesses those who commit their bodies to Him (Romans 12:1-2). When we accept His will in advance, then we can pray according to it (1 John 5:14-15). How can we know His will in matters not expressly covered by Scripture? The will of God is revealed in the *clear promises* of Scriptures which we can claim, in *principles* which we can follow, in *commands* which we can obey and in *warnings* which we can heed. When we ask according to the will of God we will not be selfish and will not ask amiss (James 4:3). What of prayers for those who do not know the Lord? We can claim the lost for Christ because He wants all of them to be saved (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4). There is a close connection between the prayers of believers and the salvation of the lost. Beseech God on their behalf. What of prayers for the sick? Can we believe that He will heal them all if we pray? Some of God's dear children are convinced that this is so. Yet we must consider the experience of Paul (2 Corinthians 12:8-9), of Trophimus (2 Timothy 4:20), Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25-30), Timothy (1 Timothy 5:23) and others, all of whom had sicknesses while walking with God. If healing were the right of every child of God, none would ever die of any illness. Christ healed many, as did the apostles. Multitudes have been healed since in His name. The prayer of faith still can deliver the sick (James 5:15). If before the Lord we have a conviction that healing is His will, we can pray accordingly. What of prayers for circumstantial decisions such as where we live, work, travel and labor for God (James 4:13-15)? Are we willing to do His will (Luke 22:42)? Will we accept godly counsel (Proverbs 11:14)? Are we willing to wait until we have peace about an action? Are we willing to decide on the basis of His interests (Matthew 6:33)? Then He will guide us (Proverbs 3:5-6). *Let us come willing to do His will* (John 7:17).
4. **The Privilege Of The Obedient.** Reference has been made already to the necessity of being undefiled in God's sight. Sin turns the heavens to brass (Deuteronomy 28:23). But positive obedience in every area brings with it the promise of God's blessing (Isaiah 1:19; Jeremiah 7:23). The Lord Jesus was obedient in every area of life. "I do always those things that please Him," He said (John 8:29). It is significant that He was heard whenever He prayed. *Let us abide in Him* that we might receive whatever we ask (John 15:7).

Answers To Prayer

Will God always answer our prayers if we meet these conditions? The answer is yes. We must remember that God's answers come in several ways. Lehman Strauss defines four of them as **direct answers, delayed**answers, different answers** and *denied answers*.⁵ To these might be added *damaging answers* to those requests better left unasked.

1. **Direct Answers** are seen in the release of Peter from prison while the church prayed (Acts 12:5-11) or in the prayer of Elijah, which first shut up the heavens and then opened them (James 5:17-18). The Psalmist rejoiced that God responded to his prayers (Psalm 116:1-2).
2. **Delayed Answers** might be illustrated by the appeal of millions of believers for the Lord Jesus to return (Revelation 22:20). The time is not yet ripe. Mary and Martha appealed to

the Lord Jesus to hasten back and heal their brother, but He delayed until Lazarus died (John 11:3-6, 14-15). This provided occasion for Him to work a greater miracle by raising him from the dead. Waiting on the Lord is often not easy—but it pays (Psalm 69:3; 37:7, 9, 34).

3. **Different Answers** are opportunities for God's best to replace our requests. The Lord had something better for Paul than removing the thorn in the flesh. It was His sustaining grace (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). The prayer of the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane was, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). The Father's response resulted in the salvation of millions of lost men and women through the shed blood of His Son.
4. **Denied Answers** are illustrated by Elijah's request that he might die (1 Kings 19:4-5), uttered in a time of despair and weakness; he was strengthened and restored instead. The disciples suggested that fire be called down from heaven to consume a village of the Samaritans (Luke 9:54) but the Lord had come to save them, not destroy them.
5. **Damaging Answers** are seen in Israel's complaining request for a king (1 Samuel 8:5-18), which was a rejection of God, and in Hezekiah's desire to postpone his death (2 Kings 20:1-6), which turned into days of tragedy (20:12-19). That it is possible for God to grant our request and yet give "leanness of soul" ought to make us more desirous of being in His will when we pray (Psalm 106:15).

Further Blessings Of Prayer

1. **Spiritual Strength** comes to us as we pray, tapping the Source of renewal for our souls (Isaiah 40:31).
2. **Spiritual Holiness** is the portion of the one who heeds the Lord's call to "Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation" (Matthew 26:41; 6:13).
3. **Spiritual Impact** in our ministry comes as we pray for boldness (Acts 4:29-31) and seek the wisdom from above to answer our opponents (Acts 6:10).
4. **Spiritual Fellowship** with God in prayer enables us to see things as He sees them and to mature in our knowledge of Him and His ways (Acts 10:9-35).
5. **Spiritual Illumination** comes as we ask Him to open our eyes to understand His Word (Psalm 119:18) and the way that our feet should walk (Psalm 119:105).

Remember the unlimited resources of the One to whom we come. He can supply every need "according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27). He asks the challenging question of our hearts, "Is there anything too hard for Me?" (Jeremiah 32:27; Genesis 18:14). If we believe and do not doubt we will know the answer.

Study Guide

1. What two aspects of prayer are mentioned in Psalm 100:4? How would you define the difference between the two? Which is the harder for you? Why?
2. In Psalm 103, what "benefits" does the Psalmist thank the Lord for? How does the Psalmist praise the Lord for His attributes and character?
3. Make a list of things God has done for you and *thank Him for what He has done*. Make a list of the characteristics of God and *praise Him for Who He is*.

Reasons for Thanksgiving

Reasons for Praise

4. What does David pray about in Psalm 32:1-5? What does David say about the state of a person before and after confession to God?

5. What importance did Samuel place on praying for others (1 Samuel 12:23)? For whom should we pray?

Ephesians 6:18-20

Luke 6:28

1 Timothy 2:1-4

James 5:16

What can you do practically to ensure that you pray regularly and effectively for others? Use a written prayer list for a week. (The original course supplied a prayer list form as Appendix B; it is not reproduced in this edition.) You may wish to devise your own method later.

6. For what personal needs should we pray?

Psalm 37:5

Matthew 26:41

Hebrews 4:16

James 1:5

1 Peter 5:7

How can reflecting on your own needs help you as you pray for others?

7. Identify *conditions* for successful prayer:

John 15:7

John 14:13

1 John 5:14-15

Matthew 21:22

In your opinion, what does it mean to pray "in Jesus' name"?

8. Identify *hindrances* to effective prayer:

Proverbs 21:13

Proverbs 28:9

Ezekiel 14:3

Malachi 1:8-9

Matthew 6:14-15

James 1:6-7

James 4:2-3

1 Peter 3:7

9. Match the types of answers to prayer below with the appropriate Scripture passage:

Direct	a. John 11:3-6, 14-15
Delayed	b. Acts 12:5-11
Denied	c. Numbers 11:18-20; Psalm 106:15
Damaging	d. 1 Kings 19:4-5

10. Paraphrase (rewrite in your own words) Philippians 4:6-7.

How would you evaluate your own prayer life in relation to this passage? What changes do you propose to make?

Lesson 11: We Are His Witnesses

Is the average person in danger of losing his soul for eternity? The Lord Jesus said, “The gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it” (Matthew 7:14 NASB). What is the condition of a friend or neighbor who gives no evidence of knowing Christ? “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). These are awesome words which should not leave us passive or silent. How can we reconcile them with the common observation that perhaps 95% of all Christians do not share the gospel with others as an essential part of their Christian calling? The Lord Jesus said 2,000 years ago, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few” (Matthew 9:37). Note that there is no lack of need or opportunity. The laborers are few.

The concern of the Lord Jesus for the souls of men was so great that He wept over a city that had rejected Him (Luke 19:41-42). He was “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). He desired that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). Jesus poured out His life going from village to village preaching the kingdom of God. He was the great Personal Worker, winning most persons individually, insofar as the gospel record shows. He faced His listeners with the dread of a Christ-less eternity and told them to fear the God Who had power to consign souls to hell (Matthew 10:28).

Call to Witness

There is no mistaking the Lord’s call to His followers. “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). He wanted them to let down their nets, and He was more interested in the sea of living men than in fish (Luke 5:4, 10). He called on them to go forth as spiritual farmers. “Look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal” (John 4:35-36). They were to sow the Word of God in the hearts of men (Mark 4:14). They were to water it with their prayers and they were to reap souls for the kingdom of God. They were witnesses in the courtroom of an often unfriendly world (Acts 1:8). The Spirit of God was given to enable them to speak God’s message to the perishing. Thus the early believers went everywhere, preaching the Word (Acts 8:4).

It is amazing that God should have entrusted so crucial a work to weak men. Leroy Eims writes, “God could have written John 3:16 across the sky every day. Or He could have spelled it out in the stars. Instead, He has assigned the momentous mission of communicating the Gospel to us!”⁶ The gospel is a sacred trust (1 Thessalonians 2:4). It should be a burning concern, a life or death issue for us (Romans 9:3). The “redeemed of the Lord” are to “say so,” not keep silent (Psalm 107:2). The man called Legion manifested his demon-possession by a wild life among the tombs. When saved, Jesus sent him out immediately as a witness (Mark 5:19). An immoral and Scripturally-untaught woman was also saved and became His principal evangelistic witness in a foreign area (John 4:28-29, 39). The blind man, whom Jesus healed, did not know much, but he could say, “One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see” (John 9:25). No verse of Scripture classifies the confession of Christ as a spiritual gift assigned to the few, or to professionally trained believers. If we cannot speak like Peter, then we can bring others to Jesus like Andrew (John 1:40-42). No one can reach our particular circle of

contacts in the way we can. It is our responsibility, not that of someone else, to warn those who are yet in their sins.

Hindrances To Our Witness

It is evident that there are powerful hindrances keeping so many believers from the important task to which God has called them.

1. **Fear.** We shrink from offending others, stirring controversy or being called “fanatics.” Sometimes we are simply afraid of failing. But Scripture says, “The fear of man bringeth a snare” (Proverbs 29:25). It blocks the blessing of God and stands against His frequent reminder, “Fear not.” What can we do? We can pray for boldness (Acts 4:29). Even such a man as Paul knew fear in this regard and God blessed his determination to witness anyway (1 Corinthians 2:3). Other believers are encouraged when we are bold (Philippians 1:14). Courage acts in spite of fear.
2. **Lack Of Power.** If our life does not demonstrate the gospel of Christ, then we will not succeed (Philippians 1:27). The Lord did not want His followers seeking to be witnesses without the power of the Spirit in their lives (Luke 24:49). The witness of godly believers is “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Corinthians 2:4).
3. **Lack Of Training.** The Lord spent a great deal of time training His disciples. If we feel awkward and do not know the proper Scripture to use, we may flounder and give up. It behooves us therefore to have a well-prepared personal testimony. We should memorize a few simple gospel verses in which the way of salvation can be made clear. A simple sequence often used is as follows:
 - a. God offers us eternal life (John 5:24).
 - b. All are sinners (Romans 3:23).
 - c. Death is the penalty for sins (Romans 6:23).
 - d. All men are called to turn from their sins in repentance (Acts 3:19).
 - e. Christ bore our sins on the cross (1 Peter 2:24).
 - f. Christ is God manifest in flesh (John 1:1, 14).
 - g. Salvation is by grace, not works (Ephesians 2:8-9).
 - h. To receive Christ is to have eternal life (1 John 5:11-12).
 - i. We are invited to receive Him (John 1:12).
 - j. We are to confess Jesus as Lord (Romans 10:9-10).
 - k. We can know that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13).
4. **Lack Of Action.** This can continue after other lacks are corrected. New converts often witness more fervently in the first few days than later when they have learned more. Needless delay is pictured in Ecclesiastes 11:4, “He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.”

Witness Of The Word

Bearing witness requires telling others about Christ: here is what we can do to make a start.

1. **Get Excited About Jesus Christ!** Be enthusiastic about Him before others. Though He is the most controversial man in all history, He is the most fascinating. He is the main issue, not the churches or the failing Christians.
2. **Take The Initiative.** Jesus was a seeker; He did not wait for people to come to Him (Luke 19:10). He went to many homes and communities to find lost souls. Seek to build bridges of understanding with others and to converse freely with them. Be interested in them.
3. **Establish Common Interests.** We must learn to be good listeners. Common ground can be found which does not involve us in the world or its defilement. Important events are happening constantly in the world and can provide an entry into spiritual conversation. People's aspirations or needs can also be openings.
4. **Pray For Divine Appointments.** God wants to lead us to seeking souls (Acts 8:26-39). Each individual person is important to Him and He will lead workers a great distance to speak to even one (John 4:3-7). Pray to win at least one soul to Christ!
5. **Use The Word Of God.** The seed is the Word. It is the means by which men are born again (1 Peter 1:23). We are to hold it forth to others (Philippians 2:16). God will see to it that it accomplishes His purpose (Isaiah 55:10-11).
6. **Share Your Personal Testimony.** You must be clear about your own salvation and be able to make the way clear to others. Write it, rehearse it and then use it. The next lesson will be devoted to helping you do this.
7. **Use Good Questions.** This was the method of the Lord Jesus. Ask, "Are you interested in spiritual things?" Those using questionnaires in general contact work ask, "We are out talking to people about how Jesus Christ relates to life today. Do you have a few minutes?" Probe their attitudes about what is happening in the world today and where it is heading. A popular subject, due to a number of recent books, is the question of whether there is life after death.

Witness Of The Life

Our witness is not confined to words but extends to the life we lead. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). The complaint about "too many hypocrites in the church" is one of the most common objections against Christianity. Even though this is often an excuse, rather than the real reason for not becoming a Christian, we can agree that if there is even one hypocrite in the church, that is too many. Our Lord also disapproved of religious hypocrites (Matthew 23:13-29). We are to lead such good lives that others will be ashamed to say anything evil about us (Titus 2:8; 1 Peter 3:16).

Though all believers are called to witness, not all have made themselves available to be the person God uses. These life traits should be evident!

1. **Life That God Is Nourishing.** Being fruitful depends on abiding in Christ, the true Vine, daily drawing from Him. "Without Me ye can do nothing," He said (John 15:5). A key element in this nourishment is a fruitful daily devotional life. The Word of God must dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16).
2. **Life That God Is Controlling.** Yieldedness is the best quality that clay can have in the Potter's hand (Jeremiah 18:6). With the Spirit of Christ in control, we will be led to Divine appointments in speaking about the Lord.

3. **Life Flowing Out To Others.** Others are touched and refreshed when the Spirit flows out of our lives like a river (John 7:38). Effective witnessing “is the overflow of the life of Christ.”⁷ Everyday actions of kindness impress others more than quoting verses or letting them know about our programs. We must be available to them, not isolated from them (Luke 15:1-2). He was aware of their problems, ailments and sorrows. He ministered food, healing and comfort, while sowing the seed of the Word of God (Matthew 13:37).

Many people know facts about Christ, but this is far from salvation. To believe on Christ requires commitment that brings us into a living relationship with a real person. Unsaved people do not realize this. That is what we want to talk about. We want to share Christ as a way of life. We best do that when He is a vital part of our life. In fact, Christ is our life (Colossians 3:4).

Conclusion

Our greatest motivation in sharing our faith should be the love of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14). He died for us and gave us a commandment that should move us to act. Our next greatest motivation should be the loving concern for others. Both are linked in Matthew 22:37-39. Should we need further motivation, however, we should consider this challenge from an unbeliever: “Did I truly, firmly, consistently believe, as millions say they do, that the knowledge and practice of religion in this life influences destiny in another, religion would be to me *everything*. I would cast aside earthly enjoyments as dross, earthly care as follies, and earthly thoughts and feelings as less than vanity. Religion would be my first waking thought and my last image when sleep sank me in unconsciousness. I would labor in her cause alone. I would not labor for the meat that perisheth, nor for treasures on earth, but only for a crown of glory in heavenly regions where treasures and happiness are alike beyond the reach of time and chance. / *would esteem one soul gained for Heaven worth a lifetime of suffering*. ... I would strive to look but on eternity and on the immortal souls around me, soon to be everlastingly miserable or everlastingly happy. I would deem all who thought only of this world, merely seeking to increase temporal happiness and laboring to obtain temporal goods—I would deem all such pure madmen. I would go forth to the world and preach to it, in season and out of season; and my text should be ‘What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?’⁸

Study Guide

1. Read Mark 5:2-20. What did Jesus tell the man whom He had just healed to do (v. 19)?

What was the purpose of Jesus' request?

How did the man react to Jesus' request and what was the result (v. 20)?

What personal application can you make from this passage?

2. Paraphrase (rewrite in your own words) 2 Corinthians 5:18, 20a.

What is your obligation and how do you intend to fulfill it?

3. How would you respond to the statement, “Witnessing is for evangelists”?

4. What do the following verses state about the eternal destiny of the unbeliever (Matthew 7:13; 13:41-42)?

How would you apply Ezekiel 33:1-9 to your responsibility to witness to the lost?

- 5. Sometimes we put off witnessing to a friend because we fear rejection. Are we in any way held accountable to witness to our friends (Ezekiel 33:1-9)?
- 6. A highly important aspect of evangelism is witnessing with our life on a daily basis. What evidence is there that the Thessalonians witnessed with their lives (1 Thessalonians 1:5-9)?

Name some specific things you can do to apply Matthew 5:16 in your neighborhood, school or workplace.

- 7. Some believers state that it is not really necessary to say anything about the Gospel since our life is a witness. How would you answer this according to Romans 10:14-17?
- 8. We can effectively combine the life witness and the verbal witness by simply telling others how Christ changed our own lives. What did the blind man of John 9:25 say when he was questioned about Jesus?

How did the woman at the well share her testimony (John 4:28-29)? What was the result (v. 39)?

- 9. The personal testimony is not only an excellent tool for the new Christian, but it is also effectively used by the seasoned veteran. Read Acts 26:1-29 and notice how Paul used his own personal testimony.

What does Paul do at the beginning of his testimony to help gain a hearing for the Gospel (vv. 2-3)?

In telling about his life *before* he met Christ (vv. 4, 5, 9-11), why does Paul mention both the good and bad aspects?

How does Paul use *detail* to effectively describe *how* he became a Christian (vv. 12-15) and what his life was like *after* he met Christ (vv. 19-22)?

How does Paul include the Gospel in his testimony (v. 23)? Why is this important?

- 10. Name one person you will pray for and witness to within the next week:_____

Do a good deed for this person (a word or note of appreciation for some kindness, a favor, assistance with a need, an invitation for tea, etc.). Record below what you did and how the person responded.

The good deed I did this past week
was_____.

The response
was_____.

Lesson 12: Personal Testimony

The courtroom is the usual scene for terms like “witness,” “testify” and “testimony.” It is in the courtroom of this world that these same terms are used of believers in Christ as they witness, testify or give their confession of faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Paul charged his young disciple Timothy, “Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate” (1 Timothy 6:12-13 NASB). Confession of Christ before others is a great privilege which can be used of God to bring others to Himself. It can also be the occasion of persecution and even death. The words “witness” and “testify” are translations of a Biblical word which relates to our English word “martyr.” It is used in that sense in Scripture (Revelation 2:13) as believers testified to their faith even unto death.

The Lord was clear in His call to His followers to be forthright about their relationship to Him. “Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God” (Luke 12:8; cf. Matthew 10:32). The opening of our mouths before others is linked even to salvation itself. “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved” (Romans 10:9 NASB). Our allegiance to the Lord Jesus should be no secret.

Content

A good testimony involves two factors. First, there must be a firsthand authentication of a fact. Ananias told Saul of Tarsus upon his conversion, “Thou shalt be His witness unto all men of *what thou hast seen and heard*” (Acts 22:15). A good witness deals with what he has seen or knows, not guessed or felt. A good witness for Jesus Christ tells how he met Christ, how his life has been changed and on what authority he makes claim to being a child of God. Second, a witness makes *a solemn declaration under oath in response to a question about the truth of a matter*. The believer is told, “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). The Apostle John in his gospel gave testimony of the things he knew to be true (John 21:24). Paul wrote for the benefit of doubters that he was truly testifying that Christ was risen from the dead. If it were not so, he would have been found a false witness in the sight of God (1 Corinthians 15:15).

The testimony of a child of God often begins with the needs which brought him to Christ, especially the problem of sin. “Many that believed came, and confessed, and snowed their deeds” (Acts 19:18). These were evil in the sight of God. The Lord Jesus has brought relief to millions gripped with a sense of guiltiness, emptiness, lack of meaning, lack of peace, fear of death and loneliness. Joy and purpose have replaced them. Yet supremely Jesus came to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15), delivering them from the wrath to come (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Believers therefore testify to the time in their experience when they heard the gospel of their salvation and believed it (Ephesians 1:13). They received “redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

Any good testimony is Christ-centered (Acts 5:31-32). It is rightly called “the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:2, 9). Particular emphasis was given by first century believers to the fact that Christ had risen from the dead (Acts 2:32; 4:33; 13:30-31). Both prophetic fulfillment and the testimony of witnesses was cited by them. It is important to tell how Christ has changed our lives (1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Paul once was a blasphemer and

persecutor of Christians (1 Timothy 1:13). He became their foremost champion. A good testimony often brings opportunity to solemnly challenge hearers as to the need of “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). Remember that spiritual opposition is overcome by believers through “the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony” (Revelation 12:11).

General Outline

1. **As Seen In Scripture.** The witness of Paul in Acts 26:1-29 is a Scriptural example of a testimony which deals with the *Before*, *How* and *After* aspects of receiving Christ. Note this order in his appeal to King Agrippa:
 - a. Before Christ Was Received (26:4-11). Paul tells of his religious background and resistance to Christ.
 - b. How Christ Was Received (26:12-18). He tells of his meeting with Christ on the Damascus road and how the Savior reproached him for his sins, yet called him to the service of the One he had persecuted.
 - c. After Christ Was Received (26:19-23). He speaks of the changes in his life and how he became a preacher even among countrymen who sought to kill him.
2. **As Reflected In Your Testimony.** When giving your own testimony, keep certain things in mind:
 - a. Before Christ Was Received. What elements in your former life caused you to see the need for a change? Which of them are common to the needs of others?
 - b. How Christ Was Received. Be specific so that others will not see this as a vague spiritual change, but rather an encounter with the living God. How, when and where did this take place?
 - c. After Christ Was Received. What clear evidences of a transformed life took place? What are the benefits of becoming a believer? What touches the longings in the hearts of others?

Guidelines For Preparing The Specific Content

The following guidelines should be observed in composing your testimony.

1. Keep the Lord Jesus central, telling what He has done.
2. Use the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:17). Mention the verses that God used in reaching your conscience. This lends authority and brings conviction (Mark 1:22).
3. Be personal (“I” and “my”) and conversational, rather than unnatural and “preachy.”
4. Be careful in using religious phrases and special Christian terminology unknown to your hearers, such as “born again,” “repentance” and even the word “saved.” If you use them, define them.
5. Think of elements in which people can identify with your story.

Certain details may be interesting. Use words that paint a vivid picture.

6. Stick to facts, rather than feelings. That makes a good witness.
7. Be gracious in your words (Luke 4:22), not bitter or condemning other groups. Speak with humility, not arrogance.

Sequence Of Preparation

1. Pray for wisdom and guidance in making clear how you found new life in Christ.
2. Accumulate brief notes on three separate sheets of paper labeled:
 1. Before
 2. How
 3. After
3. Write out a long, rough draft using your notes from the three sheets of paper. (It will usually take about ten minutes to read it.)
4. Make improvements on the long draft. Evaluate your testimony in view of the comments under “General Outline” and the seven “Guidelines.”
5. Cut your draft down to under four minutes to read.

Outline your three-four minute presentation on a 3 x 5 card. Learn to give your testimony using only your outline.

Learn to give your testimony in three-four minutes without the outline.

Classroom Exercise

The training session for this lesson will be given over entirely to the sharing of personal testimonies. We will divide into groups of six or less. Each person will give his testimony in turn. You may use your outline on your 3 x 5 card to refresh your memory. Some may wish to read their testimony, but it is preferred that only the 3 x 5 cards be used. We will seek suggestions from the group as to how these testimonies might be improved, shortened, expanded or clarified as necessary.

You may wish to ask other persons or a group to help you accomplish this.

Study Guide

Read NOTES thoroughly and prepare your testimony according to the “Guidelines” and “Sequence of Preparation.” Your final draft should be recorded under the three major questions below which bring out the *Before*, *How* and *After* of your conversion.

1. What was your life like *before* making Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior?
2. *How* and *when* did you make Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior? What were the circumstances? What Scripture did you claim by faith? In a simple, understandable way, make clear to others the way to God. Be sure that Christ, rather than people or the church, is central.
3. In practical terms, how has your life been changed *after* making Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior? A commitment that resulted in a changed life is a mark of reality. There is no point in telling about a “decision” or prayer that had no such effect.

Lesson 13: The Lord's Supper

The occasion was the night of His betrayal and the eve of His death. It was a deeply moving scene as Jesus Christ gathered with His disciples for what has come to be known as The Last Supper. Millions from every part of the world instantly recognize the scene when it appears in Christian art. The early believers marked it upon the walls of the Roman catacombs as it was etched into their memory. It was on the night of the Jewish Passover that the Lord Jesus introduced something entirely new. He took a loaf of bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to His disciples saying, "Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:26-28). Two other gospel writers join in the same account (Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20).

Names of the Supper

It is called the *Lord's Supper* (1 Corinthians 11:20) since He has convened it and He is the principal guest of honor. "The Lord's table" (1 Corinthians 10:21) has a wider meaning and includes all of His provision for His people, not simply the Supper. The feast is called the *Communion* (1 Corinthians 10:16) because there is a common sharing or fellowship with Christ and one another as we partake. It is called the *Breaking of Bread* (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 10:16) because it reflects the simple manner of an ordinary meal in which the phrase would normally be used. Many speak of *remembering the Lord* because of His command which was expressed in this way. There are others who have used the expression *eucharist*, meaning "thanksgiving," since He gave thanks for the elements (Matthew 26:26), but it is not called this in Scripture.

Certain churches apply the word "sacrament" to the supper. This came from the Roman soldier's oath of allegiance upon joining the army (*sacramentum*). Later understanding of this word has drifted considerably from this idea. There are churches which consider a sacrament to mean a rite by which God confers His grace ("a means of grace") and that it has supernatural properties which do something for the participant. It is believed by some to be linked with the forgiveness of sins. However, there is no such teaching as this in the Bible. Those who emphasize the sacramental idea are in contrast with those who see the feast as a commemoration or memorial in which the symbols reflect (rather than confer) spiritual realities. It is well to recall that the Jewish animal sacrifices never removed sins but were an anticipation of the blood of the Lord Jesus shed on the cross. His blood alone could remove sins (Hebrews 9:12-14).

Historical Background Of The Supper

The Lord's Supper was instituted on the night of the Jewish Passover. God's hand had delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt 1500 years before. At His command they slew a spotless lamb and applied the blood to their doorposts as a protection from judgment about to fall upon the whole land (Exodus 12). Each detail of the feast, ordained for their perpetual observance, had profound significance. It pointed to the great sacrifice which would truly protect from God's judgment by taking away the sins of the world. God was preparing His own Lamb long before (Genesis 22:8; Isaiah 53:7). Jesus was hailed by John the Baptist as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). One of His glorious titles is The Lamb (Revelation 5:6, 12). He was the fulfillment of the Passover feast. "Christ our Passover, is

sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). The older feast was only a shadow of the greater fulfillment to come (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1).

Every godly Jew faithfully kept the Passover (Matthew 26:17). It was a remembrance of his redemption. On the night of this sacred observance, Jesus introduced the memorial observance of bread and wine. Thereafter it was to remind believers of His body given and His blood shed for their salvation. It was to become to Christians what the Passover was to the Jews, and would be no less sacred. It replaced the Passover in the eyes of God. Israel had many ceremonies, but the Christian church was given only one collective observance.

The Lord Jesus directly communicated to the Apostle Paul the importance of that which was delivered unto believers for their observance. Jesus said, "This do ... in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:23-25). The Lord's Supper became a regular part of their worship (Acts 2:42, 46). The early church kept the observance once a week as the center of their gatherings (Acts 20:7). It was celebrated on the day of Resurrection. The so-called early church "fathers" or leaders noted that it was celebrated every Lord's Day or Sunday (Justin Martyr and the *Didache* or *Teaching of the Twelve*).

Celebration Of The Supper

1. **Who May Participate?** Certainly if the Passover was only for Jews (Exodus 12:43), the Lord's Supper is only for Christians. It was for "His own" that the Lord first instituted the feast. It was the disciples who began to break bread in memory of Him after He was risen. Moreover, the supper is for *prepared* Christians. Some believers were careless about their spiritual condition when participating and were warned of God's judgment (1 Corinthians 11:18-31). The believers were to exclude those who continue in unjudged evil (1 Corinthians 5:12-13) as well as those holding doctrines which undermine either the gospel or the person of Christ (2 John 9-10; Galatians 5:12-13). Stated affirmatively, all who confess Christ as Lord and Savior and who have a walk consistent with that faith should be welcomed to the Supper.
2. **What Is The Procedure?** We have the example of the Lord in His establishment of this remembrance as our principal guide. It seems to have been characterized by simplicity rather than elaborate ceremony. He did not specify any fixed rules or procedure. The upper room was not an ornate house of worship with railed-off communion table. He alone presided. The elements were simply bread and a cup, two very common elements of the table. No special kind of bread is mandatory, although it is probable that unleavened bread was used at that time. The stress is laid upon our being personally clean (unleavened) when we observe the feast, rather than on the kind of bread used (1 Corinthians 5:6-8). The cup contained "the fruit of the vine" (Mark 14:25; Matthew 26:29). To what extent this extract was fermented or was mixed with water is also debated endlessly. Scripture is not specific. The important thing is that we see that the loaf and the cup typify the body and blood of the Lord Jesus. We are to be occupied with Him, not the nature of the material symbols. Each of the disciples took some of the loaf and shared the cup. The section in 1 Corinthians 14:26-34 seems to be an extension of the discussion in 1 Corinthians 11 as to the type of meeting attended by the believers when there was breaking of bread. Participation by several of the brethren is indicated. The need for order, rather than confusion, is stressed. A fellowship meal was often associated with the observance.

3. **How Do We Discern The Lord's Body** (1 Corinthians 11:29)? Certainly we should know the significance of the elements as they testify to the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross when He put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself (Hebrews 9:26). We should have examined our own lives in self-judgment (1 Corinthians 11:28-32). Some have erroneously related to the Supper the words which Jesus spoke about eating His flesh and drinking His blood (John 6:53). However, the last statement is not on the subject of the Supper but refers to the believer's spiritual appropriation of Christ in the full sufficiency of His saving work. The statement "This is My body" is similar to His words "I am the Door." Both use figurative language and are among many such statements. Incorrect religious teaching, suggesting miraculous transformations as occurring in connection with the elements, is examined below:
- Transubstantiation. This view holds that the elements are converted into the very "body, soul and divinity of Christ." This "real presence of Christ" means that partakers are eating His literal body. This teaches that the sacrifice of Calvary is repeated with each observance and is offered for the sins of the living and the dead. Hebrews 10:10-18 denies this idea by stressing that there is only one, unrepeatable sacrifice for sins, never to be offered again. The sacrifice is finished and complete.
 - Consubstantiation. This means that the bread and wine are unchanged, but in a way which cannot be fully explained, the material substance of Christ's body is present and communicated to those who partake. No Scripture teaches this.
 - Impanation. This view teaches that the partaker receives Christ in the Supper because "Christ transfuses His life in us, just as if He penetrates our bones and marrow" when we take the communion (Calvin). This also has no Scriptural base.
4. **What Do We Accomplish By Breaking Bread?** If we did nothing else we would comply with the Lord's dying request and show that we love Him by so doing. This is a far cry from being legalistic. We would also conform to apostolic practice. Together, as believers, we remember Him in accordance with the manner of His choosing, not ours. We rejoice in the fact that He has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel and we have been included. We share personally and individually as members of the believing community, as we partake of the elements. Our unity is expressed in the one loaf (1 Corinthians 10:17). The cup speaks of communion or common sharing (1 Corinthians 10:16). We are one with Him, as He is with us, in all that He has accomplished. We share His attitudes as to sin and righteousness. As often as we eat the bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the Lord's death (1 Corinthians 11:26). The feast is a salvation message. The duration is described as "until He come." Each remembrance has the possibility of being the last one before His return.

Preparation For The Supper

Preparation for the Passover in the Old Testament involved many things. There was no careless participation. We should be no less prepared.

1. **Examination.** True preparation for the Lord's Supper begins with self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:28-32). This is to prepare, not preclude, the participant. One should first examine his own relationship with the Lord and confess any known sin. Then he should look at his relationship with others (especially other Christians). An attempt should be made to settle problems with other believers before partaking of the feast (Matthew 5:23-

24). The Scriptures warn against neglect in the area of self-judgment lest God's judgment come. In the church of Corinth, physical illness and death resulted from being careless in this area.

2. MEDITATION. If we have been entertaining ourselves recreationally and conversing on subjects not directly related to the Lord before coming to the feast, our preparation has failed. Reading the Word of God, singing spiritual songs and sharing with believers or family about the Lord Jesus are ways of spending time in preparation for remembering Him. Certainly we can only bring to Him that which has been prepared ahead of time. David said, "Neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which cost me nothing" (2 Samuel 24:24). Celebrations of the Lord's Supper will be freed from deadening sameness when we have prepared ourselves beforehand.

Conclusion

Worship is the supreme responsibility and privilege of the believer (John 4:23; Luke 10:41-42). We offer spiritual sacrifices as priests (1 Peter 2:5). Regularly remembering the Lord as He commanded should take precedence over recreational activities, family gatherings and other obligations. As a vital part of the believer's priesthood, we have opportunity, during communion, to offer the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of our lips to God (Hebrews 13:15). We present material offerings to God as an act of worship (Philippians 4:17-18). Finally, we should offer afresh our bodies as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2 RSV).

Jesus said, "Remember Me!"

Study Guide

1. Review the account of the first Passover observance (Exodus 12:1-14). What was the purpose of the observance (vv. 1-14)?

What part did the lamb have in the observance?

2. How did Christ use the last Passover (Luke 22:7-18) to introduce the first Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19-20)?

What new significance did the Lord Jesus attach to the bread and the cup?

3. In view of the above, and considering Isaiah 53:7, John 1:29 and Revelation 5:8-9, what does the expression "Christ our Passover" (1 Corinthians 5:7) mean?
4. The Apostle Paul further explains the purpose and meaning of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. Where did the apostle get this teaching?

What do we proclaim by partaking in His Supper? Explain.

How long should we continue to remember Him in this way?

5. What additional aspects of the elements does Paul emphasize in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17?
6. How did the early church respond to the Lord's command to remember Him (Acts 2:42; 20:7)?
7. In what different ways can we offer "sacrifices" in worship to God (Hebrews 13:15; Philippians 4:17-18; Romans 12:1-2)?
8. What is a Christian's responsibility before participating in the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:27-32)?

What do this passage and 1 Corinthians 5 indicate about the seriousness of partaking of the Supper with unjudged sin?

9. What spiritual preparation do you normally make prior to taking the Lord's Supper? What will you do to make your worship more meaningful in the future?
10. In the context of your total church experience (Acts 2:42) what commitment do you have to the "breaking of bread"?

Appendix A: Safety, Certainty and Enjoyment

By George Cutting

What Class Are You Traveling?

You are traveling—traveling from time into eternity. And who knows how near you may be this moment to the Great Terminus?

Let me ask you then, “What class are you traveling?” There are just three.

First class—those who are saved and know it.

Second class—those who are not sure of salvation but anxious to be so.

Third class—those who are not only unsaved but totally indifferent about it.

A short time ago a man came rushing into a railroad station and, gasping for breath, took his seat in one of the cars just as the train was on the point of starting.

“You’re really exhausted!” said a fellow passenger.

“Yes,” replied the man, breathing heavily after every two or three words, “but I’ve saved four hours, and that’s well worth running for.”

Saved four hours! He felt four hours were well worth the earnest struggle.

What of eternity? There are thousands of shrewd, farseeing men today who look sharply after their own interests in this life, but seem stone-blind to the eternity before them. In spite of the infinite love of God, in spite of the known brevity of man’s history here, in spite of the terrors of judgment after death and the solemn probability of waking up at last on hell’s side of a “fixed” gulf, men hurry on to the bitter end, as careless as if there were no God, no death, no judgment, no heaven, no hell! May God open your eyes to your most perilous position, standing as you may be on the slippery brink of an endless woe!

Believe it or not, your case is truly desperate! Put off the thought of eternity no longer. Procrastination is not only a thief but a murderer. There is much truth in the Spanish proverb which says, “The road of ‘By-and-by’ leads to the town of ‘Never.’” “I beseech you, travel that road no longer; ‘now’ is the day of salvation.”

“But,” says one, “I am not indifferent as to the welfare of my soul. My trouble lies wrapped up in another word—uncertainty. I am among the second-class passengers.”

Both indifference and uncertainty are the offspring of one parent—unbelief. The first results from unbelief as to the sin and ruin of man, the other from unbelief as to God’s sovereign remedy for man. It is especially for souls desiring to be *sure* of their salvation that these pages are written. I can in a great measure understand your deep soul trouble; I am assured that the more you are in earnest about this all-important matter the greater will be your thirst until you know for certain that you are really and eternally saved. “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36).

The only son of a devoted father is at sea. News comes that his ship has been wrecked off some foreign shore. Who can tell the anguish in that father’s heart until, upon the most reliable authority, he is assured that his boy is safe and sound?

Or, you are far from home. The night is dark and cold, and your way is totally unknown. Standing at a point where two roads cross, you ask a passerby the way to the town you desire

to reach, and he tells you he thinks that such and such a way is the right one, and hopes you will be all right if you take it. Does that satisfy you? Surely not. You must have certainty about it, or every step you take will increase your anxiety. No wonder, then, that men have sometimes neither been able to eat nor sleep when the eternal safety of the soul has been trembling in the balance!

To lose your wealth is much,

To lose your health is more.

To lose your soul is such a loss As no man can restore.

These are three things I desire to make clear to you:

1. The way of salvation (Acts 16:17)
2. The knowledge of salvation (Luke 1:77)
3. The joy of salvation (Psalm 51:12)

Though intimately connected, each stands upon a separate basis, so that it is possible for a soul to know the way of salvation without having the certain knowledge that he himself is saved, or to know that he is saved without possessing at all times the joy that ought to accompany that knowledge.

The Way of Salvation

Please open your Bible and read carefully Exodus 13:13; there you find these words from the lips of Jehovah: "Every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, *then thou shalt break his neck*: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem."

Now come back in thought to an imaginary scene of three thousand years ago. Two men, a priest of God and a poor Israelite, stand in serious conversation. They are in deep earnestness about some matter, and it is not difficult to see that the subject of conversation is a little ass that stands on its wobbly legs beside them.

"I have come to find out," says the poor Israelite, "if there cannot be a merciful exception made in my favor this once. This feeble little thing is the firstling of an ass; and though I know full well what the law of God says about it, I am hoping that mercy will be shown, and the ass's life spared. I am but a poor man in Israel and can ill afford to lose the little colt."

"But," answers the priest firmly, "the law of the Lord is plain and unmistakable: 'Every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck.' Where is the lamb?"

"Ah, sir, I have no lamb!"

"Then go, purchase one and return, or the ass's neck must be broken. The lamb must die, or the ass must die."

"Then all my hopes are crushed," the man cries, "for I am far too poor to buy a lamb."

A third person joins them and, after hearing the poor man's tale of sorrow, turns to him and says kindly, "Be of good cheer. I can meet your need.

"We have in our house, on the hilltop yonder, one little lamb which is 'without spot or blemish.' It has never once strayed from home, and stands in highest favor with all that are in

the house, and rightly so. This lamb will I bring." And away he hastens up the hill. Presently you see him gently leading the little creature down the slope, and soon both lamb and ass are standing side by side.

Then the lamb is bound to the altar, its blood is shed, and the fire consumes the sacrifice.

The righteous priest now turns to the poor man and says, "You can take home your little colt in safety; no broken neck for it now. The lamb has died in its stead, and consequently the ass goes free, thanks to your friend."

Can't you see God's picture of a sinner's salvation in this? His claims as to your sin demanded a "broken neck," righteous judgment upon your guilty head—the only alternative being the death of a divinely appointed Substitute.

You could not find the provision to meet your case; but, in the person of His beloved Son, God Himself provided the Lamb. "Behold the lamb of God," said John to his disciples, as his eyes fell upon that blessed, spotless One. "Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Christ went to Calvary "as a lamb led to the slaughter," and there He "once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). He "was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25). God does not abate His righteous, holy claims against sin when He justifies the ungodly sinner who believes in Jesus (Romans 3:26). Blessed be God for such a Saviour, such a salvation!

Do you believe on the Son of God?

"Well," you reply, "I have, as a poor condemned sinner, found in Him one whom I can safely trust. I do believe on Him."

Then He makes the full value of His sacrifice and death, as God estimates it, as good to you as though you had accomplished it all yourself.

Oh, what a wondrous way of salvation! Is it not great and grand and Godlike, worthy of God Himself—the gratification of His own heart of love, the glory of His precious Son, and the salvation of a sinner, all bound up together? What grace and glory! Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has so ordered it that His own beloved Son should do all the work and get all the praise, and that you and I, poor, guilty things believing on Him, should get all the blessing and enjoy the blissful company of the Lord forever and ever! "Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together" (Psalm 34:3).

But perhaps you eagerly inquire, "How is it that since I distrust self and self-work, and wholly rely upon Christ and Christ's work, I have not the full certainty of my salvation? If my feelings warrant my saying that I am saved one day, they are pretty sure to blight every hope the next, and I am left like a storm-tossed ship, without any anchorage whatever?"

Ah! There lies your mistake. Did you ever hear of a captain trying to find anchorage by fastening his anchor inside the ship? Never. Always outside.

It may be that you are quite clear that it is Christ's death alone that gives *safety*; but you think that it is what you feel that gives *certainty*.

The Knowledge of Salvation

Let me quote a verse in the distorted way that man's imagination often puts it: "These happy feelings have I given unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know

that ye have eternal life." Now open your Bible and compare this with God's blessed and unchanging Word. The verse just misquoted, 1 John 5:13, reads this: "These things *have* I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may *know* that ye *have* eternal life."

How did the firstborn sons of the thousands of Israel know for certain that they were safe the night of the Passover and Egypt's judgment? (See Exodus 12.)

Let us visit two of their houses and hear what they have to say. In the first house they are all shivering with fear and suspense. What is the secret of all this paleness and trembling? The firstborn son informs us that the angel of death is coming through the land and that he is not quite certain how matters will stand with him at that solemn moment.

"When the destroying angel has passed our house," he says, "and the night of judgment is over, I shall then know that I am safe; but I can't see how I can be quite sure of it until then. They say they are sure of salvation next door, but we think it very presumptuous. All I can do is spend the long, dreary night hoping for the best."

"Well," we inquire, "has the God of Israel not provided a way of safety for His people?"

"True," he replies, "and we have availed ourselves of that way of escape. The blood of the spotless and unblemished first-year lamb has been duly sprinkled with the bunch of hyssop on the lintel and two side posts, but we still are not fully assured of shelter."

Let us now leave these doubting, troubled ones and enter the house next door.

What a striking contrast! Peace rests on every countenance. There they stand, with girded loins and with staff at hand, feeding on the roasted lamb.

We ask, "What can be the meaning of all this tranquility on such a solemn night as this?"

"Ah," they say, "we are only waiting for Jehovah's marching order. Then we shall bid a last farewell to the taskmaster's cruel lash and all the drudgery of Egypt!"

"Are you forgetting that this is the night of Egypt's judgment?"

"No; but our firstborn son is safe. The blood has been sprinkled according to the wish of our God."

"So it has been next door," we reply, "but they are all unhappy because they are uncertain of safety."

"Ah," firmly responds the firstborn, "but we have more than the sprinkled blood. We have the unerring Word of God about it. God has said, 'When I see the blood, I will pass over you.' God rests satisfied with the blood outside, and we rest satisfied with His Word inside."

The sprinkled blood makes us safe.

The spoken Word makes us sure.

Could anything make us more safe than the sprinkled blood, or more sure than His spoken Word? Nothing, nothing.

Now, then, let me ask you a question. Which of those two houses was the safer?

Do you say the second, where all were so peaceful? Then you are wrong.

Both are safe alike.

Their safety depends upon what God thinks about the blood outside and not upon the state of their feelings inside.

If you would be sure of your own blessing, then listen not to the unstable testimony of inward emotions but to the infallible witness of the Word of God.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life” (John 6:47).

A certain farmer, not having sufficient grass for his cattle, applies for a piece of pasture which he hears is for rent near his own house. For some time he gets no answer from the owner.

One day a neighbor comes in and says, “I feel quite sure you will get that field. Don’t you recollect that last Christmas he sent you a special present and that he gave you a kind nod of recognition the other day when he drove past?” And with such words the farmer’s mind is filled with hope.

Next day another neighbor meets him, and in course of conversation he says, “I’m afraid you will stand no chance whatever of getting that field. Mr. Jones has applied for it, and you know what a favorite he is with the owner.” And the poor farmer’s bright hopes are dashed to the ground and burst like soap bubbles. One day he is hopeful, the next day full of perplexing doubts.

Presently the mailman comes, and the farmer’s heart beats fast as he breaks the seal of the letter; for he sees by the handwriting that it is from the owner himself. See his countenance change from suspense to joy as he reads and rereads that letter.

“It’s a settled thing now!” he exclaims to his wife. No more doubts and fears about it. Hopes and ifs are things of the past. “The owner says the field is mine, and that’s enough for me. I care for no man’s opinion now. His word settles all!”

Many a poor soul is in a similar condition—tossed and perplexed by the opinions of men, or by the thoughts and feelings of his own treacherous heart! It is only upon receiving the Word of God as the Word of God that certainty takes the place of doubts. When God speaks there must be a certainty, whether He pronounces the damnation of the unbeliever or the salvation of the believer.

“Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89). To the simple-hearted believer God’s Word settles all.

“Hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?” (Numbers 23:19).

You ask, “But how am I sure that I have the right kind of faith?”

Well, there can be but one answer to that question. Have you confidence in the right person, that is, in the Son of God?

It is not a question of the amount of your faith, but of the trustworthiness of the person in whom you believe. One man takes hold of Christ, as it were, with a drowning man’s grip. Another but touches the hem of His garment. But the sinner who does the former is not a bit safer than the one who does the latter. They have both made the discovery that while all of self is totally untrustworthy they may safely confide in Christ, rely on His Word, and rest in the efficacy of His finished work. That is what is meant by believing on Him. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me *hath* everlasting life” (John 6:47).

Make sure that your confidence is not reposed in your works of amendment, your religious observances, your pious feeling when under religious influences, your moral training from childhood, and the like. You may have the strongest faith in any or all of these and perish. The feeblest faith in Christ eternally saves, while the strongest faith in anything else is but the offspring of a deceived heart.

God, in the Bible, simply introduces you to the Lord Jesus Christ and says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." You may with all confidence trust His heart, though you cannot with impunity trust your own.

"I do really believe on Him," said a sad-looking soul to me one day, "but yet, when asked if I am saved, I don't like to say yes, for fear I would be telling a lie."

This young woman was a butcher's daughter in a small town. It happened to be market day and her father had not returned from market. So I said, "Now suppose when your father comes home you ask him how many sheep he bought today, and he answers, 'Ten.' After awhile a man comes to the shop and says, 'How many sheep did your father buy today?' and you reply, 'I don't like to say, for fear I should be telling a lie.'"

"But," said the mother (who was standing by at the time), "that would be making her father a liar."

Don't you see that this well-meaning young woman was virtually making Christ out to be a liar? She was saying, "I do believe on the Son of God, and He says I have everlasting life, but I don't like to say I have it lest I should be telling a lie."

"But," says another, "how may I be sure that I really do believe? I have tried often enough to believe, and have looked within to see if I had faith; but the more I look at my faith the less I seem to have."

Ah, friend, you are looking in the wrong direction to find that out, and your trying to believe plainly shows that you are on the wrong track.

Let me give you another illustration.

You are sitting quietly at home one evening when a man comes in and tells you that the stationmaster has been killed on the railroad. Now, it so happens that this man bringing the news has long had a reputation for being a very dishonest man and the most daring, notorious 100 liar in the neighborhood. Do you believe, or even try to believe, that man?

"Of course not!" you exclaim.

"Why not?" I reply.

"Oh, I know him too well!"

"But tell me how you know that you don't believe him. Is it by looking within at your faith or feelings?" I ask.

"No," you reply. "I think of the man that brings me the message."

Presently a neighbor drops in and says, "The stationmaster has been run over by a freight train tonight and killed." After he has left I hear you cautiously say, "Well, I partly believe it now; for to my recollection this man only once in his life deceived me, though I have known him from boyhood."

But again I ask, "Is it by looking at your faith this time that you know you partly believe it?"

“No,” you repeat, “I am thinking of the character of my informant.”

Well, this man has scarcely left your room before a third person enters and brings you the same sad news as the first. But this time you say, “Now, John, I believe it. Since you tell me, I can believe it.”

Again I press my question (which is, remember, but the echo of your own), “How do you know that you so confidently believe your friend John?”

“Because of who and what John is,” you reply. “He never has deceived me, and I don’t think he ever will.”

In the same way I know that I believe the gospel because of the One who brings me the news. “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son. ... He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son” (1 John 5:9-10). “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Romans 4:3).

An anxious soul once said to a minister, “Oh, sir, I can’t believe!” The preacher wisely and quietly replied, “Whom is it that you can’t believe?” This broke the spell. He had been looking at faith as an indescribable something he must feel within himself in order to be sure he was all right for heaven; whereas faith ever looks outside to a living Person and His finished work, and quietly listens to the testimony of a faithful God about both.

It is the outside look that brings the inside peace. When a man turns his face toward the sun, his own shadow is behind him. You cannot look at self and a glorified Christ in heaven at the same moment.

Thus we have seen that God’s Son wins our confidence. His finished work makes us eternally safe. God’s Word about those who believe on Him makes us unalterably sure. We find in Christ and His work the way of salvation, and in the Word of God the knowledge of salvation.

The Joy of Salvation

But if saved, you may say, “How is it that I have such a fluctuating experience, so often losing all my joy and comfort, getting as wretched and downcast as I was before my conversion?”

You will find in the teaching of Scripture that while you are saved by Christ’s work and assured by God’s Word, you are maintained in comfort and joy by the Holy Ghost who indwells every saved one’s body.

Bear in mind that every saved one still has with him “the flesh,” that is, the evil nature he was born with as a natural man and which perhaps showed itself while he was still a helpless infant on his mother’s lap. The Holy Spirit in the believer resists the flesh and is grieved by every activity of it in motive, word, or deed. When the believer is walking “worthy of the Lord,” the Holy Spirit will be producing in his soul His blessed fruits: love, joy, peace, and so forth (Galatians 5:22). When the believer is walking in a carnal, worldly way the Spirit is grieved, and these fruits are wanting in greater or lesser measure.

When Christ’s work breaks down—and, blessed be God, it never, never will—your salvation will break down with it. When your walk breaks down—and be watchful, for it may—your enjoyment will break down with it.

Thus it is said of the early disciples that they walked “in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 9:31).

And again in Acts 13:52: "The disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost."

Your spiritual joy will be in proportion to the spiritual character of your walk after you are saved.

Now do you see your mistake? You have been mixing up enjoyment with your safety, two widely different things. When, through self-indulgence, loss of temper, worldliness, and so on, you grieved the Holy Spirit and lost your joy, you thought your safety was undermined. But:

Your safety hangs upon Christ's work for you.

Your assurance rests upon God's Word to you.

Your enjoyment depends upon your not grieving the Holy Spirit in you.

When, as a child of God, you do anything to grieve the Holy Spirit, your communion with the Father and the Son is suspended; and it is only when you judge yourself and confess your sins that the joy of communion is restored.

Suppose your child has been guilty of some misdemeanor. His face shows that something is wrong with him. Half an hour before this he was enjoying a walk with you around the garden, admiring what you admired, enjoying what you enjoyed. In other words, he was in communion with you; his feelings and sympathies were in common with yours. But now all this is changed, and as a disobedient child he stands in the corner, the very picture of misery. Upon penitent confession of his wrong-doing you have assured him of forgiveness; but his pride and self-will keep him sobbing there.

The joy of half an hour ago is all gone. Why? Because communion between, you and him has been interrupted.

What has become of the relationship that existed between you and your son half an hour ago? Is that also severed or interrupted? Surely not.

Your child's relationship depends upon his birth.

His communion depends upon his behavior.

But presently he comes out of the corner with broken will and broken heart, confessing the whole thing, so that you see that he hates the disobedience as much as you do. You take him in your arms and cover him with kisses. His joy is restored because communion is restored.

Suppose while your child is in the corner there should be a cry of "fire" through your home. What would become of him then? Would he be left in the corner to perish in the burning house? Impossible! Probably he would be the very first person you would carry out. Ah, yes. The love of relationship is one thing, and the joy of communion quite another.

When David sinned so grievously in the matter of Uriah's wife, he did not say, "Restore unto me thy salvation," but "Restore unto me *the* joy of thy salvation" (Psalm 51:12).

When the believer sins, communion is for the time interrupted and joy is lost until he comes to the Father and confesses his sins.

Then, taking God at His Word, he knows he is forgiven; for His Word plainly declares that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Ever bear in mind these two things: There is nothing so strong as the link of relationship, nothing so tender as the link of communion.

All the combined power and counsel of earth and hell cannot sever the relationship, while an impure motive or an idle word will snap the communion.

If you are troubled, get low before God and consider your ways. And when the thief that has robbed you of your joy has been detected, drag him at once to the light, confess your sin to God, and judge yourself unsparingly for the unwatchful, careless state of soul that allowed the thief to enter.

But never, *never* confound your safety with your joy.

Don't imagine, however, that the judgment of God falls more leniently on the believer's sin than on the unbeliever's. He does not have two ways of dealing with sin, and He could no more pass by the believer's sin without judging it than He could pass by the sins of a rejecter of His precious Son. But there is a great difference between the two.

The believer's sins were all known to God and all laid upon Christ when He suffered upon the cross at Calvary. There and then, once and forever, the great "criminal question" of his guilt was raised and settled, judgment falling upon the blessed Substitute, "who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24).

The Christ-rejecter must bear his own sins in his own person in the lake of fire forever.

Now, when a saved one fails, the "criminal question" of sin cannot be raised against him, the Judge Himself having settled that once for all on the cross. But the communion question is raised within him as often as he grieves the Spirit.

Let us illustrate further. It is a beautiful night. The moon is full, shining in more than ordinary brightness. A man is gazing intently down a deep, still well where he sees the moon reflected, and he remarks to a bystander, "How beautifully fair and round she is tonight! How quietly and majestically she rides along!" He has just finished speaking when suddenly his friend drops a small pebble into the well. He now exclaims, "Why, the moon is all broken to pieces, and the fragments are shaken together in the greatest disorder!"

"What gross absurdity!" his companion replies. "Look up, man! The moon hasn't changed. It is the condition of the well reflecting her that has changed."

Your heart is the well. When there is no allowance of evil, the Spirit of God takes of the glories and preciousness of Christ and reveals them to you for your comfort and joy. But the moment a wrong motive is cherished in the heart or an idle word escapes the lips unjudged, your happy experiences are smashed to pieces. You are restless and disturbed within until in brokenness of spirit before God you confess your sin (the disturbing thing) and thus are restored once more to the calm, sweet joy of communion.

But when your heart is all unrest, has Christ's work changed? No, no. Then your salvation has not altered.

Has God's Word changed? Surely not. Then the certainty of your salvation is unchanged.

Then, what has changed? The action of the Holy Spirit in you has changed, and instead of taking of the glories of Christ and filling your heart with the sense of His worthiness, He is grieved at having to fill you with the sense of your sin and unworthiness.

He takes from you your comfort and joy until you judge and resist the evil thing that He judges and resists. When this is done, communion with God has again been restored.

The Lord makes us increasingly jealous over ourselves, lest we grieve “the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30).

However weak your faith may be, be assured of this, that the blessed One who has won your confidence will never change. “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8).

The work He has accomplished will never change. “Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it” (Ecclesiastes 3:14).

The Word He has spoken will never change. “The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever” (1 Peter 1:24-25).

Thus the object of my trust, the foundation of my safety, the ground of my certainty, are alike eternally unalterable.

My love is ofttimes low,
My joy still ebbs and flows;
But peace with Him remains the same—
No change Jehovah knows.
I change, He changes not;
The Christ can never die;
His love, not mine, the resting-place,
His truth, not mine, the tie.
—H. Bonar

Once more the question: What class are you traveling? Turn your heart to God and answer that question to Him.

“He that hath received His testimony has set to his seal that God is true” (John 3:33). May the joyful assurance of possessing this great salvation be yours, now and till He comes.

George Cutting

	WORLD	LOCAL CHURCH			COMMUNITY		FAMILY		PERS
	Missionaries and Full-time workers	Leaders	Saints	Other	Work	Witnessing	Immediate	Relatives	Need
SUN									
MON									
TUES									
WED									
THURS									
FRI									
SAT									

Notes

1. "Manna in the Morning," by Stephen Olford. Moody Press, Moody Bible Institute of Chicago. Used by permission.
2. "Manna in the Morning." Used by permission.
3. *The Power of Prayer* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1924), p. 69. Used by permission.
4. *Master Secrets of Prayer* (Lincoln, Nebraska: Back to the Bible, copyright © 1959), pp. 10-11. Used by permission.
5. *Sense and Nonsense About Prayer* (Chicago: Moody Press, copyright © 1974), by Lehman Strauss, pp. 117-118. Used by permission.
6. LeRoy Eims, *Winning Ways* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1974), p. 26. Used by permission.
7. LeRoy Eims, *What Every Christian Should Know About Growing* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1976), p. 103. Used by permission.
8. Quoted by J. Oswald Sanders, *The Divine Art of Soul Winning* (Chicago: Moody Press, n.d.), pp. 13-14. Used by permission.

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To God be the glory.