

PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING

PART 2

A discipleship series designed to equip men and women to live a dynamic, supernatural life



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Introduction

You are about to continue your journey in the *Practical Christian Living* discipleship series. Part 2 is designed to help you experience a dynamic and supernatural walk with God. Too often we approach God only as a distant Being, too busy running the universe to be concerned about our lives. The goal of *Practical Christian Living (PCL)* is to help you know and trust God as your loving Father—the most important relationship you can have in life. The Bible stresses that, far from being a distant Being, God loves us and cares deeply about the details of our lives, and longs for our love and fellowship in return.

This *PCL* series is written for Christians who want to experience more intimacy and consistency in their relationship with Christ, as they rely on the power of the Holy Spirit. This “Spirit-filled life” is the solution to the challenge of living a vital Christian life in an increasingly secular society. Through studying and discussing each *PCL* session, you will grow in your knowledge and experience of God and biblical truth. Unlike most Bible studies, which are limited to conveying Bible knowledge, the emphasis of *PCL* is on applying that knowledge so that your thoughts, motives and actions will change. Furthermore, the skills and knowledge you gain are meant to be applied not only in your own life but also passed on to others.

Each session of *PCL* includes four approaches to learning: Scripture memory, personal preparation of the lesson, group discussion and application. All four elements work together to help you integrate the biblical truths into your life. However, the session material is only part of the spiritual growth process. Your group leader will also seek to create an environment in your meetings that includes prayer, fellowship, and sharing what God is teaching you and doing in your life. Additionally, your leader will spend some personal time with you to help you internalize the truths you are learning. The concepts in each session are built on concepts in the previous session; therefore, if you have not already completed Part 1, you will find it extremely beneficial to work through it.

The Apostle Paul’s great desire was “... that we may present every man complete in Christ.” Like Paul, we desire that you would grow to maturity in Christ as well. Committing yourself to *PCL* can be a significant step in that growth process. We commend you for taking this step.

Our prayer is that as you understand who God really is and how great His love is for you, you’ll grow to trust Him with your life and love Him more deeply as your heavenly Father.

—*The Editors*

A large, stylized number '11' in a dark blue color, positioned on the left side of the page. The number is composed of two vertical bars with a slight curve at the top and a horizontal base. The background features a large, light blue circular graphic with a swirling, arrow-like pattern.

Session 11

*Living Consistently
by the Spirit*

Living Consistently by the Spirit

Review: We can share the good news of God’s love with our friends and co-workers in a sensitive and caring way. Ordinary conversations can easily be turned to spiritual things, allowing us to share our story and introduce others to Christ.

OVERVIEW

In this session, we’ll look at some principles that will help us to become more consistent in living the Spirit-directed life. We’ll examine some of the key hindrances to walking in the Spirit, seek to understand some of our privileges and resources as God’s children and discover the importance of living by faith.

Day One

HOW ABOUT YOU?

A young salesman named Alex learned about the Spirit-directed life and enthusiastically trusted God to fill him with the Spirit. He sensed that he had made an important spiritual discovery, but later he began to wonder.

A high sales quota put Alex under pressure, and he felt a familiar sense of worry. Then when a co-worker asked for his help on a project, Alex snapped, *“Can’t you leave me alone to make my sales calls?”*

Alex was disappointed with his inability to handle the pressure and with his reaction to his friend. *“What happened to the power of the Holy Spirit?”* he thought. *“I guess the Christian life is just too difficult for me.”*

- **Why did Alex fail to respond to his circumstances appropriately at this time in his life?**

- **What would you tell Alex to do now?**

LIVING BY THE SPIRIT

Like Alex, many people feel that it isn't possible to live the Christian life on a consistent basis. However, the Bible tells us that it is possible. Every Christian can experience a consistent Spirit-filled life, trusting God to overcome the problems that enter his or her life. This is called "living by the Spirit" or "walking in the Spirit" (see Galatians 5:16).

If we try to live the Christian life in our own effort, it becomes difficult, even impossible to live. But if we allow the Lord Jesus to direct our lives, He then lives His supernatural life within us in all of His resurrection power. However, many Christians' experience is more like that of Alex. What then is the means to live consistently by the Spirit? Applying three important principles is essential:

- 1. Be sure you are filled with the Spirit.**
- 2. Know your spiritual resources for living the Christian life.**
- 3. Learn to live by faith, not by feelings.**

BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

In session six, we learned what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We also discovered how to keep Christ on the throne of our lives moment by moment through the practice of "spiritual breathing."

- **Describe in your own words the concept of "spiritual breathing."**
- **What is "exhaling"?**
- **What is "inhaling"?**

We are filled with the Holy Spirit by faith alone. Don't depend on or expect "spiritual" feelings to determine if you are filled. Trust in the promises of God that He has filled you if you have confessed all known sin and have asked in faith.

- **Read Matthew 6:24. (The term "mammon" refers to riches or money.) Besides money, what are some other things in life that might become your "master" instead of Christ?**



KEY QUESTION

Can you live a Spirit-directed life if something else is master of your life? Why or why not?



Day Two

HINDRANCES TO BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

Unconfessed Sin

Being either too introspective about our sin or not introspective enough about our lives is a common problem that we all face as we seek to walk in the Spirit. Yet David maintained this attitude: *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way”* (Psalm 139:23,24 NASB).

- **According to David, what is your part in discovering sin in your life? What is God’s part?**

We saw in earlier sessions that unconfessed sin does not affect our eternal relationship with God. However, it does affect our fellowship with God. John writes, *“If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth”* (1 John 1:6 NASB). Unless we deal with unconfessed sin, we will be out of fellowship with God.

- **What things sometimes prevent us from “breathing spiritually”?**

Self-Effort

“For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me” (Romans 7:15-20 NASB).

- **Why does sin have the upper hand in Paul’s life as it does in our lives at times?**

- **What should we do when this happens?**
- **What kind of influence will we have on others when we're in this condition?**

Legalism

"It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1 NASB).

Definition

Legalism—attempting to earn God's acceptance by living according to certain standards, expectations or rules.

- **What standards or expectations (yours or others') do you feel you need to live up to in order to feel good about yourself?**
- **Read Romans 7:6. What does Paul say is our relationship to external standards?**
- **How are we now to serve Christ?**

FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Read Colossians 3:12 and Matthew 18:21-35. In order to continue to experience God's love and forgiveness, what must we do?

KNOW YOUR RESOURCES AS A CHILD OF GOD

As children of God, we have a new identity. We're no longer sinners but saints in God's eyes. This gives us privileges and resources that enable us to live by the Spirit.

- **Based on Hebrews 4:16, what is our privilege as children of God?**
- **Read Galatians 2:20. What source did Paul have to draw upon to live the Christian life?**
- **What did Paul have to do to experience Christ's life?**

- **How would this truth have helped Alex with his response?**
- **According to Philippians 4:13,19, what resources does God promise us?**

Sometimes Satan, our own desires, our emotions and the circumstances we face seem to powerfully draw us toward sin. However, the key to victory in such situations is to recognize and depend on the truths of who we are in Christ and on the privileges and resources we have as children of God. We constantly face a choice: to believe God's truths and live by the Spirit, or to disbelieve and sin.

If we do sin, we have another important choice to make. We can continue in that sin and further grieve our heavenly Father, or we can confess it and allow the Holy Spirit to again direct our lives.

“If we let Him ... He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into ... a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to God perfectly His own boundless power and delight and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful; but that is what we are in for. Nothing less.”
— C.S. Lewis

FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Read Ephesians 1:18,19. What three things does Paul say we should draw upon on a regular basis?

Day Four

LIVING BY FAITH

Our strong inclination to live our lives based on our feelings greatly hinders living by the Spirit. We are prone to place more emphasis on what our feelings tell us than on what God's Word tells us.

For example, when we sin, we often feel unworthy of God's love; however, the Bible tells us that God loves and accepts us unconditionally. When we face difficulties in life, we may feel inadequate or fearful instead of trusting in God's promises to provide.

- **What are some areas of your life in which you are tempted to live according to your feelings instead of trusting in God's Word?**
- **What is the outcome of choosing to believe our feelings over the facts of God's Word?**

Feelings are often based on our circumstances and sometimes even our physical health. If our circumstances go well, we assume that God is pleased with us and that we are walking with God. When things go badly, we may feel that God is displeased or even punishing us. Instead of trusting God in the matter, we may get angry or depressed. When we trust in the smoothness of our circumstances more than in God's Word, we operate in unbelief instead of living by the Spirit. When we are ill or overtired, we can "feel" like some circumstances are very threatening, which in the light of the next day are not so overwhelming.

- **Read James 1:2-4 and Romans 5:3-5. What are we told to do in the midst of trials and testing? Why?**

The hindrances of unconfessed sin, self-effort and fluctuating feelings will continually challenge us in our walk with Christ. However, there is an overriding principle that will help you respond properly to whatever you face in life. It is living by faith as demonstrated by giving thanks in all things.

Faith is another word for trust. When we place our faith, even a very weak faith, in a trustworthy God and His Word, we experience God's peace and faithfulness. The more we get to know God, the more we experience His trustworthiness and can learn to trust Him. And the more we trust Him, the more we experience the reality of His love and grace and power. Faith is like a muscle: it grows with exercise.

- **Read Romans 10:17 and Hebrews 11:6. What do these verses tell us about faith?**

FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Read Matthew 11:2-6. What might John the Baptist have been feeling in prison? What was Jesus' message to him?

**DEMONSTRATING FAITH: THE STORY OF
A BITTER CHRISTIAN**

Some time ago, a young woman went to a Christian conference. While there, she asked Bill Bright, the president of Campus Crusade for Christ, for counsel. Through tears, she shared her story of the loss of her fiancé, who had been killed in an auto accident. She had been driving as they were returning home from their engagement party when an oncoming vehicle crossed the centerline, forcing her to swerve from the road into a telephone pole.

The tragedy of her fiancé's death was compounded by feelings of guilt because she had been the one driving. As months passed, she went to psychiatrists, psychologists, ministers and friends looking for help with her feelings of guilt and bitterness. "What shall I do?" she pleaded with Dr. Bright. "If you can't help me, I fear for my sanity."

He asked her if she were a Christian and she said, "Yes."

They read Romans 8:28 and he asked, "Do you believe that all things work together for good?" She said, "Yes, I believe that."

They turned to 1 Thessalonians 5:18. She read it aloud: "*In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*" Dr. Bright said to her, "Have you thanked God for the loss of your loved one?"

She was shocked and could hardly believe that she had heard him correctly. "You do not trust God, do you?" he asked gently. "Yes, I trust God," she insisted. "Then why not show that you do?" he asked. "Will you pray and tell God that you trust Him and give thanks in everything?"

As they knelt together, she prayed through her tears, "God, I don't understand, but I know that I can trust You; and I do say: 'Thank You.'" When she said, "Thank You," she was saying to God, "I trust You."

The Bible says that without faith we cannot please God. The best way to demonstrate faith is to say "Thank You" in advance. You may have lost a loved one, or your money, or your business or your health. You may ask, "Why did God do this to me?" God says that He causes all things to work for good (Romans 8:28) and commands, "*In everything give thanks ...*" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

That young lady came to Dr. Bright's office early the next morning bubbling over with joy. She said, "Last night I slept without medication for the first time since the accident. This morning when I awakened, my heart was filled with praise and thanksgiving to God. I cannot understand it, but I know that it has something to do with what you taught me about saying 'Thank You' to God."



KEY QUESTION

In what ways is giving thanks in the midst of a problem evidence of faith in God?



SUMMARY

When we seek to walk with Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, we encounter various hindrances along the way. Learning to overcome these hindrances is essential to a consistent walk with the Lord. If we want to grow in our faith, we must learn to trust Him in the midst of our circumstances. The best way to demonstrate that trust is to give thanks in all situations, even the most difficult or tragic. It comforts us to know that God promises to use all our circumstances for our good and for His perfect plan.

APPLICATION

Take a few moments to list some past or present difficulties you have experienced. In light of Romans 8:28 and 1 Thessalonians 5:18, now thank the Lord sincerely for these experiences, even though the experiences may be difficult. (It's not unusual for feelings of anger, bitterness or anxiety to return. Just take the matter to the Lord again and thank Him by faith.)

Past or Present Difficulties:



ASSIGNMENTS

1. Review 1 Peter 3:15 and memorize Romans 8:28.
2. Read the article, "How to Walk in the Spirit."
3. Study and prepare Session 12.



SUGGESTED READING

Enjoying Intimacy With God by J. Oswald Chambers

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Session 12

*Talking
With God*

Talking With God

Review: Remember that hindrances discourage us from living by the power of the Spirit. We must be alert so that these hindrances do not keep us from a growing fellowship with God. In order to experience this growth with God, we must thank Him in all things. God can be trusted with everything He allows to come into our lives.

OVERVIEW

In this session, we will concentrate on further developing our relationship with our heavenly Father. We will examine the role of prayer in our relationship with Him, and we'll learn more about how God answers prayer.

Day One

HOW MUCH DOES GOD CARE?

Mark on a scale of 1 to 10 (**10 = high**) how much do you feel God cares about each of the following:

- ___ Personal conflict with your employer
- ___ Loss of your wallet
- ___ Your finances
- ___ Your cold hanging on for two weeks
- ___ Your desire for a special vacation this summer
- ___ Your family members who do not yet know Christ personally
- ___ Finding a parking place downtown
- ___ Having a close group of friends to hang out with



KEY QUESTION

Why is it so hard to believe that God cares about the little concerns in our lives?



GOD'S CARE FOR US

The extent to which we believe God cares about our daily lives largely determines how and what we pray about concerning our personal needs. Before we spend time studying prayer, we will look at how God views us, our needs and our concerns.

- **How do the following Scriptures describe God's care for our lives?**

Matthew 10:29-31

Philippians 4:6,7

1 Peter 5:7



KEY QUESTION

In light of God's care for us, how should we respond to Him?



FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Read Matthew 6:25,26. How should we respond when we are anxious about our physical needs?

God greatly desires to meet our every need. But He wants our relationship with Him to be far more than merely seeing Him as a source for meeting our needs (“Gimme, gimme, gimme; by the way my name is Jimmy”).

“God loves each of us as if there were only one of us.”

— **Saint Augustine**

BUILDING A LOVE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

The relationship between a husband and wife illustrates, by design, our relationship with God. Let's look at some of the key elements of communication needed to maintain an intimate, growing relationship between a husband and wife and see how these apply to our love relationship with God. Look up the verses on the next page and note the parallels.

Elements of Communication for a Growing Relationship

Husband/Wife	God/Man
Express appreciation for one another's qualities.	Psalm 145:1-3
Seek reconciliation when one has offended the other.	1 John 1:9
Express gratitude for things done.	1 Thessalonians 5:18
Ask each other to do things.	Matthew 7:9-11

- **What would happen to a marriage if any one of these elements of communication were missing?**
- **What would happen to your fellowship with God if any of these expressions of communication were missing?**

“What we usually pray to God is not that His will be done, but that He approve ours.” — Helga Bergold Gross

Day Three

Consistent communication is crucial to developing our love relationship with God. Many people find the **ACTS** acrostic helpful in remembering the four elements of our communication with Him. Below is a description of how each element builds our relationship with God.

Adoration—*Praising God*—increases our awareness of God's qualities; builds our love and trust in Him; pleases God as we offer Him our worship.

Confession—*Agreeing with God*—restores communication; makes it possible for the Holy Spirit to direct and empower us.

Thanksgiving—*Expressing gratitude toward God*—reminds us of what God has done and what He will do; builds our faith; increases awareness of our dependence on God.

Supplication—*Asking requests of God*—stimulates us to seek God’s will in specific areas of our life; demonstrates our dependence and trust; involves us in interceding for others; helps us to develop a heart for the world (becoming others-centered).

Use this format as a helpful guide and not as a ritual. Sometimes your prayer time may include only two or three of these elements. Other times you may use a different order.

We have seen how much God cares for us and have looked at elements of our communication with Him. We will now examine some promises and requirements that God has given us about answering our prayers.

GOD ANSWERS PRAYER

- **Read Jeremiah 32:17,27 and 33:3. Why does God want us to pray?**



KEY QUESTION

What sometimes prevents us from believing these promises from God? What limits do we place on ourselves?



- **On what basis does God promise to answer our prayers?**

John 14:13,14

1 John 5:14,15

The full meaning of the promises in these two passages is that God intends to fulfill His purposes in the world through Jesus Christ. We can come to God in prayer only through what Christ has done on the cross. To pray “in Jesus’ name” means to pray as His representative, with His authority. Concluding every prayer by saying: “in Jesus’ name, Amen” is not a magic formula.

Similarly, praying “according to God’s will” does not mean merely adding these words at the end. Instead, it means asking for those things which are in accordance with God’s purposes as stated in His Word.

Day Four

- **What does God require in order for us to see answered prayer?**

James 4:2,3

Psalm 66:18

FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Matthew 21:22; John 15:7. What is the relationship between asking, believing and abiding?

Day Five

Some people think that God promises to do whatever we ask whenever we ask it. Examples in Scripture show us that God answers prayer in different ways.

- **In Acts 12:5-17, what answer did He give the early church in response to their request to release Peter?**
- **In 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, what answer did He give Paul regarding his “thorn in the flesh”?**
- **In Genesis 15:1-5; 16:1-3; 21:1-3, what answer did He give Abraham and Sarah when they longed for a son?**

SUMMARY

Developing our relationship with our heavenly Father depends greatly on our communication with Him through prayer. God cares deeply about everything in our lives—from the smallest detail to the biggest problem—and wants us to bring every concern to Him. But prayer not only consists of making requests of God; it also includes adoration, confession and thanksgiving. These additional elements are also necessary to maintain an intimate, growing relationship with God.

“It is an incontrovertible fact that some Christians seem to experience a much closer intimacy with God than others.”

— J. Oswald Sanders

God always answers our prayers, but not always in the way we expect. This is due to His greater wisdom combined with His perfect love for us. This results in answers to prayer which provide not what we think we need, but what He knows we need. His answers always accomplish His will in the lives of His people and bring Him the greatest glory.

“Satan laughs at our toiling, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when he sees the weakest saint on his knees.”

— Author Unknown

PRACTICING PRAYER

In your group, spend some time with God in prayer using the following guide.

■ Adoration

List two attributes of God that you appreciate. Tell God how you have seen these attributes demonstrated in your life or in the world around you.

1.

2.

■ Confession

Ask the Lord to reveal any sins you may need to confess. (Remember, if you have already confessed a sin, you no longer need to bring it up.)

Tell God that you agree that you have sinned. Thank Him for forgiving you, and declare in faith that you want to turn away from sin.

■ Thanksgiving

List two things God did for you this past month. Thank God for each thing.

1.

2.

■ Supplication

List one current need or concern in the following areas. Ask God to meet each need.

Within your life:

Regarding someone else:

Involving God's work in our world:



ASSIGNMENTS

1. Review Romans 8:28 and memorize Ephesians 6:10,11.
2. Pray each day this week using the ACTS acrostic. (Remember, it is not necessary to include all four types of prayer in every prayer time, but over a period of days, each is necessary to building quality fellowship with God.)
3. Read the article, "How to Pray by Faith."
4. Study and prepare Session 13.



FOR FURTHER STUDY

Too Busy Not to Pray by Bill Hybels

Prayer by O. Hallesby

With Christ in the School of Prayer by Andrew Murray

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Session 13

*Battling
the Enemy*

Battling the Enemy

Review: God loves us and cares for us very much. Because of this, He greatly desires us to communicate with Him through prayer. In order for our love relationship with God to grow, we must come to Him with adoration, confession and thanksgiving as well as with our requests, including requests for others.

OVERVIEW

We encounter hindrances to living the abundant Christian life such as self-effort and circumstances. We also encounter various enemies that seek to defeat us and render us ineffective in our walks with Christ. In this session, we will examine who these enemies are, the strategies they use to defeat us and how we can wage war against them to emerge victorious in our battles with them.

Day One

WHAT'S GONE WRONG?

Cal and Judy have been Christians for many years. They have committed their lives, their business, their marriage and their children to the Lord. But lately, everything seems to be going wrong in their lives. Calvin's plant manager made a huge error which could cost him hundreds of thousands of dollars and even bankrupt his business. Their youngest daughter has strayed away from the Lord and is exhibiting extremely rebellious behavior. Judy is finding it difficult to counsel a friend who is bitter and cannot seem to gain victory in a certain area. Their church is going through an ugly split, and Cal and Judy have begun looking for a new church home. On top of everything else, their oldest son has just been diagnosed with a kidney disorder. Cal and Judy are becoming discouraged and find themselves wondering if they are doing something wrong and if God may be punishing them for some unknown sin.

- **What might be the root cause of Cal and Judy's problems?**
- **How would you encourage Cal and Judy at this time in their lives?**

WHO IS THE ENEMY?

The Bible teaches clearly that the Christian life is not only a walk but also a warfare against an unseen enemy that the Bible describes as *“the devil ... evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, ... those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and ... wicked spirits in the heavenly realms”* (Ephesians 6:12 NLT).

As Christians, we often fail to comprehend who our real enemy is. We blame other people for our problems (or sometimes even God) and often think that experiencing the abundant Christian life means escaping trials, difficulties and temptations. The reality is that God does not promise to protect us from these challenges. Instead He gives us strength to overcome our trials. He gives us spiritual weapons to fight the real demonic enemies in the spiritual battles of life.

Complete the chart below, discovering the identity of our enemy and what he does to defeat us.

Who is our enemy? How is he described? What is his strategy?	
Revelation 12:7-10	
.....	
1 Peter 5:8	
.....	
2 Corinthians 4:4	
.....	
John 8:44	
.....	
1 Thessalonians 3:5	

Sum up in a few sentences who our enemy is and what he tries to do in the world and in our lives.

Let's look at an example of how Satan has worked to defeat people in the past.

“Many things in history will become clearer ... when it is realized that behind every earthly power there is a satanic power lurking, seeking to control and dominate for the glory of the rebel who declared war against God.”

— Donald Barnhouse, *The Invisible War*

Day Two

Read Genesis 3:1-8.

- **What was Satan's tactic with Eve? Why was he effective? (v. 1)**
- **Where did Eve go wrong in her encounter with Satan? (vv. 2,3)**
- **To what did Satan finally appeal? (vv. 4-6)**
- **What were the results of listening to Satan? (vv. 7-9)**
- **What should Eve and Adam have done to defeat Satan?**

FOR A DEEPER LOOK: 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. The battleground is in the mind. What do the strongholds represent? How do we defeat the strongholds?

“Satan and his demons are actively involved in trying to distract you from your walk of faith by peppering your mind with his thoughts and ideas. He is relentless in his attempts to establish negative, worldly patterns of thought in your mind which will in turn produce negative, worldly patterns of behavior.”

— Neil Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness*

Day Three

DEFENDING AGAINST THE ADVERSARY

Satan is seen busily at work throughout the Bible, seeking to defeat and even destroy God's people and purposes in the world. And he is busily at work today, as our adversary and accuser. He is often subtle in his workings, so we need to be alert to his ways and be on our guard to defend ourselves. Paul was aware of Satan's schemes. In 2 Corinthians 2:11, he expressed his concern “that Satan not outwit us.” Let's look at how the Bible says we should respond to our enemy, the devil.

“The watchword against temptations from the devil is: fight.”

— Donald Barnhouse

Read James 4:7-10.

- **How should we respond to the devil?**

- **In what ways can we resist the devil?**

God has given us “spiritual armor” with which to resist the devil. Let’s take a look at that armor.

Read Ephesians 6:10-18.

- **What are the warfare pieces listed which we can use?**

- **Which pieces are defensive? How are they to be used?**

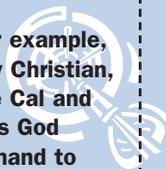
- **Which pieces are offensive? How are they to be used?**

- **Read Matthew 4:3,4. How did Jesus use His offensive armor in battling Satan?**

“Since Satan’s primary weapon is the lie, your defense against him is the truth. Dealing with Satan is not a power encounter; it’s a truth encounter. When you expose Satan’s lie with God’s truth, his power is broken.” — Neil Anderson

K E Y Q U E S T I O N

Satan often will attack our identity in Christ. (For example, we might start feeling like this: “I’m such a lousy Christian, God must really be disappointed with me” or, like Cai and Judy, “Why are all these bad things happening—is God angry with me?”) How will you apply Paul’s command to stand firm against Satan by using the Word as an “offensive weapon”?



SATAN'S ALLIES

Satan is not the only adversary we as believers face. We also face two other formidable enemies which Satan uses as his allies to defeat us in our attempts to live for Christ.

Read James 4:1-4.

- **What enemies are mentioned here?**

- **What do you think it means to be a “friend of the world”?**

Satan's allies are our fleshly desires and the world's value system. He has helped create the worldly value system that appeals so strongly to our sinful nature.

- **Read 1 John 2:15-17. Why does the world's system of values appeal to our fleshly nature?**

- **According to Galatians 5:16-18 and 22-26, how can we defeat the fleshly desires that battle within us?**

“In Galatians 5:16, the ordinary word for ‘live’ in the NIV literally means ‘walking around.’ It stands for a person’s conduct in ordinary life, his daily actions at home or in business, at work or play, and walking (or living) denotes activity and progress. The implication is that in our daily life we are to live in constant awareness of the Holy Spirit. It is as if Paul were saying, *‘Habitually order your lifestyle through the Spirit’s guidance, and then you will not be deflected by the desires of the flesh, from a walk in fellowship with God.’*” — J. Oswald Sanders, *Enjoying Intimacy With God*

“ ... The only remedy for the fleshly, or carnal, nature is that it be crucified, for it is inveterately wicked and incapable of improvement ... That was done for us in Christ’s death for us, but it remains for us to reckon it to be true for us (Romans 6:11). As we take that ground in faith, the Holy Spirit will make it true in our experience, and we shall be emancipated from the dominance of fleshly desires.”

— J. Oswald Sanders, *Enjoying Intimacy With God*

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN SATAN AND THE FLESH

In James 4:7, we are commanded to resist the devil. In 1 Corinthians 6:18, we are commanded to flee immorality. How do we determine if the situation requires “resisting” or “fleeing”?

Read 1 Corinthians 6:18. Because of the nature of our flesh and the power of temptation, God commands us to flee from immoral situations that may overpower us and lead to sin. In Romans 6:13, we are warned against presenting ourselves to opportunities to sin.

However, in the case of the temptations of Christ in Matthew 4, the temptations are mental in nature, and Jesus answers the lies of the enemy with the truth of God’s Word.

Compare the following situations, and determine if we should physically flee the situation or resist the enemy’s lies with God’s Word. Mark an “**F**” for flee (physically) and an “**R**” for resist (mentally). In the group, discuss the steps you would take.

- _____ You get fired from your job and have feelings of hopelessness and inadequacy.
- _____ Your fiancé(e) invites you into his/her home after a romantic evening out.
- _____ You slip back into an old pattern of sin, and now you feel unforgiven and unworthy to ask once again for forgiveness.
- _____ You are halfway through a movie at the theater, and the storyline promises to include immoral scenes for the rest of the movie.
- _____ You are a recovering alcoholic. The people at a party you are attending insist that you drink with them.
- _____ Someone offends you, and you replay the incident over and over in your mind.
- _____ Your boss insists that you go to a topless bar for a business lunch.

The three enemies we have discussed—the world, our fleshly desires and the devil—all work together to tempt us. Satan is the master tempter. He uses the false values of the world and our sinful desires to try to deceive and defeat us.

THE HINDRANCE OF TEMPTATION

- **According to Matthew 4:1-3, who is the tempter?**
- **What do you think are the areas in which people are most likely to be tempted?**

- **Read James 1:13-15. What causes us to be drawn into temptation?**
- **How does temptation differ from sin?**
- **Based on 1 Corinthians 10:13, how does God limit the temptations we face?**
- **What does He provide when temptation comes?**



K E Y Q U E S T I O N

In light of the three passages just considered and what we have been learning, how should we deal with temptation?



“The essence of all temptation is the invitation to live independently of God and fulfill legitimate needs through the world, the flesh or the devil instead of in Christ. That’s the great contest. And Satan knows just what buttons to push to tempt you away from dependency on Christ. He has observed your behavior over the years and he knows where you are vulnerable, and that’s where he will attack.”

— Neil Anderson

As Christians, we need to remember that we are in a spiritual battle every day of our lives. If a soldier at war lets down his defenses, he can be easily ambushed by the enemy. The Christian has been given spiritual armor with which to resist and battle the adversary, but he/she must employ that armor to be victorious.

SUMMARY

As believers, we need to be aware of all the “players” in the spiritual arena. God is ultimately in control, but Satan is constantly at work to keep us from Him and to discourage us in our walk. God provides us with armor, with which we battle the enemy. We need to be on constant alert to the things of the world, to our own flesh and to our adversary the devil. As we saw in the last session, prayer is vital to our maintaining our relationship with God and thus overcoming the attacks of the enemy of our souls.



ASSIGNMENTS

1. Review Ephesians 6:10,11 and memorize Luke 6:27,28.
2. Read and prepare Session 14.
3. Go back to the story about Cal and Judy at the beginning of this session. Write down any additional advice you might give them in light of what you have just learned.
4. List below a few areas of your life in which you are vulnerable to temptation, then write beside it your strategy for overcoming a temptation in that area.

Area of Vulnerability

**Strategy for Overcoming
the Temptation**

5. Keep a log of the temptations you encounter throughout the week. Then complete the following chart in order to thank God for your successes or learn from your mistakes.

Temptation

Origin of Temptation Encountered
(e.g. world, flesh or devil)

How I Responded

How I Should Have Responded

.....

Temptation

Origin of Temptation Encountered
(e.g. world, flesh or devil)

How I Responded

How I Should Have Responded

.....

Temptation

Origin of Temptation Encountered
(e.g. world, flesh or devil)

How I Responded

How I Should Have Responded

.....

Temptation

Origin of Temptation Encountered
(e.g. world, flesh or devil)

How I Responded

How I Should Have Responded

.....

Temptation

Origin of Temptation Encountered
(e.g. world, flesh or devil)

How I Responded

How I Should Have Responded



SUGGESTED READING

Victory Over the Darkness by Neil Anderson

Waking the Dead by John Eldredge



Session 14
*Loving
Unconditionally*

Loving Unconditionally

Review: In the previous session, we learned that the Christian life is not only a walk, but also a battle—a war against an unseen enemy called Satan, against our fleshly nature and against the world’s value system. The devil is busy at work seeking to defeat and neutralize us. However, as we resist the devil through faith in God’s truth and walk in the Spirit, we can be victorious in daily living.

OVERVIEW

In our lifetime, we will encounter many people whom we feel do not deserve our love. God wants us to love not only those individuals we enjoy but also those who do not appeal to us—even those who may hurt us. Unfortunately, many Christians do not know how to do this. Therefore, we need to learn how to love others consistently with God’s great love.

Day One

ADVICE NEEDED

Read this letter to “Dear Gabby” and write a brief note of advice in response. (Stephanie is a Christian.)

Dear Gabby,
 Last week I overheard two co-workers talking about me in the ladies’ lounge. They criticized my work, my dress and my grammar. When they left, they saw me and stammered something unintelligible, then quickly walked away. I was so hurt and angry. I thought they were my friends! Now I can hardly stand to be around them. I’m having a hard time focusing on my work. I feel betrayed and find it impossible to be civil to them. What can I do?—*Stephanie*

Dear Stephanie,

We all have faced the challenge of trying to love someone who has mistreated or hurt us. How impossible it is in our own strength! However, God provides a way to love others supernaturally. Before we can love others like that, we need to understand the nature of God's love.

God has loved me to the end of all my sinfulness, of all my self-will, all my stiff-neckedness, all my pride, all my self-interest; now He says—“Love one another, as I have loved you.” I am to show my fellow men the same love that God showed me. That is Christianity in practical working order.
— Oswald Chambers, *In the Presence of His Majesty*

GOD'S LOVE

¹*“If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I knew all the mysteries of the future and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would I be? And if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody. ³If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever.*

⁴*“Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud ⁵or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. ⁶It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. ⁷Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.*

⁸*“Love will last forever, but prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will all disappear. ⁹Now we know only a little, and even the gift of prophecy reveals little! ¹⁰But when the end comes, these special gifts will all disappear. ... ¹³There are three things that will endure—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love”*
(1 Corinthians 13:1-10,13 NLT).

Using verses 4-7 from this passage, list two or three qualities of God's love that seem most meaningful to you.

From the verses above, list in the following chart some differences between God’s perfect love and man’s ability to love. (Some of the qualities of man’s love are not directly mentioned in the Scripture passage. You will need to derive or infer them from the quality of God’s love that is stated.)

GOD’S LOVE	MAN’S ABILITY TO LOVE
<i>For example:</i> is unconditional	may depend on circumstances or on how we feel
is very patient	

OUR LOVE FOR OTHERS

We have seen that God’s love for us is unconditional. This is the same kind of love that God commands us to demonstrate in our relationships with others.

- **Read John 13:34,35. How does Jesus command us to love others? How would that look?**

Ephesians 4:32 (NIV) states: *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”*

- **When someone offends or hurts us, what should our response be?**

- **Why is this so hard to do?**
- **How might you use these principles and verses to counsel Stephanie in our opening story?**



KEY QUESTION

What actions do you think are involved in forgiveness?



FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Read Luke 23:33-35. How might we typically respond to someone who attacks us physically or emotionally? Where would we find the power to respond as Jesus did?

- **What does Hebrews 12:14,15 say are some results of not forgiving? Can a person be living a Spirit-directed life and yet refuse to forgive someone who has hurt or offended them? Why or why not?**
- **According to Luke 6:27-36, what are some loving actions you are to take with someone who hates you?**

The word “love” is often misunderstood in our culture today. It is portrayed as an almost involuntary feeling. On the other hand, the Bible describes love as an act of faith that chooses what is best for another person in spite of our feelings toward him/her. This is not hypocrisy.

The difference between being a hypocrite and loving by faith is one’s motive. A hypocrite acts contrary to his/her feelings for a selfish motive. Someone loving by faith, however, chooses to love for a godly motive in spite of his/her feelings. Learning how to consistently love difficult people with God’s love requires living supernaturally in the power of the Holy Spirit.

FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Read Matthew 18:21-35. What does Jesus say is the relationship between a person’s attitude about his/her own need for forgiveness and forgiving others? What does this reveal about our evaluation of our own sins? When our evaluation is correct, how does that affect our readiness to forgive others?

LOVING WITH GOD’S LOVE

Several ingredients are necessary for a Christian to demonstrate the same qualities of love that God does—especially toward difficult people.

Read Ephesians 3:16-21.

- **What part does living by faith play in demonstrating God’s love toward those who are difficult to love?**

- **What must be true in our lives for us to be able to demonstrate God’s love?**

“If you are suffering from a bad man’s injustice, forgive him lest there be two bad men.” — Saint Augustine

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:7,8 NASB).

THE SECRET TO LOVING WITH GOD’S LOVE

- Make it our desire to please Him.
- Be sure that we are filled with the Holy Spirit.
- Ask God in faith to give us His love for that specific person.

We cannot in our own human strength love with God’s unconditional love. But in trusting Him by faith, we can be confident that God’s love will flow through us to others.

“People of all ages respond to love. It’s the most powerful force in the world. It changes lives. It attracts people to Christ. It’s the central point of our faith, and that’s true anywhere you go in this world.”

— Arlis Priest, *Love Unlocks Every Door*

SUMMARY

God loves us unconditionally and commands us to love others in the same way. Although this is impossible in our own strength, we can love others with God's unconditional love by faith through the power of the Holy Spirit. We can consistently claim His supernatural love for people.

A PLAN FOR LOVING

Mark an "X" by each action as you complete it.

- ___ 1. Write the initials of at least one person you have a difficult time loving:
- ___ 2. Think about your relationship with him or her as you reread 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.
- ___ 3. If needed, confess to God your lack of love for that person. By faith, claim God's love for him or her.
- ___ 4. Reread 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, inserting your name in place of "love."
- ___ 5. Pray again, asking God to make those qualities real in your contacts with that person.
- ___ 6. Determine to focus on your attitude toward that person, not on his or her actions.
- ___ 7. Pray once more, asking God to give a specific blessing to him or her (Luke 6:28).
- ___ 8. Plan one way you will "do good" for that person this week (Luke 6:27).



ASSIGNMENTS

1. Review Luke 6:27,28 and memorize John 13:34.
2. Read and meditate on 1 Corinthians 13 every day this week in carrying out "A Plan for Loving."
3. Read the article, "How to Love by Faith."
4. Study and prepare Session 15.

15

Session 15

*God's Gift
of Work*

God's Gift of Work

Review: In the last session, we saw that God wants us, even commands us, to love others, including those who may have hurt us or those we don't especially like. He does not expect us to love others in our own strength, but He provides us with all we need to love others in the same way that He loves us. By faith, we can forgive and love others as we allow the Holy Spirit to direct and empower our lives. Just as loving others is something that we do through God's power, so is our work.

OVERVIEW

Work is not something we do apart from God, nor is it beneath God's dignity or concern. Work is a major part of human life that God has given us. In this session, we will examine how God views work as it relates to His creation as well as look at some of the important purposes of work.

Day One

JOE'S DILEMMA

Joe attends an evangelical church where he recently joined a men's small group that meets every Saturday morning. Joe, who never went to college, works at the local professional football stadium, managing the cleaning crew and the men and women who run the concession stands. His income, though modest, provides enough money to cover his family expenses, give to the church and even give to a few local ministries.

The other men in his small group are all professionals who are involved in ministries that are actively involved in advancing the kingdom of God. Joe feels like he has gone as far as he can with his background and education, but he wishes that he were doing more for Christ's kingdom. When he hears the other men share about using their medical expertise to help people get well, engineering automobiles that will get better mileage and save more lives, or raising thousands of dollars for overseas missions, he feels a sense of awe and intimidation. He just can't imagine how washing toilets, cleaning gum off walkways and selling hot dogs has any eternal value to God. His days are full of repetitive tasks that, to his mind, add nothing to building God's kingdom or helping mankind.

- What perspectives would you share with Joe regarding his work?

GOD'S VIEW OF WORK

God Is a Worker

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ... So God created man in His own image ... By the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing; so on the seventh day He rested from all His work"
(Genesis 1:1,27; 2:2 NIV).

- **What do you notice about God and what He did in these verses?**

Work has value because of the nature of God and because of the way He has created work and placed workers in His creation. In fact, according to John 5:17, God is still working today: "... My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I, too, am working" (NIV).

God Created Us to Be Workers

Read Genesis 2:15.

- **What did God give man to do upon his creation? Why do you think God did this? When did God give man work to do?**

- **What are the implications for us today?**

FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Read Psalm 104. Write down as many "occupations" of God as you can find.

THE VALUE OF WORK

We Earn Money to Meet Our Needs

"This should be your ambition: to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we commanded you before. As a result, people who are not Christians will respect the way you live, and you will not need to depend on others to meet your financial needs"
(1 Thessalonians 4:11,12 NIV).

- **What does God command us to do regarding work? Why?**

We Learn Important Skills

- In what ways has your job/career enabled you to develop skills?

- How have you been able to leverage those skills for God’s kingdom?

We Earn Money to Help Others

Read 1 Timothy 6:18,19.

- What are several key words/concepts Paul wants us to embrace in our lifestyle?

- How can you apply this in your life and family?

- Why does Paul call this a “foundation for the future”?

WE CAN SERVE PEOPLE

“God has given gifts to each of you from His great variety of spiritual gifts. Manage them well so that God’s generosity can flow through you” (1 Peter 4:10 NLT).

- What unique abilities and skills has God given you?

- What are some specific and unique ways you can serve people through your job/profession/career?

“I went into the restaurant business when I was eight years old. I feel a divine guidance that you have by just serving people—serving a necessity of life which is food. God has given us an opportunity to have a positive impact on each one of our customers as well as our employees, especially through the books and tapes we give away.”

— Truett Cathy, founder and president, Chick-fil-A

We Can Find Satisfaction in Our Work

Read Ecclesiastes 5:18-20.

- **In what ways does your work/job bring personal fulfillment and satisfaction? Why?**

- **In what ways is it frustrating? Why?**

- **What changes can you make to increase your satisfaction level?**

“I used to try to rush life: ‘I can’t wait for it to be December. I can’t wait till ... ’ Now, I wish I had spent more time enjoying every moment. Steve always told me, ‘Just enjoy every day. Don’t wish it away.’ He loved to live and he loved to work. He worked for Cantor Fitzgerald for 17 years and felt that work was being on a thrill ride every day.”

**— Shelly Genoveve, wife of Steve Genoveve,
Cantor Fitzgerald partner who died in the
World Trade Center attacks**

We Can Make a Difference for Christ

“You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it useful again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. You are the light of the world—like a city on a mountain, glowing in the night for all to see. Don’t hide your light under a basket! Instead, put it on a stand and let it shine for all. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father” (Matthew 5:13-16 NLT).

- **What are some practical ways you can be a light at work?**

- **What are some unique ways you can make your company/department succeed?**

- **What are some negative situations/behaviors God might want you to help change in your work environment?**

Read Colossians 3:23,24.

- **Who are you really working for?**

- **What are the implications for your work ethic?**

“A significant and often overlooked way that we serve God is in our everyday tasks. Martin Luther understood this when he wrote, ‘The maid who sweeps her kitchen is doing the will of God just as much as the monk who prays—not because she may sing a Christian hymn as she sweeps but because God loves clean floors. The Christian shoemaker does his Christian duty not by putting little crosses on the shoes, but by making good shoes, because God is interested in good craftsmanship.’”

— *Our Daily Bread*, September 5, 1994

Read 2 Corinthians 5:20.

- **What would it mean for you to be an ambassador for Christ in your workplace?**

- How could you effectively communicate who you represent (God) in such a way that it would draw people to Christ rather than repel them?

“This is true joy in life—being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making me happy ... I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live ... Life is no brief candle to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have ahold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.”

— George Bernard Shaw

FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Read 2 Thessalonians 3:7-13. What was the example Paul wanted to set for the Thessalonians and why?

SUMMARY

God is a worker, and He has modeled that from the day of creation until now. He is also working today in each of our lives to make us more like Him. Working is a part of His plan for each of us, and it is, in fact, a gift from Him. Even if you were to inherit millions of dollars, God would still want you to work. However, we are not to put success at work at the center of our lives, but rather our relationship with God and the opportunities we have to influence people for Christ.



ASSIGNMENTS

1. Refer back to the opening story about Joe. Based on what you've learned, briefly write below some additional thoughts that you could share with someone like Joe.

2. Review John 13:34 and memorize Colossians 3:23,24.
3. Study and prepare Session 16.
4. Complete the following Work Style Questionnaire and answer the questions at the end.



SUGGESTED READING

Your Work Matters to God by Doug Sherman
How Then Should We Work? Rediscovering the Biblical Doctrine of Work, by Hugh Whelchel

WORK STYLE QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questions represent areas related to the integration of work and faith in which many Christians struggle. As we begin our study, answer these questions privately, and take some time to reflect upon your answers in light of your faith.

1. I begin each workday with a prayer that God will help me do my work in a Christ-like way.

Never Rarely Sometimes Frequently Always

2. If I know that people in my company are doing something unethical or illegal, I stand up and voice my objections.

Never Rarely Sometimes Frequently Always

3. I set limits to the amount of time/energy I put into my job, and my schedule reflects these limits.

Never Rarely Sometimes Frequently Always

4. I present the message of the gospel to my co-workers.

Never Rarely Sometimes Frequently Always

5. I would accept a job that pays extremely well, even if it doesn't fully utilize my abilities, over a job that might thoroughly satisfy but doesn't pay as well.

Absolutely Not It Depends Don't Know Probably Definitely

6. I discuss how the Bible relates to workplace issues with other Christians in my profession.

Never Rarely Sometimes Frequently Always

16

Session 16

*Developing
Character From
the Inside Out*

Developing Character From the Inside Out

Review: In the previous session, we learned that God cares deeply about our work. God Himself is a worker, and He created us to work. Work has value since we earn money to meet our needs as well as help and serve others. Work also gives us a platform to be an example and an ambassador for Christ.

OVERVIEW

Business scandals bring to the forefront the need for business leaders to be authentic and to exemplify lives of integrity. How much more then should people who call themselves followers of Christ be different from the world's standards. The Bible has much to say about character, about who we are both in public and in private. Biblical truths and admonitions call us to higher standards than we may have ever considered. In this session, we will examine a variety of areas where the Bible speaks to matters of the heart.

Day One

A TRUE STORY

In 1899, four reporters from Denver, Colorado met by chance one night in the Denver railway station. Al Stevens, Jack Tournay, John Lewis and Hal Wilshire worked for the four Denver newspapers: the *Post*, the *Times*, *The Republican* and *The Rocky Mountain News*.

Each had their usual challenging task of finding a scoop for the upcoming Sunday edition. They hoped to spot a visiting celebrity arriving that evening by train. However, none showed up, so the journalists wondered what they would report on. As they discussed options in a nearby tavern, Al suggested that they make up a story. The other three laughed—at first. But after a few drinks, they all agreed—they would make up such an interesting tale that no one would question it, and their respective editors would congratulate them on their find.

A phony local story would be too obvious, so they decided to write about someplace far away—like China. “What if we say that some American engineers, on their way to China, told us they are bidding on a major job: the Chinese government is planning to demolish the Great Wall?” Harold was not so sure the story would be believable. “Why would the Chinese ever tear down the Great Wall?” asked Harold. “As a sign of international goodwill and to invite foreign trade.”

By midnight, the four men had worked out the details. The next day, all four Denver newspapers carried the story—on the front page! The *Times* headline that Sunday read: “*Great Chinese Wall Doomed—Peking Seeks World Trade!*” Of course, the story was a ridiculous tall tale made up by four opportunistic reporters in a hotel bar. But amazingly, their story was taken seriously and soon ran in newspapers in the eastern U.S. and even abroad.

—Adapted from *Disciplines of a Godly Man* by R. Kent Hughes

In 1939, an urban legend was started by Denver songwriter Harry Lee Wilber. He wrote an article for the *North American Review* that claimed that the reporters’ fabricated news story resulted in Chinese hostility toward foreigners, which culminated in the Boxer Rebellion of 1899-1901. It is true that the Boxer Rebellion was a bloody response by Chinese patriots angry about the growing openness to foreigners, but evidently, the reporters’ hoax was not the cause. With today’s technology, however, any news story so widely distributed has the power to shape international opinion.

- **What was the root cause of these reporters’ actions?**

Ability will help a man get to the top, but it takes character to keep him there. —Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

THE BIG PICTURE

Read 1 Samuel 16:1-7, the story of a new king of Israel being chosen by God and anointed by Samuel the prophet.

- **What was most important to God, as opposed to man, in the selection of David as a leader?**
- **What are some implications of the statement, “*the Lord looks at the heart*”? (See also Proverbs 4:23.)**
- **Read 1 Peter 1:13-16. To what kind of lifestyle does God call us?**



KEY QUESTION

What do you think it means to “be holy” in daily life?



Webster’s New World Dictionary defines holy as “belonging to or coming from God; spiritually perfect or pure; untainted by evil or sin ...”

God wants His followers to demonstrate lives of exemplary character. He empowers us by His Spirit to change on the inside. That change is then manifested in specific outward attitudes, motivations and actions as seen in the fruit of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:22-26).

One key factor in seeing change become a reality is in the area of personal discipline. The victorious Christian life does not just “happen” but is developed over time through godly choices.

Read 2 Peter 1:3-11.

- **What has God granted us? (vv. 3,4)**

- **For what reason? (v. 4)**

- **How does Peter describe our discipline of faith in verses 5-7?**

- **What will be the outcome? (vv. 8,10,11)**

- **If we fail in this area of our lives, what does Peter say will be the result? (v. 9)**

“If we are to excel, we must strip ourselves to a lean, spiritual nakedness.”

— R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*

CHARACTER ISSUES

We will now examine five key areas of our lives in which the Bible admonishes us to have the highest possible standards—to be holy as God is holy.

Moral Purity

Recently *Leadership* magazine conducted a poll of 1,000 pastors on the subject of their moral purity. One out of eight of them indicated they had committed adultery while in the ministry, and 23% said they had done something sexually inappropriate. *Christianity Today* surveyed 1,000 of its subscribers who were not pastors and found the figure to be nearly double, with 23% saying they had had extramarital sex and 45% saying they had done something sexually inappropriate.

- **Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8. What commands are we given here? Why?**
- **Read 1 Corinthians 6:18-20. What key principles does God call us to live by in this passage? Why?**



KEY QUESTION

In what specific ways might you daily “honor God with your body”?



FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Read 1 Timothy 4:12 and 2 Timothy 2:22. What things are we told to pursue?

Our Speech

Read Ephesians 4:29-5:10.

- **What commands for living are given in this passage? Why?**
- **Define the following four “speech traps” Paul warns us to avoid in verses 4:29 and 5:4.**
 - Unwholesome talk—**
 - Obscenity—**
 - Foolish talk—**
 - Coarse jesting—**

- What do the same verses say about the kind of speech that we are to engage in?
- Give an example of how you might apply this in a real-life situation at work or at home.

“Verbal cyanide comes in many forms. Gossip, innuendo, flattery, criticism, diminishment are only a few of the venoms with which Christians inject each other. And the results are universal: toxic gastric juices brew a devil’s feast—the swill of souls.” — R. Kent Hughes

Our Thought Life

- What types of things do you tend to daydream or fantasize about? Why?

Read Philippians 4:8.

- What kinds of things could you think about to replace your current daydreams?
- What obstacles might you face in doing that?

FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Read Matthew 5:27-30. What does Jesus say about the seriousness of sin?

Our Finances

Read 1 Timothy 6:6-19.

- What is the source of true contentment? (vv. 6-8)
- What are some dangers of loving wealth? (vv. 9,10)

- What am I to pursue in life? (vv. 11-16)
- What are some things I should do with my money? (vv. 17-19)

“It is foolish and destructive to think that the center of life is material gain.” — Crawford Loritts



KEY QUESTION

What are some specific ways you could be “rich in good deeds” and “generous”?



“Let temporal things serve your use, but the eternal be the object of your desire.” — Thomas à Kempis

Alcohol

- What does Paul caution us against in Ephesians 5:18? Why?
- In Galatians 5:19-21, “drunkenness, orgies and the like” are listed as “acts of the sinful nature.” What environments in today’s culture might lead to this type of behavior? What might be some alternative environments we could seek out?

*“The gods had given me almost everything. But I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease ... I grew careless of the lives of others. I took pleasure where it pleased me ... I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and that therefore what one has done in the secret chamber, one has some day to cry aloud from the house-top. I ceased to be lord over myself. I was no longer the captain of my soul, and did not know it. I allowed pleasure to dominate me. I ended in horrible disgrace.”—Oscar Wilde, quoted by William Barclay, *Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, p. 100*

SUMMARY

God is calling each of us as followers of Christ to live holy lives so that we honor God on a daily basis and serve as an example to those around us at work and at home as people of the highest standards. We have examined five areas in which we are to have integrity and purity: our morals, our speech, our thoughts, our money and our use of alcohol.

APPLICATION

Write down what God would have as your next step of practical growth for you in each of the five areas:

Moral purity

Speech

Thought life

Finances

Use of alcohol

“It is not great talents God blesses so much as likeness to Jesus.” — Robert Murray McCheyne, Scottish pastor from 1836 to 1843

**ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Review Colossians 3:23,24 and memorize 1 Peter 1:16.
2. Study and prepare Session 17.

**SUGGESTED READING**

Disciplines of a Godly Man by R. Kent Hughes
The Life You've Always Wanted by John Ortberg

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Session 17

*Living in
Community*

Living in Community

Review: The Bible has much to say about character, about who we are both in public and in private. In the previous session, we learned that God wants us to be holy as He is holy. That should be reflected in our moral purity, our speech, our finances, our thought life and the use of alcohol.

OVERVIEW

Fellowship with other Christians is one of the most important and rewarding aspects of the Christian life. In order to grow in our commitment to community, we must understand what God’s purpose is for our relationship with other Christians. In this session, we will focus on the role and importance of living in community with other Christians, both in the marketplace and in the community. We cannot grow strong in our relationship with the Lord apart from being committed to a group that includes mature believers.

Day One

COMMON APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY

Write in the following chart what these Christians misunderstand about the community they are experiencing:

Person	Misunderstanding
<i>Phil:</i> “I like variety. I’ve attended five different churches and two retreats with other groups in the past eight weeks.”	
<i>Jean:</i> “I really enjoy my small group Bible study, but church services don’t seem to meet my needs.”	
<i>Wayne:</i> “I’m looking for a Christian group that will really minister to me and help me grow. But I don’t have time to get involved in their activities.”	
<i>Donna:</i> “It’s too hard to drag myself out of bed. Sunday is the only day I have to sleep in and read the paper.”	

Fill in the following statement about your own experience of fellowship, picking one of the previous statements, if applicable.

"I am probably most like _____ because ..."

Fellowship with other Christians is one of the most important and rewarding aspects of the Christian life. Yet at times, everyone will experience difficulty either in building or in maintaining close relationships with other followers of Christ. In order to grow in our commitment to community, we must understand what God's purpose is for our relationship with other Christians.

"God calls us not to solitary sainthood but to fellowship in a company of committed men." — David Schuller

"As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!' ... Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it" (1 Corinthians 12:20,21,27 NIV).

DEFINITION

The word **fellowship** or **community** is translated from the Greek word *koinonia*. It means "belonging in common to." The idea behind the word is that one person participates with another in something that is possessed in common by both.

It is common for non-Christians to "fellowship" around interests such as sports, hobbies, etc. For the Christian, fellowship may also take place in social settings, but true spiritual fellowship is based on our common relationship with Christ and His calling on our lives.

Read Hebrews 3:13 and 10:24,25.

- **What benefits of true Christian fellowship are found in these passages?**

- **Why would these benefits be important to your spiritual growth?**

You can receive good encouragement from Christian media (radio, books, CDs, TV), but nothing can replace the role of the individuals who will love you, encourage you and hold you accountable in various areas of your life.

GIVING FELLOWSHIP

Most of us are aware of the need for meaningful support from other believers. However, most Christians evaluate their fellowship and community with other Christians based on what they can receive. Sadly, very few Christians give much thought to how their participation in prayer, listening, studying, singing or talking is a means of giving fellowship to others.

Read the following Scriptures and describe how God wants you to minister to others through fellowship in your community.

Scripture	Your Ministry to Others
Romans 12:4-8	
Romans 12:12-16	
Romans 14:19	

Unless our fellowship includes giving as well as receiving, we will have a shallow, self-centered Christian experience. The very nature of Christianity requires giving—the greatest example being Christ Himself. If we are to give of ourselves in this way, we must depend on His love to keep motivating us.



KEY QUESTION

How do these perspectives compare with attitudes prevalent in our culture today?



LOVE: THE MOTIVATION OF FELLOWSHIP

- **What ingredients found in Acts 2:42-47 show that the early believers cared for one another?**
- **According to Jesus' words in John 13:34,35, why is love among believers always so important?**

“I will not permit any man to narrow and degrade my soul by making me hate him.” — Booker T. Washington

FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Read 1 John 3:11,14; 1 John 4:20,21; 1 Peter 4:8. How is my relationship with others a reflection of my relationship with God?

RECONCILIATION WITH OTHERS

Hurts and misunderstandings will occur even in a community that is characterized by love. True love, however, will seek to deal promptly with problems that arise.

The Bible gives specific guidance for what to do when a problem occurs in a relationship between fellow Christians. Choose one of the following situations and consider how you could have applied the appropriate Scripture.

Think of a time when ...

- **You offended someone. What could you have done to apply Matthew 5:23,24?**

- **You were aware that a Christian friend was caught up in a sin. How could you have followed Galatians 6:1?**

- **Someone offended you. What could you have done to obey Matthew 18:35?**

Our natural response when experiencing conflict with another person is to avoid that individual, but God calls us to be a part of a unified and loving body of believers. The purpose of seeking reconciliation is to maintain that spirit of unity and love in the body of Christ. This means that we, as Spirit-directed Christians, must always be willing to take the initiative in resolving conflicts.

“God is not satisfied until all His family love Him, and all His children love one another. No earthly father could really be content with less. If any of his children were cold towards him, or at feud with one another, then the parent’s heart must be sad.” — Harrington C. Lees

SOURCES OF COMMUNITY

Mark an “X” by your definition of the word “church.”

- ___ a building, with or without a steeple
- ___ a local group of people, a congregation
- ___ a denomination or religious organization
- ___ all people who have received Christ as Savior

The Bible uses the term “church” in two ways. One usage refers to all people who have trusted Christ as Savior: the universal church. *“And He put all things in subjection under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all”* (Ephesians 1:22,23 NASB).

The second usage refers to a local group of people gathered to worship and serve Christ and to experience regular Christian community. Since we have received Christ, we are already members of the universal church. God wants us also to be a part of a local community, which will usually be our primary source of fellowship.

Other sources of community that could supplement our primary source of giving and receiving fellowship:

- Small group Bible studies
- Conferences and retreats
- Marketplace or neighborhood movements and ministries

Questions to Ask in Choosing a Good Church:

- Do the sermons explain how to become a Christian and how to grow in Christ?
- Do the members demonstrate a vital relationship with Christ and an interest in spiritual growth?
- Is the Bible upheld as the Word of God? Is it clearly taught, including practical applications to your life?

Suggestions for Getting the Most Out of a Church Service or Christian Meeting:

- Pray before the service/meeting begins.
- Put daily concerns out of your mind, and focus on the Lord.
- Use your Bible and mark meaningful portions.
- Think about what the words of the hymns or songs mean.
- Take notes on the message; apply the truths you learn.
- Seek to meet new people and welcome them.

SUMMARY

Spending time in community with other believers is an essential part of a growing relationship with God. He commands us to build relationships with other Christians in order to give and receive love and encouragement.



ASSIGNMENTS

1. Review 1 Peter 1:16 and memorize Hebrews 10:25.
2. Get involved in community with other believers by choosing a specific step suggested in this session and applying it in your life this week.
3. Study and prepare Session 18.
4. Read the article, "How to Be an Effective Member of the Body of Christ."



FOR FURTHER STUDY

Encouragement by Larry Crabb

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Session 18

*Living in Light
of Eternity*

Living in Light of Eternity

Review: Living in community with other Christians is one of the most important and rewarding aspects of the Christian life. True spiritual fellowship is based on our common relationship with Christ and His calling on our lives. It involves giving fellowship as well as receiving it, resolving conflicts with fellow believers and finding good sources of encouragement and worship.

OVERVIEW

This session focuses on the perspective God wants us to have on our lives while on earth. This perspective causes us to evaluate and make choices according to God's value system rather than on man's fleeting,

Day One

QUOTES ON LIFE

"Most men live lives of quiet desperation."

—Henry David Thoreau, WRITER

"The tragedy of life is what dies inside a man while he lives."

—Albert Schweitzer, SCIENTIST, HUMANITARIAN

"We are born crying, live complaining, and die disappointed."

—Thomas Fuller, AUTHOR

"I have had few difficulties, many friends, great successes; I have gone from wife to wife, and from house to house, visited great countries of the world, but I am fed up with inventing devices to fill up 24 hours of the day."

—Ralph Barton, CARTOONIST, WHO LEFT THIS NOTE BEFORE HE TOOK HIS LIFE

"The meaningless absurdity of life is the only incontestable knowledge accessible to man."—Leo Tolstoy, AUTHOR

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness . . ."—Paul, APOSTLE OF CHRIST

- **All the people in the preceding quotes were very successful in their careers. In your opinion, what are some differences between success in making a living and living successfully?**

TWO PERSPECTIVES ON LIFE

—TEMPORAL VS. ETERNAL

Today we will look at two contrasting perspectives on life which ultimately determine a person's true success in living.

"...We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18 NASB).

Check two or three questions you are most likely to ask yourself when considering a significant decision.

- ___ Will it help me get ahead?
- ___ Will this glorify God?
- ___ Will it draw more people toward Christ?
- ___ Will this give me more security?
- ___ How could this affect a weaker believer?
- ___ Will this help me be more effective for God?
- ___ How will this affect my Christian growth?
- ___ Will others be impressed?
- ___ What kind of return will I get?
- ___ Is this in line with God's Word?
- ___ Is it to my advantage?
- ___ What will I get out of it?

"If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him." — C.T. Studd

- **Which view—temporal or eternal—has been most dominant in your life?**

The term **temporal** refers to any value or thing that lasts only as long as the world. **Eternal** refers to values and things that last into God's eternal kingdom. Temporal things or values are not wrong in and of themselves. God has created everything in the world for our use and enjoyment. Yet

He instructs us to guard against allowing temporal things or values to become the focus of our lives—that is, having a “temporal perspective.”

“Let temporal things serve your use, but the eternal be the object of your desire.” — Thomas à Kempis

Day Two

Jan is the human resources director for a large firm in the city. The position brings her into contact with many employees in the firm. Recently the president of the company offered her a new position with a substantial raise. This would make her the first woman vice president in the company. However, her new position and longer hours would substantially limit her contact with people and take her away from her family and friends because of the heavy travel required.



KEY QUESTION

If Jan has an eternal perspective, how might she evaluate the pros and cons of her decision?



If the direction of our lives is determined by temporal values, the outcome will reflect the attitudes that were described in the first quotations of this session. However, if the focus of our lives is on eternal things and values, then we have an “eternal perspective.”

How then do we live in a temporal world and keep an eternal perspective? We must make daily decisions and actions based on whether or not they advance our walk with God or further His kingdom.

APPRAISING LIFE BIBLICALLY

Read Philippians 3:4b-10 and 3:20. Fill out the following debit/credit chart using Paul’s examples of gain or loss.

DEBIT (LOSS)	CREDIT (GAIN)

- **If you evaluate your life as Paul did, what specific things would you count as loss compared to the value of knowing Christ?**
- **How did Paul’s awareness of his heavenly citizenship affect the way he lived his life on earth?**
- **How can your life be more reflective of a heavenly citizenship?**

FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Read Luke 16:19-31. What were the consequences of the rich man’s choices? What opportunities did the rich man ignore?

A TRUE STORY

The Treasured Ring

In the early 1980s, a woman inherited a lovely ring from her grandmother—a ring she had long admired and considered to be very valuable. She so treasured it that she hid it in a secret place whenever she left home for fear that a thief might break in and discover it. While she was out, she often worried about it and would immediately check on it upon returning.

Several years later, when renewing an insurance policy, the woman had a jeweler appraise the ring. To her dismay, he informed her that her “precious” ring was in fact only costume jewelry, worth a few dollars at most. That which she considered her most valuable possession turned out to be a fake, yet it had influenced her actions and emotions for years. Only an accurate appraisal of the ring’s true value set her free from its hold on her.

“But he who is spiritual appraises all things” (1 Corinthians 2:15 NASB).

THE GOAL OF PERSONAL PEACE, AFFLUENCE AND COMFORT

It is easy to be deceived into thinking that certain things the world values are of far greater importance than they really are in light of eternity.

Read Luke 12:15-21.

- **What was foremost on this man’s mind?**
- **Why did God say this man’s perspective made him a fool?**

Day Four

TREASURE IN HEAVEN

Read Matthew 6:19-21 and 31-34. Jesus said laying up “treasures in heaven” is the way to become “rich toward God” (Luke 12:21).

- **What are some specific ways in which you can invest in “heavenly treasures”?**

- **How could Jesus’ promise in Matthew 6:33 free you to focus on God’s kingdom?**

FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. What is the significance of making eternal investments?

Day Five

EVALUATING LIFE’S INVESTMENTS

Choose one or two areas from the list below and evaluate them from an eternal perspective. Write the changes that would result in your life if you began to pursue these areas from an eternal perspective.

Work

Relationships

Finances

Use of Time

Business Practices

Relationships With Non-Christians

Response to Problems

When Daniel Webster was asked for the greatest thought that had ever passed his mind, he replied, "My accountability to Almighty God."

SUMMARY

God desires that every believer would have an eternal perspective on life. He is pleased when we make our decisions in light of His perspectives because this shows that we are loving and trusting Him. As we allow His values, desires and will to govern and direct our lives more and more, we will experience a close, intimate relationship with our heavenly Father. And we will experience the fulfilling, abundant life that we have always sought.

"He who provides for this life but takes no care for eternity is wise for a moment but a fool forever." — John Tillotson

AN INVESTMENT PLAN

Jim Elliot served as a missionary in Ecuador, seeking to reach the remote Auca Indians. Soon after beginning his efforts to share Christ with them, he and his four companions were killed by these Indians. His diary contained this quote:

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose."

Stop and talk to the Lord. Ask Him to show you some temporal aspect of your life that you could invest for eternal purposes. Then complete the statement below. Begin with your own name. List the temporal area you are willing to give and what eternal value you expect to gain.

Example: I, Kim Smith, am no fool to give time (which I cannot keep) to gain the joy of seeing Lee grow in Christ (which I cannot lose).

I, _____, am no fool to give _____
(which I cannot keep) to gain _____
(which I cannot lose).



ASSIGNMENTS

1. Review Hebrews 10:25 and memorize 2 Corinthians 4:18.
2. Continue having a daily quiet time. Ask God to help you gain an eternal perspective on each day's activities.
3. Implement your "Investment Plan."
4. Read the article, "How to Help Fulfill the Great Commission."
5. Write a short statement expressing what you would like to have written about you at the end of your life.
6. Study and prepare Session 19.



FOR FURTHER STUDY

Living for What Really Matters by Stacy and Paula Rinehart
The On-Purpose Person by Kevin McCarthy

NOTES:

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Session 19

Finances in God's Kingdom

Finances in God's Kingdom

Review: In our last session, we learned that we have a choice in how we live our lives. We can live with an eternal perspective or we can live for the “here and now.” Living with an eternal perspective enables us to make wise choices that will benefit not only us but also those around us.

OVERVIEW

God's call on our lives means that we should evaluate every decision, relationship and value in light of the eternal perspective of glorifying God. Yet it can be very challenging to live consistently with an eternal perspective in the area of our finances. The goal of this session is to look at the biblical view of money, our responsibilities as stewards of the resources God has given us and the dangers of following the world's philosophy of using money.

Day One

A QUESTION OF VALUES

Bob became a Christian in college and moved to Silicon Valley after graduation where he attends Silicon Valley Bible Church. He worked hard for 10 years in the high tech industry and made enough to put a hefty down payment on a new 5,000-square-foot home in the hills but was still left with a \$4,000-a-month mortgage. With all the landscaping and new purchases, Bob's credit is stretched to the limit. Bob's pastor recently asked the congregation to give sacrificially for a new Sunday school building, but Bob has nothing to give. He can't even fulfill his general church pledge because of his debt. He works hard just to keep what he has accumulated, but it seems every day he's deeper in debt and can't enjoy the things or the little free time that he has.

Alan became a Christian the same year as Bob at the same college. He also moved to Silicon Valley, went to work for a large transportation company and joined Grace Bible Church. After seven years, he bought a two-bedroom condo that requires little or no maintenance. Alan enjoys having friends over for dinner and travels each summer to Honduras with a medical missionary group. He supports several missionaries and is one of the largest donors to the church growth program.

Alan and Bob ran into each other at an alumni meeting for their alma mater and shared their stories. When Bob left the meeting, he wondered why his life felt so empty compared to Alan's. Alan didn't have a quarter of the assets that he did, but he seemed so happy and content. "*Why does Alan have less but enjoys it more?*" Bob wondered out loud as he drove back to his office for a late-evening conference call.

- **Where might Bob have gone wrong in his approach to his career and finances?**

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF MONEY

The Bible contains about 500 verses on prayer, less than 500 on faith but more than 2,300 verses that deal directly with the topic of money. Jesus spoke more about money than about the topics of heaven and hell combined. Why might He have been so concerned with this topic?

God Owns It All!

"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to Him" (Psalm 24:1 NLT).

- **What are some implications for you from this verse?**

Read Deuteronomy 8:17,18.

- **Aren't money and manufactured goods essentially "ours" by virtue of our making or building them? Why or why not?**
- **What warnings are given in this passage? How might they apply to your specific abilities and work?**

Because God created everything in the world, He also owns everything. Therefore we are His stewards, managers and servants, not owners.

OUR ROLE AS HIS STEWARDS

"Stewardship is the responsibility of managing the assets, property or affairs of someone else."—Webster's Dictionary

- **What are some things that God has entrusted to your stewardship?**

Read 1 Corinthians 4:1,2.

- **Why is it important that we as stewards be “found faithful”?**

“Do you not know that your body is the temple (the very sanctuary) of the Holy Spirit who lives within you, whom you have received [as a gift] from God? You are not your own, You were bought with a price [purchased with a preciousness and paid for, made His own]. So then, honor God ...”
(1 Corinthians 6:19,20 Amplified Bible).

- **In what ways do we act as though we are the owners of our lives rather than God’s stewards or servants?**

Because everything belongs to God and because we have been bought by the blood of Christ, God is the owner of everything. We are simply stewards or managers of our lives and the things God entrusts to us.

“When the possessor of heaven and earth brought you into being and placed you in this world, He placed you here not as owner but as a steward.” — John Wesley

Read Matthew 25:19-30.

- **What was the responsibility of the servants?**

- **What was the reward?**

- **What responsibilities has God entrusted to you?**

FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Read Deuteronomy 10:14 and 1 Chronicles 29:10-13. What do you learn from these verses about God’s ownership? What was

“Money is a terrible master but an excellent servant.”

— P. T. Barnum

David’s attitude toward God and why?

THE POWER OF WEALTH

Read 1 Timothy 6:6-11.

- **What are the dangers of pursuing riches?**

- **What does the Scripture say is evil? What then is the moral status of money?**

- **What things should we pursue? Why?**

Our culture tells us to get all we can get—to look out for ourselves. Yet God has a lot to say about the importance that we place on money. Satan tempted Jesus with riches and fame if Jesus would only serve him. The love of money can cause us to serve our adversary rather than God.

FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Read 1 Timothy 6:17, Matthew 19:23, Genesis 13:2-13. Why do “riches” have such a strong influence on our lives? How can wealth affect our relationships?

Read Matthew 6:19-24.

- **What is the danger of “storing up treasures on earth”?**

- **Besides money, what are other “treasures” we tend to “store up” on earth?**

- **What does it mean to store up treasure in heaven? How does money relate to that?**

- **In verse 21, how does our use of money relate to our heart?**

Mammon was the name of the god of money in Jesus' day. To "worship Mammon" means to idolize money or the things it can acquire. Idolatry cuts to the heart of the issue: our pride. We desire possessions, power and control, the very things Satan offered to Eve and Adam in the garden (Gen 3:4-7).

"Happiness is not based on money. And the best proof of that is our family." — Christina Onassis

"Trust in yourself and you are doomed to disappointment; trust in money and you may have it taken from you, but trust in God, and you are never to be confounded in time or eternity." — D. L. Moody

FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Read Matthew 6:33; Galatians 6:7-9; Exodus 18:21; Luke 19:8. What are some other benefits that result from being a good steward?

THE ROLE OF GIVING

Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19. In this passage, the word "command" is used twice, which is unusual for the New Testament.

- **What are we commanded *not* to do?**

- **What are we commanded *to* do?**

- **What do you think it means to be "rich in good deeds"?**

- **What can you do to cultivate an attitude and lifestyle of generosity?**
- **What is the reward for a life of giving and sharing?**

Think about it ...

Giving smashes the idol, even for the secular person. Those who cling tightly to their money are in bondage to it. Those who have learned the JOY of giving are free from the grasping, selfish bondage that the love of money inflicts.

Giving blesses the receiver when done in a godly way.

Giving can have eternal impact for the kingdom and glorifies God.

WHERE SHOULD I GIVE?

“Elders who do their work well should be paid well, especially those who work hard at both preaching and teaching” (1 Timothy 5:17 NLT).

- **Why does the Bible place a high priority on giving to the church you attend?**

The Apostle John wrote to his friend Gaius, who was an elder in a young church in Asia, urging him to support and help the first missionaries of the Christian movement: *“Beloved, it is a fine and faithful work that you are doing when you give any service to the brethren, and especially when they are strangers. ... For these traveling missionaries have gone out for the Name’s sake. ... So we ourselves ought to support such people, in order that we may be fellow workers in the Truth”* (3 John 5-8 Amplified Bible).

- **Who are some missionaries or mission organizations that God might be leading you to support financially?**

Jesus came to seek those who are lost. He cared about the poor and the downtrodden. There are many church and para-church organizations which God will use to help you in your faith journey, which reach out to the poor, which help in times of crises and disasters, and which take the gospel to those in prison and in developing countries.

God does not expect you to give to everything. You must evaluate how He would have you invest the resources He has given you for His kingdom. Once regular giving is established, individual opportunities can be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

“When we acknowledge God’s ownership, every spending decision becomes a spiritual decision.” — Crown Ministries

FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Read 1 Corinthians 16:1,2; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5,14,15; Galatians 2:10; 1 Timothy 5:8. Remember the Scripture has over 2,300 verses regarding money, and many of those deal with giving. As a result of reading these passages, where might God be directing you to give?

Day Five

WHAT ABOUT TITHING?

There is a lot of discussion about the concept of tithing. Some think it is only an Old Testament practice; others believe it still holds true for today. Interestingly, the giving prescribed under the Law included support for the governing body in Israel, which was set up as a theocracy. The complete giving under the Law totaled about 23% of one’s income. The New Testament seems to indicate that we should give in accordance with our means; we are challenged to give sacrificially; and, we are told to give joyfully.

FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Read Proverbs 3:9,10; Proverbs 11:24; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; Acts 20:35. How does God’s view of giving differ from the world’s view of giving? How can we develop the proper attitude in giving?

APPLICATION

- **What do you think would be the immediate benefits of applying God’s plan of stewardship in your life?**

- **What would the eternal benefits be?**

SUMMARY

God looks at our hearts. God loved us so much that He gave the greatest gift of all—His one and only Son. God looks at the attitude of our hearts when we give. He wants us to give of our time, talents and treasure out of a heart of love and appreciation for who He is and what He has done for us.

“I place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in relation to the kingdom of God. If anything will advance the interests of the kingdom, it shall be given away or kept, only as by giving or keeping it I shall most promote the glory of Him to whom I owe all my hopes in time or eternity.”

— David Livingstone



ASSIGNMENTS

1. Review 2 Corinthians 4:18. Memorize Matthew 6:21 and Matthew 28:18-20.
2. Study and prepare Session 20.
3. Work through the following applications.
 - Bring your finances under the lordship of Christ. What would that mean for you?
 - Establish a plan to manage the money God has given you. If you don't have a budget, make at least a rough one that starts with setting aside at least 10% of your income for giving and another 5 to 10% for a savings plan. Seek to eliminate as much debt as possible and create positive cash flow, not spending more than you earn.
 - Evaluate your strategy for giving and trust God to enable you to give regularly as He leads. Remember: You *can't* serve two masters.



FOR FURTHER STUDY

Money and the Kingdom of God by Maurice A. Fetty
God & Your Stuff by Wesley K. Wilmer
Debt-Free Living by Larry Burkett



20

Session 20

*Spiritual Leaders
for a Spiritual
Movement*

Spiritual Leaders for a Spiritual Movement

Review: In the last session, we looked at our responsibility as stewards of the financial resources God has given us. We talked about bringing our finances under the Lordship of Christ and the character issues involved in doing that.

OVERVIEW

This final session of *PCL* focuses on a specific aspect of living in light of eternity. It looks at how we can have the greatest impact for Christ by becoming people of character involved in a spiritual movement focused on the goals and calling of the Great Commission.

Day One

THE IMPACT OF A SPIRITUAL MOVEMENT

In the first two decades of the 20th century, thousands of African-American citizens were publicly lynched—including almost 100 women. In four years, from 1918 to 1921, 28 blacks were actually burned at the stake by mob action. As late as the 1940s, lynching was still a common method of social control and intimidation in the southern states. In the segregated South, the practice was largely defended as a means to protect the honor of white women. It was often perpetrated against black men who were accused of raping a white woman or of simply addressing a white woman in a socially inappropriate fashion.

Jessie Daniel Ames, a southern white woman, believed that the most effective voice against lynching could come from those it was intended to benefit. In 1930, with only 12 compatriots, she created the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL). These 12 women became the foundation of a spiritual movement that would help transform the South.

Ames and the other charter members were all officers in various Protestant denominations. Apart from the brutal injustice of the practice, they were deeply concerned that the lynching of African-Americans by white “Christians” tended to “discredit Christianity and impede the work of missionaries among non-white peoples.” As Ames later commented, “That was one of the strongest appeals we could make.”

Although Ames was its only salaried worker, ASWPL soon had councils in all 11 of the formerly Confederate states and more than 40,000 active members. The key to Ames' success seemed to be her reliance on volunteers and a pre-existing network of religious and secular women's organizations. By the early 1940s, 109 women's associations, representing four million women, supported the ASWPL's work.

Through literature, speeches and word of mouth within its vast network, ASWPL undermined the ideas that fueled lynching and revealed the truth about the barbaric practice. They circulated petitions to show elected officials that there was widespread support for anti-lynching laws. They persuaded law enforcement officials to sign a pledge expressing opposition to lynching. By 1941, 1,355 police officers in the South had signed the pledge. In that same year, policemen in 40 documented cases had successfully opposed lynch mobs. ASWPL members were credited with "preventing the lynching of scores of blacks because of their timely phone calls to a sheriff or visits to a local jail."

While southern senators consistently blocked federal anti-lynching legislation, the ASWPL was able to fundamentally change the cultural attitudes and beliefs that undergirded the practice. And the impact was dramatic. The NAACP conceded "virtual disappearance of this form of oppression" by the early 1950s. As one historian commented on the era, "From its inception, the anti-lynching campaign was rooted firmly in a tradition of evangelical reform."

—The Commission on Interracial Cooperation, 1919-1944

- **What were some things that made these women so effective in their cause?**
- **Read Acts 1:8. What has been the impact of the movement Jesus began?**
- **Have we finished the task? Why would a movement be important to reach the world?**

DEFINITION

A **movement** is an ever-increasing group of people who:

1. Embrace a common purpose and mission
2. Move toward defined goals and objectives using powerful strategies and tools
3. Spread and multiply their goals and objectives
4. Use constant repetition to foster allegiance to their beliefs.

A “spiritual movement” is a similar group of people characterized by the awesome power of God working through a committed team of men and women to draw a lost world back to Himself.

The power of a movement is that it multiplies the effect of those working together so they will have a far greater impact than if they were to work separately. The sheer magnitude of the Great Commission compels us to work together in an unprecedented way to influence our cities for Christ.

“There is no substitute for the motivating power of a great cause. The happiest people on earth have found some cause and they stride through life propelled by a commitment to it.”

— Alan McGinnis, *Bringing Out the Best in People*

In addition to the supernatural aspect, a spiritual movement is comprised of three basic elements:

1. Momentum
2. Multiplication
3. Management

Momentum is that sense of excitement and vision for the cause transferred from the leaders to the followers or gained from certain activities.

Read Acts 2:40-47.

- **How would you describe the excitement level of the early church?**
- **How do you think that excitement affected their motivation to reach out to their city?**

Multiplication takes place as people are individually developed in their personal and spiritual growth to the point they can lead others in the same development.

Read 2 Timothy 2:2.

- **What was Paul’s goal in developing the spiritual leadership of Timothy?**

- **What are some implications for a movement like Cru City or some other organization?**

Management is the planning, organizing and leading of the many components of the movement.

Read Acts 6:1-4.

- **What kind of men were required to handle the “management” aspects of the early Christian movement in Jerusalem?**

- **What does that say about the need for spiritual leadership in every area of a movement?**

FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Read Matthew 14:15-21. Which verses describe momentum? Multiplication? Management?

BENEFITS OF INVOLVEMENT IN A SPIRITUAL MOVEMENT

- Provides a way to invite non-Christians and Christians to events that help them take the next step toward maturity.
- Provides places of growth for people with various needs that no one individual alone could meet.
- Creates an environment of vision and excitement that you can use to motivate those whom you wish to develop.
- Gives training and opportunity for those wanting to become spiritual leaders.

To have the greatest impact on the world, we should be involved in a spiritual movement that challenges us to live for Christ and invest our lives and resources most effectively, as well as provide the environment that will accelerate that cause.

“If you ask me what is the distinguishing mark of the Communist ... I would say that beyond any shadow of a doubt it is their idealism, their zeal, dedication, devotion to their cause and willingness to sacrifice.”

— **Douglas Hyde, *Dedication and Leadership***

THE CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP: BUILDING SPIRITUAL LEADERS

In his book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, Robert Coleman underscores Jesus' reason for working so closely with the 12 disciples: *"Why? Why did Jesus deliberately concentrate His life upon comparatively so few people? Had He not come to save the world? ... The answer to this question focuses at once on the real purpose of His plan for evangelism. Jesus was not trying to impress the crowd, but to usher in a kingdom. This meant that He needed men who could lead the multitudes ... If our objective is the world, we must do the same."*

Read Matthew 28:19,20.

- **What is Jesus calling every Christian to do?**
- **What did Jesus mean by the phrase, "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you"?**

"Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude" (Colossians 2:6,7 NASB).

- **What things might be involved in being "firmly rooted, built up and established" in a person's faith?**

"We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me" (Colossians 1:28,29 NASB).

- **What do you think it means to present someone "complete in Christ"?**
- **What kind of effort is required to build people to this level of maturity?**

- **Part of becoming like Christ means learning to make disciples. Whom might God be leading you to build into to begin this process?**

Building people to maturity in Christ will help us grow to maturity as we depend on the power of the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of those we are discipling.

“Leadership is not magnetic personality. That can just as well be a glib tongue. It is not making friends and influencing people; that is flattery. Leadership is lifting a person’s vision to higher sights, the raising of a person’s performance to higher standards, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations.” — Peter Drucker

THE DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS

Discipleship is the process of helping an individual to change from a worldly perspective for living to a perspective based on God’s Word. It is a progressive change in attitudes and behavior built on a growing commitment to God’s Word.

Read 1 Peter 2:2,3.

- **How does Peter characterize spiritual growth in this passage?**

- **What stages of growth are involved in raising children?**

Just as a child masters certain basic skills before moving on to more complicated ones, so the Christian needs to understand and apply basic spiritual truths at the beginning and then progress toward spiritual maturity. While not the only way of expressing it, the following diagram gives a good overview of the general steps of spiritual growth in a person’s life, seeking to become mature in Christ.



Notice that each level of development in the diagram has a title (e.g. “Evangelism”) and a purpose for the level (“Helping People to Receive Christ”).

In the Cru City movement, it is the responsibility of the “discipler” both to develop people and evaluate how each person is doing in his/her spiritual growth. Before a person moves on to the next level, the discipler needs to be sure the person being discipled exhibits certain “essential qualities” in his/her life. Exhibiting the “essential qualities” shows that he/she has truly grown in those areas and not just heard the concepts.

For instance, before moving a person from the “Christ-Centered Living” level to the “Ministry Development” level, the discipler would want to observe the following characteristics in that person’s life.

ESSENTIAL QUALITIES to observe before moving to the “Ministry Development” level:

- 1. Developing love for God.**
- 2. Walking in the Spirit and seeing growth in all areas of personal life.**
- 3. Gaining an eternal perspective on life.**
- 4. Growing in confidence of forgiveness and trust in God.**
- 5. Developing a servant’s heart for people.**
- 6. Willing to begin to share the gospel and minister to others.**
- 7. Growing in prayer and feeding on the Word in an established quiet time.**
- 8. Growing in fellowship with other Christians.**

A fuller discussion and complete list of “essential qualities” for each level of the discipleship process can be found in the Cru City study, *Leverage Your Life*, Session Two.

FOR A DEEPER LOOK: Read 1 Timothy 3:1-13, 5:17, 6:20,21. Why is it important for one to have certain “essential qualities” before he/she begins to lead? What are the dangers of being in leadership before being ready?

INVOLVEMENT IN A GREAT COMMISSION MOVEMENT

We have seen that the components of a spiritual movement include at least three aspects: momentum, multiplication and management. The goals for an **individual** in a spiritual movement committed to the Great Commission can be expressed by the words “win, build and send.” This phrase captures the movement of someone progressing up the steps of the chart above.

“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’” (Matthew 28:18-20 NIV).

- **Where do you see the ideas of win, build and send in this passage?**

- **In which of those areas and its activities are you most interested?**

USING YOUR GIFTEDNESS IN THE MOVEMENT

- **In Acts 6:3-5, what kinds of gifts were useful to serve the widows?**

- **Read Romans 12:6-8. In your group, discuss how these gifts might be employed in one or more of the areas of momentum, management and multiplication in your city.**

In the development of believers, the conducting of events and the administration of the movement, gifted people are needed to give leadership. It is important to note that whether leaders are serving in momentum, multiplication or management roles, the movement needs spiritual leaders—“full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit”—to accomplish the supernatural task to which God has called us.

• HOW TO WALK IN THE SPIRIT BY BILL BRIGHT

Chuck leaned on the horn one more time, a long, angry blast. He'd already been waiting 10 minutes. Where were they?

Marianne knew how nervous he was about this morning, his first Sunday teaching the fifth grade boys. He had *asked* her and the kids to be ready *on time!* Finally she arrived, opened the door, and helped the three-year-old into the car.

"I can't believe this," Chuck shouted as six-year-old Julie covered in the corner of the back seat. "I *told* you I had to be there early. I've got chairs to set up and materials to get ready!"

Marianne made a weak attempt to apologize as they pulled out of the driveway and headed—too fast—toward the church. Chuck ranted on with no consideration for his family's feelings ... until something deep inside him seemed to say, "You're in a fine state of mind to be teaching about God's love and patience, aren't you?" He recognized the "voice" in an instant. It spoke quietly in the midst of his anger, and as always, dove right to the heart of the matter. He could not argue; he knew the voice was right.

He glanced at his wife. Just seconds before he had been so angry he had seen her as the enemy. Now what he saw was the woman he loved, staring sadly out the window as the houses slipped past beside them. He had wounded her deeply with his outburst.

"Honey," he said, reaching for her hand. "I owe you an apology." The rest of the trip they spoke quietly together, mending hurt feelings, righting wrongs, restoring their communication.

Chuck had slipped back into the practices of the fleshly man like all of us at times. He had been so involved in the problem of the moment that he forgot who should be on the throne of his life. It is almost reflex to return to our fleshly I'll-do-it-myself ways when we forget to believe the promises of God's Word (John 1:9), and their provisions for our daily living. We forget 1 Corinthians 10:13, "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" (NASB).

Paul says in Romans 14:23, "... Whatever is not from faith is sin" (NASB). It is not sin itself that returns us to the fleshly state again; it is what we decide to do about that sin. If we stop breathing spiritually and allow sin to separate us from God and/or our belief in His power for our lives, our only choice is to live once again as fleshly Christians. On the other hand, as we choose to breathe spiritually—confessing our sins to God moment

by moment (exhaling), and breathing deeply of His forgiveness and restoration (inhaling)—we continue to keep Him enthroned and to live victorious lives.

As Chuck drove his family to church that Sunday morning he “exhaled” when he confessed his sin to God and his family. And he “inhaled” a fresh filling of the Spirit as he opened his heart once again to God’s restorative powers, and worked things through with his wife. When he stood before those fifth grade boys he was ready to speak to them with conviction of God’s unconditional love for us as His redeemed children. The boys sensed in their teacher a humility and honesty that drew them to the Savior, and before class had finished three of the children had given their hearts to God. The Lord brings glory to Himself through the committed lives of His children.

As you “exhale” and “inhale” spiritually, you will notice a difference in your life. You will become “spiritually fit” and aware of a new freedom and power in your witness. When sin enters, do not let it set you back. Simply keep short accounts with God and do not allow sin to accumulate.

John writes, “My little children, I am telling you this so that you will stay away from sin. But if you sin, there is someone to plead for you before the Father. His name is Jesus Christ, the One who is all that is good and who pleases God completely” (1 John 2:1, TLB).

As your relationship with the Holy Spirit matures, you will discover it is both critical and progressive. It is critical, in that as you continue applying His power moment by moment, you will learn *how* to appropriate by faith what He offers you. Your relationship is progressive, in that by faith you will grow and mature in your Spirit-controlled walk. It is often easy to identify a believer who has lived by the Spirit for many years, for the fruit of the Spirit is easily seen.

The concept of “spiritual breathing” is a simple one, but it needs to be understood in a broader context. I would like to discuss four things we need to take precautions about in our Christian walk:

- being certain we are filled with the Holy Spirit;
- preparing for spiritual conflict;
- knowing our rights as children of God;
- living by faith.

In order to walk in the Spirit, we first must *be sure that we are filled with the Spirit*. In Ephesians 5:18 we are told, “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (KJV). To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be directed and empowered by Him as a way of life. Jesus warned, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one

and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon” (Matthew 6:24, NASB).

There is a “throne” in each heart—our control center—and there is room on the throne for only one reigning power. The struggle within us is over control of that throne, and the Christian who is ruled by self has removed the Holy Spirit from the throne of his life.

It is imperative that we remember God’s *command* to us and His *promise*. He commands us, “Be filled”; He promises that if we ask anything according to God’s will, He will hear and answer (1 John 5:14,15). Because He commands us to be filled with His Holy Spirit, we can be sure that we are asking something that is His will for our lives. And when we pray according to His will, He has promised to answer our requests. Therefore, we can *expect* Him to fill and empower us when we sincerely desire to surrender the control of our lives to Him and trust Him to fill us with His Spirit. Then we must continue to breathe spiritually, “exhaling” by confession and “inhaling” by appropriating His forgiveness and power in our lives by faith.

What about emotions in the experience of the believer? Feelings add color and excitement, and are a valuable part of life, but they are extremely fickle, changing with the weather. As Christians we live by *faith*, trusting in God’s trustworthiness and the promises of His Word. If we depend on feelings for a confirmation of His working in our lives, we put ourselves in a dangerous position and will almost always be disappointed.

Let’s compare the process of believing God and living the Christian life to a train. The power is in the engine (FACT), the fuel is in the coal car (FAITH), and bringing up the rear is the caboose (FEELINGS). No engineer would couple his train to a caboose and expect it to pull the load. The engine—fact—gives Christianity its power, and often *feelings* follow naturally, as a bonus. But if they are not there, it does not mean the *facts* have changed.

Refuse to seek emotional experiences as proof of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling. If you have a sincere hunger and thirst for God’s righteousness, and you have confessed your sin, surrendered to His control, and trusted Him to fill you, you can be assured that *you are filled with the Holy Spirit!* God is faithful to His promises.

John 14:21 reminds us, “He who has My commandments, and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him” (NASB). It does not say, “He who *feels love* for me,” but, “He who *keeps My commandments*.”

Feelings usually follow the decisions and actions of our lives, but we need not look for them nor depend on them to confirm fact for us. Looking for

an emotional experience is denial of the concept of faith, and whatever is not of faith is sin (Hebrews 11:6). When we believe God, He honors our faith and we can live life with assurance that He is filling us, moment by moment.

Second, as all good soldiers who are prepared for battle, we must be ready for spiritual conflict. We who have become spiritually alive and committed to our Lord, must *expect resistance from the enemy*, and one of his sharpest weapons is guilt. He will poke and prod when we least expect it, with stinging nettles that itch and swell. He will accuse us of sins for which we have already accepted God's forgiveness, and he will do everything possible to destroy our security in Christ, for he knows that a doubting soldier is worthless in battle. The good news is that we have a choice!

- Do not allow Satan to sink arrows into his target. A "moving target" is always harder to hit.
- Refuse to withdraw into unnecessary introspection (one of Satan's favorite ploys) and you will not probe into areas that have already been forgiven and forgotten by the Savior!
- Confess to God only what the Holy Spirit impresses upon your heart as something which is standing between you and His complete filling of your cleansed heart.

We are told in 1 Peter 5:7,8 to let God have all of our worries and cares, for He is always thinking about us and watching everything that concerns us. We are to be careful—alert to inevitable attacks from Satan, the great enemy, who prowls about the earth like a cunning lion looking for his next victim to tear apart. He is a shrewd and merciless foe, attacking either subtly or obviously, attempting to defeat and destroy us. But we can be confident that "greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4, NASB).

Two thousand years ago Satan was defeated when Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins. Victory is ours, *now!* We do not look forward to victory but backward, toward the cross where the enemy was defeated once and for all. We need not fear Satan as long as we walk in the Spirit, depending on Christ for our strength and provision.

The third area we must be aware of if we are to walk consistently in the Spirit is that of our rights as children of God (John 1:12). We have inherited an inexhaustible supply of love, power, forgiveness and grace from our Father. It is our responsibility to learn how to draw upon that supply.

The source book which declares our rights of inheritance is, of course, the Bible. As believers we need to spend time reading, studying, memorizing and meditating on God's Word to live in a way that will please Him.

The desires of His heart for us, His precious children, are hidden in the Scriptures. As we search for these nuggets of truth, they are revealed to us by the Holy Spirit Himself.

For example, when Christ takes up residence in our lives, our bodies become His living temples. Jesus promised us His special power to live holy lives (Romans 12:1,2). As His children, this is something we've inherited.

We also can be effective witnesses for Him. When His Spirit directs us, we are filled with His love for the lost. As we share truth with them, He speaks through us.

One word of caution. We must be careful not to think of Bible study, prayer and witnessing as "works" that justify our position in Christ. In truth, it is just the opposite. The works we do in the name of our Lord are the results of living to please the Savior, evidence of a lifetime given to the moment-by-moment filling of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, if we are to walk in the Spirit, we must live *by faith*. It is sad to see the pain of sincere Christians who have been deceived by a displaced emphasis on emotions. When unrealistic expectations are levied by others who have set their own standards of proof for the Spirit, there can be nothing but disappointment ahead. Praise God, we do not live by fluctuating feelings, but by faith in His never-changing Word!

And His Word is not silent on the issue of faith. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that "without faith it is *impossible* to please Him" (NASB, italics ours). Galatians 3:11 reminds us that ... "the righteous man shall live by faith" (NASB).

Faith requires believing when it is not easy to do so. But God has given us a lifeline to hold fast to when things are rough. Romans 8:28 promises us, "all things ... work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (NASB).

It is not easy to learn to say, "Thank You, Lord," when your heart is breaking, but it is a priceless addition to the Christian walk. Writer Joseph Bayly, who has lost three sons in death over the years, has said that God was never closer than when he and his wife walked away from a fresh grave.

Praise and thanksgiving are gifts expressing our trust in God in the midst of overwhelming circumstances. Have you lost a loved one to death? Has pain and disease seemed to control your body? Have you received hurts you did not deserve? Have you suffered financial reverses? Have you tried thanking God, while none of it is making sense? Have you told Him you trust Him even when life is crushing in on you?

If we believe God and His promises when things seem to be falling apart

around us, we are acknowledging His lordship, and obeying His command to trust Him when we cannot see the end. In 1 Thessalonians 5:18 we read: “In *everything* give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (NASB, italics ours). He promises rewards when we trust Him. He has said “all things” will work together for good, and He stands behind His Word.

It may seem that only a fool would be thankful under such circumstances but if we believe God’s Word to be true, then we need to exercise our will and give thanks when there seems to be no reason for thanksgiving. Over the years Christians around the world have learned some sweet and valuable lessons through simply being obedient to God’s Word, and giving thanks *when they least felt like it*.

To sum up, a Christian will want to walk in the Spirit moment by moment because God has commanded that we do so. It is the only way to keep Christ on the throne, and in control of our lives. And as self decreases and Christ increases (Galatians 2:20), the result will be unbelievable growth, and an abundant Christian life.

—*Transferable Concept 4*, from the Transferable Concept series by Bill Bright.

• HOW TO PRAY BY FAITH BY BILL BRIGHT

“Mommy,” the child asked, “what’s prayer?”

“It’s two people who love each other talking together—one of them is God, and the other is you.”

Prayer is simply communicating with the Father who loves us unconditionally. The well-known “hot line” that connects Washington, D.C., with the Kremlin, offers the President instant, direct communication with Russia in the event of a national emergency. If we liken it to the communication lines between the believer and God, the sad truth is that our spiritual “hot line” to God’s heart sits idle much of the time. We seem to forget the line exists until an emergency or crisis arises to remind us that we are not sufficient unto ourselves.

Who can pray?

Instinctively man knows he should pray, and he does—if only to gods of sticks and stone. Whenever we are faced with tragedy, heartache, sorrow or danger, we acknowledge the need within us to turn to someone greater than ourselves and more powerful than our circumstances. But peril lies in praying ignorantly. When people have prayed to gods of blood, fire and war, they have emerged sadistic, ruthless and militaristic. Man assimilates the moral character of the object he worships. That applies to the Christian as well.

Scripture points out, “There is one God, and one mediator ... between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5, NASB). Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6, NASB). Sound exclusive? That is exactly what Jesus intended, to show us that the way to God is very narrow and our focus needs to be on Him and no one else. He must be our only object of worship, for “... with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, [we] are being transformed into the same image ...” (2 Corinthians 3:18, NASB). We worship the one true, holy and loving God, and focusing on Him makes us more like Him every day.

Prayer requires a clean heart. Imagine that we have been invited to tea with the Queen of England. What a flurry of preparation would take place! For days we would shop for just the right outfit for the occasion. We would appear before Her Majesty prepared head to toe with a proper haircut and a speech ready to prevent embarrassing blunders.

God asks only that we bring a clean and open heart into His presence. The beloved psalmist said, “If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear” (Psalm 66:18, NASB). Our holy God cannot commune with sin; it is the eternal separator. If we would have God hear our prayers, we must confess any sin in our lives and enter His chambers dressed in robes of purity.

We dare to approach His throne with our petitions and praise only on the authority of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our only mediator. On the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus said no less than six times, "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:14, NASB).

To whom do we pray?

Every member of the Trinity is involved in our prayers. We pray to the Father in the name of the Son through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Prayer ushers us into the presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords, and we bow in reverence and awe. But He is our Father and delights in our communication. Because of this we can come before Him confident and relaxed, with joyful hearts filled with expectancy. God loves us more than any human being ever could.

Why do we pray?

- 1. Our prayers bring glory to God.** Although our Lord delights in our praise and requests, the purpose of prayer is to glorify Him. Jesus said, "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13, NASB).
- 2. We communicate with God through prayer.** Some think of prayer as a convenient "escape hatch" from trouble, a direct route to getting their way, and a means to manipulate God into meeting their needs. To use prayer this way is like filling a shiny new Cadillac with balloons. Prayer is meant to be so much more.

Prayer is a holy line of communication, instituted and commanded by God for the exclusive use of His precious children. The New Testament is filled with directives about prayer and its role in our Christian walk. "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17, NASB); "Keep watching and praying ..." (Matthew 26:41, NASB); "... pray about everything ..." (Philippians 4:6, TLB). Prayer is important to God and vital to us. We cannot grow without it.

- 3. Prayer is fellowship between God and His children.** God waits eagerly for us to come to Him in prayer. Desiring our fellowship, He created man. His love for us was so perfect, so unquenchable, that in spite of our self-centeredness He gave His only Son to pay the price for sin and open a way for us to come into His presence. Incredible as it seems, God wants our fellowship!

Proverbs tells us that "... the prayer of the upright is His delight" (Proverbs 15:8, NASB). In our egotistical thoughts, prayer has become something for *us*. Something we do to meet *our* needs. But we are being told here that prayer meets the desire of *God*, and that we must spend time with Him because our prayers are gifts we offer to please and delight the Lord we love.

- 4. Christ set an example of prayer for us.** When Jesus was here among us, prayer was a priority for Him. Even in days filled from morning to nighttime with an impossible, pressured schedule, Jesus found time for

prayer. He was dependent upon that fellowship with His Father. He escaped into prayer and restored His wounded spirit. How much more should we be aware of our own need for prayer?

5. **Prayer brings results.** Praying does change things. Jesus prayed for Lazarus who had died and God restored a beloved friend to life (John 11:43). Elijah prayed that God would forbid it to rain and for three and one-half years no rain fell in the land. When he prayed again that God would let it rain, the sky became black with heavy clouds that spilled out on the parched ground (James 5:17,18). There is undeniable power in the prayer of the believer.
6. **Prayer is spiritual nurture for the growing soul.** Talking to God and listening for His response is part of His design to nurture us as we mature in Him. Just as a small child needs nourishment and love to grow strong physically, we need regular food for our souls if we want to mature spiritually. Now and then a day may slip by when we forget to feed on God's Word or communicate with the Father and there may be no apparent ill effects. But if we continue to deprive ourselves of steady nourishment, we will quickly begin to show the signs of spiritual malnutrition. In times of stress we'll discover that we have lost the strength to live victorious, fruitful lives.

When should we pray?

We are told to pray *without ceasing*, to talk to God about everything as we go through the day. We ask for wisdom in difficult situations. We thank Him for blessings as they occur. We pray for the salvation of loved ones and the healing of the sick. We pray for wisdom for our leaders, for our pastors and politicians. And all of this is done as life unfolds around us—on the freeway, in the kitchen with children hanging on our knees, walking through the office.

But there is also a need for *time alone* in a set-apart place where we can kneel undisturbed before an open Bible and talk peacefully with God as we read His Word. We hear God's voice through His Word and through the impressions that come as we open our hearts to meditate in His presence.

As you read the Bible, ask the Holy Spirit to make your reading meaningful and uplifting. Pause often to thank God for His loving provisions, to confess the weaknesses in your life as you see them reflected in Scripture, to ask for the boldness and faith the apostles had, and to thank Him for fresh insights into His plan for your life. Invite God to speak to you, then wait to hear His voice.

Group prayer, in the company of other Christians, is another vital part of an active prayer life. Yet few gatherings are more dull, unattractive and boring than the average prayer meeting. It is a lack of individual preparation that creates the emptiness we feel at times like these. When we spend

time with God in private, preparing for our time together, we come already filled with His presence, expecting Him to do great things as we meet together with Him. Without preparation we can only parrot prayers we have patterned after someone else, and there is no heart in what we say.

How exciting it becomes to talk to God as though He were actually present—as indeed He is. Prayers are then heartfelt and spontaneous, directed by the Spirit.

What does prayer consist of?

The basic elements of prayer can be remembered easily by using the word “ACTS” as a reminder: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication.

Adoration. To adore God is to worship and praise Him, to honor and exalt Him in our hearts and minds. Our prayers should be an expression of complete trust in Him, a confidence that He hears us. Prayer is much more than words. It is the expression of our hearts, open before God.

Reading aloud psalms of praise and similar portions of Scripture can greatly enrich our prayer time. Time spent praising God for His goodness will warm the coldest heart.

Confession. For the Christian who seeks fellowship with God, prayer needs to begin with confession on the basis of Psalm 66:18 (NASB): “If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear.” Isaiah 59:2 reminds us, “Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear” (NASB). Confessing our sin prepares the heart for thanksgiving and supplication.

If our discipline of prayer begins with worshipful adoration of God, any sin in our lives will be revealed by the Holy Spirit. For as we see God in His holiness and love, we become aware of our own sin and unworthiness. Someone dressed in white who enters a dark coal mine will not know how smudged and dirty he or she has become until he or she stands once again in the light. It is the same with sin. Until we expose ourselves to the “light of the world” (Jesus), we cannot see the dark places in our lives.

We always can be totally transparent with God, for He knows us intimately. We have no secrets before Him. The hairs of our head are numbered and He knows our thoughts before we think them. We cannot hide behind a facade or fool God. So we can come in complete freedom and honesty and tell Him exactly how we feel. If you do not feel spiritual, tell Him. If your heart is cold, confess it. If you have been disobedient, confess it and receive His forgiveness and cleansing; be restored to fellowship once again.

True confession is honest and it involves:

- acknowledging that our sin is wrong and therefore is grievous to God;
- accepting God's forgiveness for our sins—past, present and future;
- repenting, aligning our attitude with God about our sin. When we change our attitude, the Holy Spirit then helps us to change our actions accordingly.

We can be confident in our confession because 1 John 1:9 promises: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (NASB). Beware of unhealthy extremes of confession that lead to unnecessary introspection. Accept God's forgiveness once and for all for your sin, then concentrate on His love and acceptance of you as His child.

Thanksgiving. There is no better way to demonstrate our faith than to say, “Thank You, God.” The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that without faith it is impossible to please the Father (Hebrews 11:6). We are commanded to give thanks for all things because “this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:18, NASB). To fail to give thanks is to disobey God.

If we are filled with God's Holy Spirit and recognize that He controls all things, we can thank Him not only for the blessings of each day, but also for the problems and adversities. When we meditate on the goodness of God, the salvation He has freely given, eternal life in Christ, the chance to serve, health, food, shelter, a free country, we are obeying God's command. And praise has a remarkable effect on us. It is invigorating and edifying. It focuses our attention on what we *have* instead of what we *want* and we can see proof that God is at work in us.

But praise involves thanking God for adversity as well. Make a list of every problem, disappointment and heartache in your life. Then begin at the top and thank God for each entry. We are commanded to give thanks in adversity as a demonstration of faith. Expressing our faith pleases God and allows Him to make Himself strong on our behalf. A critical, unbelieving spirit displeases Him and hinders His efforts to bless and enrich our lives, and keeps Him from using us for His glory.

Supplication. Paul encourages us, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6, NASB). To many Christians, prayer is like window-shopping; they spend a great deal of time looking, but they never make a choice to buy. We must know our hearts; we must know what we need and ask God in specific terms, expecting Him to answer.

Supplication includes petition for our own needs and intercession for others. We should pray daily for our spouses, our children and our parents. We should pray for our neighbors and friends, our pastor and missionaries, and for other Christians to whom God has given special responsibility. Pray for those in authority.

Pray especially for the salvation of souls, for a daily opportunity to introduce others to Christ and for the fulfillment of the Great Commission in our generation. Begin with your community. Pray for and seek to find one or more Christian friends with whom you can establish prayer partnerships.

Christians often do not realize the importance of intercession. The apostle Paul continually prayed for his converts (Ephesians 1:15,16) and he also asked them to pray for him (Ephesians 6:19). Every Christian should pray for others and should encourage other Christians to pray for him or her.

We must pray for ourselves also that our inner man may be renewed and quickened, empowered by the Holy Spirit. We need to tell God about our problems and ask Him for wisdom and guidance. We should ask expectantly for strength to resist temptation, and for the comfort we need when sorrowing. There is nothing too small or too great to bring before the Lord in prayer. What is important to us is *important to Him*.

Can we pray with confidence? How?

Can we expect answers to our prayers? Scripture says we can if we abide, ask, believe and receive.

Jesus revealed *abiding* as the key to successful prayer, promising, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you” (John 15:7, NASB). In other words, if our lives are totally yielded to Him, with His Word abiding in us so that we know His will, we can ask anything we wish—for our desire will be to do His will.

Abiding is simply walking in the Spirit with no unconfessed sin in our lives and being totally available to God. As we pray according to His will, we know He will answer us (1 John 5:14).

To expect answers to our prayers, we must *ask specifically*. James says, “... You do not have because you do not ask.” He goes on to explain, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures” (James 4:2,3, NASB). The Lord Jesus speaks with the authority of God when He says, “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it” (John 14:14, NASB).

Jesus promised, “All things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive” (Matthew 21:22, NASB). *Believing God* is the heart of answered prayer. God does not ask that we have great faith, simply that we believe in a

great and trustworthy God. Jesus said, “ ... If you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you” (Matthew 17:20, NASB).

But faith is not something we can manufacture on our own; it comes from God (Ephesians 2:8,9). The Holy Spirit produces faith in us as we continue to walk in obedience. Faith is like a muscle: If we don't use it, we lose it.

Receive, by faith, the answers to your requests. If we are abiding in Christ and are directed by the Holy Spirit, if we are praying according to the Word and will of God, we can *expect* God to answer our prayers. So be prepared to see God work. Imagine that you are receiving the answers you are seeking and begin to thank God for answered prayer!

Even greater things!

As we bow in prayer, we are tapping a source of power that can change the course of history. God's might, power, love, wisdom and grace are available to us if we believe Him and claim His provision. Prayer is the greatest privilege of the Christian experience because it allows us to be in the very presence of God. When we take the promises of God seriously, claiming all we have been promised, there is no limit to what God can do.

If you would like to unleash the full power of prayer in your life, join me in this prayer:

“Father, You said I have not because I ask not. So right now I am claiming Your promises because I want to live in victory as You have promised that I can, for Your glory. I pray in Your all-powerful name. Amen.”

—*Transferable Concept 9*, from the Transferable Concept series by Bill Bright.

• HOW TO LOVE BY FAITH BY BILL BRIGHT

Maybe you've known someone like Georgia ... you wouldn't class her as a friend, but she's not an enemy either. She's a person you tolerate because she shares an office in the same suite as you. She says she attends church, but she doesn't act like a child of God. Her conversation is sprinkled with four-letter words and laced with the most recent "news" about fellow employees.

You have kept your distance because you didn't want to be associated with her, but Georgia needs to be loved and God has laid it on your heart to love her. Is it really possible to love someone like that?

Man's greatest need is to be loved. We all seek to give it and we all yearn to receive it. Few barriers can resist the mighty force of love, especially God's love. It was God's love that changed the course of history. First-century Christians' love for one another was what set them apart from the rest of the world.

At the time of Christ, hatred was the common practice for Greeks, Romans and Jews. Racism, caste systems, wars and prejudice reigned and ruled. So when the followers of Jesus—a sharply diverse group—demonstrated love to one another, the rest of the world sat up and took notice. Jesus had said, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35, NASB). He was right. Onlookers watched and responded in amazement, "Behold how these people love one another!" Soon many of them joined the revolution of love as it swept their world.

The Greek language gives us a better understanding of the meaning of "love." In English we use the same word for various, even unrelated, meanings but Greek is much more specific.

Eros is a word translated love but it actually speaks of sensual desire; it is not used in the New Testament.

Phileo, a second word for love, refers to the kind of love found between friends or relatives, and conveys a sense of loving someone because he or she is worthy of our love.

Agape is the third and purest kind of love. It is used to describe the love God has for us. It is not expressed merely through emotions but is often an act of the will. It is God's supernatural love for us revealed supremely through our Lord's death on the cross in our place. It is the Godlike love He longs to reproduce in us and through us to others, and its source is the Holy Spirit.

Agape is love based on the character of the person doing the loving. It's

not dependent on whether the subject of the love is worthy. Sometimes it is love “in spite of,” but never love “because of.”

A New Commandment

The Lord Jesus gave His disciples a new commandment which applies to us today. He said, “Love each other just as much as I love you” (John 13:34, TLB). But what kind of love was He referring to? To answer that we must explore the kind of love with which He has loved us.

God’s love was expressed through His only Son, Jesus: “... that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16, NASB). It is the very same love that kept the Son of God hanging on the cross in our place to die for our sins. It is the supernatural, unconditional love that God makes available to believers with the command that we are to love one another.

Is it possible that you and I can love with Godlike love? Had the day of Pentecost not occurred, God’s love would never have been duplicated in human form. But with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the disciples found themselves able to love each other as Jesus had. They even miraculously came to love their enemies, the angry mobs who had crucified their Lord. The very people who threatened their lives were seen in a new light.

That love, that *agape love*, is available to us today. It is not an emotional experience but a divine, supernatural power that originates with the Father. This kind of love flows through the Holy Spirit to us, and through us to those in the world around us. This is what makes it possible for us to love someone like Georgia.

As we acquire God’s love within us and learn to incorporate His loving ability into our lives, there are several things we need to know about this powerful love that is ours.

God loves us with unconditional love! We are loved because of Him, not because of us. His love for us is never based on our performance. He loves us *in spite of* our disobedience, weakness, sin and selfishness. His love is so great that He chose to love us, even to die for us *while we were still sinners* (Romans 5:8). His love is unconditional and completely undeserved.

We are commanded to love. A wealthy, successful young lawyer from the Sanhedrin once approached Jesus with a question his own trained mind could not answer. “Sir,” he said, “which is the most important command in the law of Moses?” Jesus answered without hesitation. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind,” He said. “This is the great and foremost commandment.” The second greatest commandment? Jesus chose, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (See Matthew 22:36-40.)

Every other commandment, every other law given by God or designed by man, finds its roots in one of these two which Jesus said were the most important of all. Keep these two laws and you are fulfilling them all. And then Jesus added His own, “This I command you, that you love one another” (John 15:17, NASB).

Our Own Efforts

We cannot love in our own strength. We often refuse to love unlovely people. It is easier to love the “beautiful” people, or to love those who are good to us and those who appreciate what we do for them. Why love anyone who is unattractive, or peculiar, or grouchy or disagreeable? Or why even try to love those who just don’t love us? First, because God says we must. Second, He provides the strength to obey His every command. In ourselves we have neither the power nor the motivation to love the unlovely and the Bible explains why: “The old sinful nature within us is against God. It never did obey God’s laws and it never will” (Romans 8:7, TLB).

We cannot demonstrate *agape love*, God’s unconditional love for others, through our own efforts. We can resolve over and over to love someone who gets on our nerves and within a matter of days (if it takes that long) we fall right back into our old patterns of avoidance and procrastination, or whatever we are best at. By nature we are too proud to “stoop” to such lowly measures and attempt to love someone who does not love us in return or even appreciate our efforts on his or her behalf. Our pettiness and jealousies, our pride and selfishness block our path to obedience. It’s humanly impossible to love others the way Jesus tells us to love.

With God’s Love

But with God in our lives, and through the empowering of the Holy Spirit, God enables us to be different from what we are naturally. He provides the motivation we lack, the ability to love, the creativity to show our God-love. It is a new kind of love altogether.

We can love with God’s love. It was God’s kind of love that brought us to Christ. It is this same love that sustains and encourages us each day. It empowers us to minister to fellow believers as we have been commanded. This is the same love that brings others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

But how do we get God’s love into our lives? It and the Holy Spirit are inseparable; when we receive Him, we receive His love. Scripture reminds us: “We feel this warm love everywhere within us because God has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love” (Romans 5:5, TLB). God is a Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit is love (Galatians 5:22). When we are directed by the Spirit we are filled with His love.

And so we are filled with God's love and ready to love the world with this remarkable, unconditional, boundless love. But can we make this love a practical reality in our lives? How will others ever know they are loved if we cannot show them?

Love by Faith

We love by faith. Everything about the Christian life is based on faith; nothing we have received from God has come to us except through faith. We love by faith just as we received our salvation—by faith. We love by faith just as we walk by faith. We love by faith just as we are filled with the Holy Spirit by faith.

Is there a limit? Yes. After we are able to love others as much as Jesus loves us, we can stop. It is God's will for us to love each other, and He does not command us to do anything that He will not enable us to do. We are reminded in 1 John 5:14,15 that anything we ask according to His will He hears and answers. Do you want to love with God's love? Simply claim His promise as it relates to His command to love and take it by faith.

A fellow worker and I had had a disagreement. I was finding it extremely difficult to work with him. I wanted to love him and I knew that I was commanded to do so; yet it was more than I could do. I could not generate the love I needed for this person. And then I was reminded of 1 Peter 5:7 where I am told to cast my anxiety on God because He cares. In obedience I gave the problem and my inability to solve it back to God, and claimed His love for this man by faith. The troubled feelings I had harbored in my heart were gone the moment I considered the problems in God's capable hands.

Within a few hours, someone slipped a note under my door. To my surprise it was an unexpected letter of apology from this man I had disagreed with. Without knowing about my decision to love him, he too had decided that love was the answer. We met for coffee and prayer, and the fellowship we shared that afternoon was warmer and more rewarding than any we had ever shared.

Love Yourself

Make a list of the people you don't like and claim the promise of 1 John 5:14,15. And begin *now* to love them by faith in this promise from God.

Do you love yourself? Perhaps you will find your own name on your list. The truths of 1 Corinthians 13 (entire chapter) apply to ourselves as well, and can be claimed for ourselves by faith the same as we would claim them for anyone else. Ask God to give you His eyes so that you can see yourself as He sees you. Jesus loves you without reservation, unconditionally. He loves you so much that He died for you while you were still in

sin, unaware of your need for His forgiveness. If He—God Himself—can love you that much, who are you to disagree?

Pray for each person on your list, asking the Holy Spirit to fill you with God's love for every one of them. The next time you meet or talk to someone on your list, draw upon His limitless, inexhaustible, overwhelming love for them as an act of faith. Expect God to work through you by faith. Expect Him to use your smile, your gentle words, your patience to express His love to them.

Try this love on each “enemy” in your life—everyone who angers you or ignores you or bores you or belittles you—every frustrating human being you know. Then wait to see the results. Men and women around us are just waiting, longing to be loved with God's irresistible love.

The road home seemed longer than usual that rainy April night. The man at the steering wheel had just learned about God's command to love unconditionally as God Himself loves His children. And now, with the windshield wipers beating out a steady cadence he could not shake the picture of his own son.

It had been a foolish argument over ... funny, he could not even recall what they had argued about, but Wayne had stomped from the house and he had not heard from him since. It had been months now, and he did not know whether his boy was dead or alive. The knot of longing in his middle was growing. “Oh, God,” he cried out into the darkness, “I won't believe that Wayne is dead. You know I need to make things right with him. In spite of everything, I want to tell him that I love him.” Tears pushed their way down his cheeks and disappeared into his greying beard. “Please, Father,” he whispered hoarsely, “let me tell my son how much I love him.”

He turned the corner and glanced at the house. Could he be seeing things? The light in Wayne's room was on. It could only mean that the boy was back. Leaving the car in the driveway, he rushed through a downpour into the house. “Wayne,” he called “Son, is that you?”

Into the early hours of the morning the father and son talked. “I was so scared to come home, Dad,” the boy said. “You have every right to hate me.”

“I don't hate you, son,” the father said. “God and I love you ... just the way you are.” The father and son embraced. “We're going to make it; you, me ... and God.”

How exciting to have such a dynamic joyful force available to us! And it all comes from our loving Savior, Jesus Christ. He promises that all we

need is available to us in His Word. We need not guess nor hope nor wish; we only need to claim His love by faith—right now.

Memorize and claim 1 Corinthians 13 and ask the Lord to cement its truth into your life day by day as you draw—by faith—on the limitless resources of love that are yours through the Holy Spirit. It has changed the lives of many. Let it change yours by praying the following prayer:

“Lord, the One who calls Yourself Love, I choose to obey Your command to love like You do. I claim Your promise to enable me to love by faith, and I trust You to empower me with the perfect love of Your Holy Spirit. Amen.”

—*Transferable Concept 8*, from the Transferable Concept series by Bill Bright.

• HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE MEMBER OF THE BODY OF CHRIST BY BILL BRIGHT

Margaret Rhodes is an unusual woman. Though blind, she was not content just being part of her church membership; she wanted more in her life. Margaret stepped beyond the safety and comfort of organized programs and became a part of the evangelistic movement the church was beginning in her community.

Margaret's pastor, Dr. E. V. Hill, is the dynamic, visionary black preacher who pastors Mount Zion Baptist Church in south-central Los Angeles. As part of his plan for reaching the city with the gospel, he asked for a committed Christian in each block of homes to act as a representative, praying and planning with other Christians about how to reach their neighbors for Christ. Margaret volunteered and took the training classes at her church. When she surveyed her block, she found seven other believers and quickly turned them into team members. Prayer meetings at Margaret's became a weekly event.

"It wasn't long," Dr. Hill says, "till all but one man in Margaret's block had committed their lives to Christ." He chuckles as he adds, "And believe me, he was pretty nervous."

This is one church that is making an impact within its community because individual members are willing to leave the status quo behind and become involved in the needs of those around them.

It was an active, vibrant group of believers like this who made a difference in life for my wife, Vonette, and me more than 45 years ago.

Both of us had been exposed to the church in our early lives. We even had been baptized. But it took seeing the love of Christ lived out in the lives of dedicated men and women at the First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood to convince us that there was more to Christianity than what we had experienced. Our young faith was fostered and nourished through that fellowship. We began discovering a new excitement in living the Christian life.

It is those few who become excited about the Christ of Christianity and what He is doing in people's lives around the world who are used of God to make a difference where they are. When unbelievers see *Jesus* in the lives of others, they usually want to know more about Him. Most people are hungry for God's love and eagerly respond to the gospel when they understand who Jesus really is and what He has done for them.

The DeMoss Foundation recently discovered something about the spiritual hunger of our nation. Nancy DeMoss, wife of the late Arthur S. DeMoss, a beloved friend and former board member of Campus Crusade for Christ,

initiated an evangelistic media campaign through the Foundation that reaped results unprecedented in advertising history—secular or Christian. Spot announcements were aired on television and full-page ads were run in national newspapers and magazines offering a free book called *Power for Living*. In the book, the concept of real power for living was presented in the person of Jesus Christ, the all-powerful One. Those interested were asked to phone or write for a free copy of the book, but no one was prepared for the kind of response that resulted.

More than *11 million people* wrote or called indicating a personal interest in finding the source of power for living. Books were sent to each one. Over one million wrote back to say they had received Christ personally as a result of reading the book. Only God knows how many millions more opened their lives to Him as a result of the campaign.

On any given Sunday, 40 percent of America's adult population are in church. More than 100 million adults are on membership rolls and an additional 50 million identify themselves as Christians. The impact of the church in society is felt by everyone, not just by believers. All too often we seem to forget how important and influential the church of our Lord Jesus Christ is in any community—around the world. Unfortunately, many of the people who fill our churches only know about Christ. They do not know Him personally.

Their exposure has been much like that of a small boy who was raised in the South. At the entrance to the park in their town stood a fine statue of General Robert E. Lee sitting proudly astride his powerful horse, Traveler. Every day the boy and his father walked past the monument and stopped to look at the statue of the soldier and his horse. The boy's father, proud that the South had produced such a hero in the Civil War, wanted his son to grow up to appreciate his heritage. "Say good morning to General Lee, Son," he would say.

The boy came to look forward to their daily visits to the general, and every time they stopped at the foot of the statue, he would raise his small hand to the hero before him in a somber salute of respect. "Good morning, General Lee," he would say.

For weeks the boy and his father performed their little ritual at the foot of the statue. One day the child paused. "Daddy," he asked curiously, "who's the man sitting on the back of General Lee?" The boy had been exposed to the general, but who the man actually was and what he had done obviously had not been communicated clearly for the boy to understand.

Who could say "no" to the Lord Jesus Christ if they really understood who He is and what He has done for them? If people could see and understand that only God provides the love and forgiveness they are searching for in their lives.

How clearly do we communicate that Good News? As Christians, it is our privilege—and responsibility—to communicate what we know of the Savior, *accurately and emphatically*. We proclaim glibly on bumper stickers, “Jesus is the answer.” The truth is that Jesus *is the answer*, whatever the question! The problem lies in our finite inability to communicate the infinite reality of Jesus to the searching heart. In ourselves, we are not able to meet human needs.

In 1983 both houses of Congress and President Ronald Reagan declared that year as the “Year of the Bible.” It was my honor and privilege to serve as chairman of that committee. The President, as honorary chairman, was quoted as saying, “Every problem that we face in our society would be solved if the American people would simply obey the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule.” In light of some of the staggering difficulties facing our society, that may come across as an oversimplified generalization.

But when you really think about it, the solution holds merit. Stop and consider with me for a moment its implications. Could the complex, knotted misunderstandings in a marriage on the brink of divorce be reversed if both individuals began treating their partners the way they themselves longed to be treated? Would it affect the lives of those involved in crimes of violence if they begin living their lives in accordance with the teachings of God? What about chemical dependencies and child abuse? What of desertion and immorality? And what about racial hatred and anything else that comes to mind?

The claims of Christ, if truly given root in a life, can and do change these very circumstances in everyday lives of ordinary people. Imagine—if an entire society lived according to God’s design for His creation, it would be revolutionized. Society would progressively change from the inside out. It would never be the same again.

It is for this reason we need to be aware of—and responsible for—our calling as believers. As part of the Great Commission, our very lives need to represent Christ to those around us—Christian and non-Christian alike—to woo and win them into the kingdom, to build His church.

For the past several years, my ministry responsibilities have taken me to scores of countries on every major continent. I’ve found that most pastors, missionaries and Christian leaders around the world agree on two things.

1. God is at work in the world *through His body, the church* in an unprecedented way.
2. The average Christian misses tremendous opportunities for service

through the church, simply because he/she is not equipped to make a difference where he/she is. Many are not filled and empowered with the Holy Spirit nor have they been trained to share their faith in Christ.

Effective membership in the body of Jesus Christ is built on a foundational principle that cannot be overlooked: *Since Christ's church is His body, every member must surrender to the Head.* For us to be effective in our witness, Christ must be Lord of our lives just as He is Lord of the church. But He can be Lord only when we are willing to die to self.

The greatest paradox of the Christian life is that *we must die before we can live.* The apostle Paul refers to this in Galatians 2:20 when he says, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me" (NASB).

An effective member in the body has made a total, irrevocable commitment of his or her life to the Lord. It is the second most important decision in the believer's life, and the only way to say with Paul, "[I am] Jesus Christ's slave ... sent out to preach God's good news" (Romans 1:1, TLB).

As a part of the body of Christ, how does being under the Lord's headship affect our everyday life? The New Testament responds to that question with three very direct, easy-to-apply answers. Each one is associated with a specific disciple whose life best expressed the principle. The individual members of the early church were energized by these basic principles and they took advantage of every opportunity through: witnessing; service; and fellowship.

Witnessing—Peter

Jesus left His disciples with a promise: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and *you shall be My witnesses ...*" (Acts 1:8, NASB, italics ours). Ever since the Day of Pentecost, the primary purpose of the church—and each member individually—has been to witness. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter said, "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses" (Acts 2:32, NASB). From that point on in the book of Acts, when we encounter Peter, it is almost always as a witness. Witnessing is *required* of those under the headship of Christ. The Christian who does not regularly share his faith will soon lose his "first love" and ultimately the power and blessing of God.

Nothing pleases the heart of God more than watching His children as they go about the business of spreading the gospel, then discipling men and women of all nations in Christ. It is the active fulfillment of the Great Commission, and the church suffers most deeply when Christians prefer to be fed, rather than to pour themselves into the lives of others. The fact remains that without winning, building and sending those around us, there soon will be no one to carry the good news.

The writer of Hebrews could have been addressing the many apathetic Christians in the church today when he wrote, “You have been Christians a long time now, and you ought to be teaching others, but instead you have dropped back to the place where you need someone to teach you all over again the very first principles in God’s Word. You are like babies who can drink only milk, not old enough for solid food” (Hebrews 5:12,13, TLB).

The question is this: With such widespread apathy within the body, is it possible that an individual can make a difference? The answer is a resounding YES! There are many things individuals can do to keep from being pulled under by apathetic surroundings.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Volunteer for evangelistic visitation with your church, then lovingly foster new converts. Channel them into the church and help establish them in a follow-up series such as *Foundations*.
- Work with your pastor to begin a discipleship ministry using *Practical Christian Living*. Then select, recruit and build others to grow in their relationship with Christ and to become effective witnesses for Him. Training trainers is what keeps the cycle going.
- Find people who want to grow in Christ and help them find a place of service in the church. Meet with them once a week for prayer, instruction in evangelism and discipleship.
- Organize and/or participate in coffees, luncheons, Bible studies and other events focused on presenting the gospel to non-Christians.
- Work with your pastor, deacons and elders to contribute not only to the making of disciples, but to the growth of the body as it is expressed locally.

God will multiply believers through us *if we are filled with the Holy Spirit*. Many Christians become discouraged in witnessing because their efforts seem to be in vain, despite the fact that they are using the latest witnessing techniques. Even the best tools cannot ensure results. We can only be effective witnesses when we are filled with the *only* power source—the Holy Spirit. In ourselves we are powerless. To follow Christ and be filled with His Spirit is to become a productive “fisher of men.”

Service—Paul

The Book of Acts records Paul’s consuming passion for leading men and women to Christ and discipling them in their faith. Yet his letters to the churches of the first century have a dominant theme of service. “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant ... ”

(Philippians 2:5-7, NASB). As servants under the headship of Christ, we are to give generously of all we are. God promises “... whatever a man sows, this he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7, NASB).

Jesus spent His life giving Himself to those in need. As His servants we must ask: If Jesus gave His time, money and Himself to others, how can we do less? “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master” (Matthew 10:24, NASB).

A servant’s heart finds expression in many ways. Henrietta Mears, an influential Christian leader of this century, expressed her servant’s heart by being available to those in need. Her door was always open. She once said that she measured her own spiritual commitment by the requests she received from others, feeling that God could use her in others’ lives only as she stayed an open channel for His service.

The principle is true for all of us. Ms. Mears’ method was an appropriate expression of her spiritual commitment, not an example to duplicate in our lives. We must each find the method right for *our own* abilities and circumstances by remaining responsive to the Spirit of God within us.

Service is not a very popular concept in our self-satisfying culture. A subtle attitude of self-centeredness has filtered quietly into the church and many Christians approach fellowship asking, “What’s in it for me?” instead of, “What can I give?” Yet the one who strives to be satisfied soon discovers that happiness is elusive. It is the person who lives to give and to serve others who reaps true fulfillment and finds meaning in life.

The committed servant gives generously of his wealth. Although we North American Christians comprise only five percent of the world population, we possess an estimated 80 percent of the Christian wealth. Untold billions of dollars could be released into the work of Christ around the world if more United States Christians gave with a spirit of generosity.

A servant sees the need of others. Scripture reveals that God has a heart for the homeless, for widows and orphans, the poor, the sick and the imprisoned. His concern for the needy is so strong that Jesus said, “... To the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me” (Matthew 25:40, NASB). We need to develop our Christian compassion for the hurting and neglected, the forgotten and afraid in our midst. It is our responsibility as followers of Christ.

A servant spends time on his knees. The power of prayer cannot be over-emphasized. It is our communication with God, a vital link to His heart, and a necessary part of the Christian walk that was demonstrated regularly by Jesus. We need to practice the presence of God by taking time throughout each day for quiet moments of fellowship with Him. We

need to speak to Him and take time to listen in His presence. We need to bond ourselves to other believers in prayer, through regular times together, praying for personal and local needs, national and worldwide. We need to develop a support system network of prayer around our pastors, praying for them daily, praying with them weekly as their schedules permit.

In the body we share common duties, *but a servant discovers and uses his unique gifts*. Paul wrote to the church in Rome, “We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly ...” (Romans 12:5,6, NASB). The gift of hospitality gives you a natural means to evangelize non-Christian friends, neighbors and family members. The gift of mercy can reach out to the fragmented life of a single parent, or reach into the loneliness of a senior adult, the handicapped or a wayward child. The gift of encouragement helps disciple young believers.

The disciple’s heart longs to be a servant—like the Master. Through it all, the undercurrent of power flows as we regularly uphold each other in prayer, together or apart. And while we are on our knees before God, we can ask Him for more opportunities to serve.

Fellowship—John

God did not say we would be known as His disciples by our witness, although witnessing is a priority. Neither did He say we would be known as His disciples because of our great acts of service. Instead, He said it would be *our love for one another and our fellowship*, that would link us to Him in the eyes of others. “All men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35, NASB). The greatest power in the world is love.

Luke recorded examples of church fellowship for us in the Book of Acts. When the disciples returned to Jerusalem after Jesus’ ascension into heaven, they awaited the fulfillment of His promise together. “These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer ...” (Acts 1:14, NASB). They shared the anticipation and the long days of waiting, praying with one another until the promise came.

Then on the Day of Pentecost, the promise was fulfilled and their fellowship changed dramatically. Where it once had been solemn and exclusive, it now became joyful and they widened their small circle to include others. The Scripture says, “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship ... taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart. ... And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42,46,47, NASB).

Through the Holy Spirit, we in the 21st century can share the same kind of fellowship the disciples enjoyed in the first century. In his first letter, John expressed the nature and purpose of our fellowship when he wrote, “We are telling you about what we ourselves have actually seen and heard, so that you may share the fellowship and the joys we have with the Father and with Jesus Christ his Son” (1 John 1:3, TLB).

Members of an Institution or Part of a Movement?

In order to be an effective member of the body of Christ, we must participate fully in all three of these aspects of the life of the body: *sharing the gospel, sharing our gifts in service and sharing our life in fellowship*. It is not enough merely to be members of a local institution. We must be part of the movement of God through the church.

Dr. E. V. Hill has stated, “Every church member should have a personal ministry to share the gospel with others. The emphasis at our church is more on building disciples than on enrollment.”

Church membership rolls never tell the true story. We cannot be content just to fill the pews on Sunday mornings. To make a difference in this world, we must become a vital part of our churches through our witness, our service and our fellowship together. We must work with our pastors in helping our churches become all they can be, to the glory of God.

• HOW TO HELP FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION

BY BILL BRIGHT

Today we would call it a strategy meeting; the “Coach” and the “players” together in a “huddle” on a mountain in Galilee. The risen Lord had a plan, one that would reach the entire world. Christians call this global strategy “the Great Commission.” What was said on the mountain has affected generation upon generation of believers. Had it not, few today would be experiencing the love and forgiveness of God’s grace.

The disciples leaned close as Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you” (Matthew 28:18-20, NASB). It is the greatest claim ever recorded!

In this chapter we will be looking at the who, what, why, when, where and how of the Great Commission.

Who mobilized the Great Commission?

To whom was it directed?

Who would dare claim “all authority in heaven and on earth”? There could be only one answer. It would have to be the unique God/Man Himself, Jesus Christ, the very Son of God. At Jesus’ birth, God became man. He allowed other men to put Him to death on a cross, but three days later was raised from the dead. His death and resurrection saved those who would believe from the power of sin and provided eternal life for all who would put their trust in Him. The result was a spiritual revolution that upset the first century world and altered the course of history.

As Christ walked the earth, He had the power to change lives. That same life-changing power is available to us today. His life spans the centuries because He was—and is—God! Though it was His disciples who heard Him speak the words of the Great Commission, the impact of those words continues to apply to all Christians throughout history.

The Great Commission is a supernatural plan given by the infinite God to finite man. So often we slip into thinking that the early Christians were different from us, that they possessed a quality of life we cannot attain. But the men and women who heard Jesus’ words were common, ordinary working people. They were plagued with the same weaknesses that we have, but two crucial things were true of them. First, they knew a resurrected Lord, triumphant over death; One who lived among them and promised He would return to reign as King over all the earth. And second, they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

We have the same opportunities to be committed to our resurrected and returning Lord. His Holy Spirit waits to empower those of us who trust

Him for His filling. We have the *same ability to turn our world upside down!* We could start a revolution in the 21st century that would rival anything the world has seen thus far!

What is the Great Commission?

The command of our Lord simply means winning hearts to Jesus, teaching them what He taught, equipping them to send them out as ambassadors in such numbers that every soul in the world would hear the message heralded by angels the night our Lord was born: “I bring you the most joyful news ever announced, and it is for everyone! The Savior, yes, the Messiah, the Lord, has been born tonight in Bethlehem!” (Luke 2:10,11, TLB).

But, wait a minute, you say. This world has almost six billion people in it. Surely you can’t be serious about telling everyone about Christ? Oh yes we can!

To those who laugh at the possibility of achieving a task of such magnitude, we point to benefits surrounding us living in this century. Consider for a moment the giant strides technology has made in our generation. The media has brought the edges of our task to within our grasp. Let me give you an example.

A man by the name of John Heyman produced a film, simply entitled “JESUS.” In the years since its release, its evangelistic impact around the world has been staggering. A copy of the picture can be dubbed perfectly into any language within a matter of weeks using generators, jungle recording studios and native voice actors.

The dubbed film has lessened the need for a linguist to learn a tribal tongue, reduce it to written symbols, translate Scripture and teach a people to read so that the gospel can be shared. This is an enormous task and takes years to accomplish. The film has made it possible for tens of millions of people around the world to commit their lives already to the Jesus they have learned about. “JESUS” gives them the message of salvation *in their own tongue*. Skeptics, we are on our way!

Why should Christians devote themselves completely to fulfilling the Great Commission?

There are at least three good reasons:

- 1. We obey because Christ commanded us to go.** The athletic coach presents his list of rules and standards to his players and says, “These are the things you must do if you expect to be on the team.” Players abide by the rules, or they don’t make the team. In battle, the commanding officer shouts orders to his soldiers who obey without question or face the threat of court-martial, or even death. Jesus’ authority is based on love, and backed by God the Father, and He has issued us an order: “Go!” We dare not take our Lord’s command lightly.

2. **We obey because men are lost without Christ.** Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6, NASB). That may sound narrow, but God Himself has said it. I dare not argue with my Lord.
3. **We obey because hearts are hungry for God.** Since the beginning of the ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ, we have witnessed man’s hunger for God demonstrated in thousands of ways. As part of our worldwide training program, trainees spend hours each week in person-to-person evangelism in local communities and in public gatherings. It is not unusual for hundreds in a single day to receive Christ.

For example, more than three thousand African-Americans in south-central Los Angeles received Christ through the personal contact of some sixteen hundred staff and student workers. Over two thousand asked Christ into their lives in one day of sharing on the beaches of Southern California. And in Korea, nine thousand Korean trainees shared Christ with some forty-two thousand people in a single afternoon of witnessing. Sixteen thousand expressed a desire to receive Christ, and four thousand appropriated the power of the Holy Spirit by faith.

When will the Great Commission be fulfilled?

Only Jesus and His Father know when and how it will be done. However, since He gave us the command, and has promised to equip us to do His will, we must assume that He means for us to pursue the fulfillment of His design in each generation ... an *ongoing process* of fulfilling the Great Commission.

If it is to be fulfilled at all, *now is the time for action*. We must begin now and dedicate ourselves daily, as a way of life, to communicate God’s love and forgiveness with those our lives touch. As the apostle Paul writes in Colossians 1:28, “So everywhere we go we talk about Christ to all who will listen ...” (TLB). From the time we awaken in the morning until we go to bed at night, our first priority is sharing the most joyful news ever announced to hearts aching to hear it.

Where do we fulfill the Great Commission?

We must reach the whole world, a discouraging impossibility for mere human beings. But Jesus laid down a strategy to follow. Just before He ascended into heaven, Jesus told the disciples, “You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NASB).

Jerusalem was home to the disciples with surrounding Judea also being familiar territory. But Samaria was the land of Gentiles, foreigners who knew nothing of Jewish beliefs, and it was the edge of the “uttermost part of the world.”

Where does “Jerusalem” begin for us? Where all journeys begin—at home.

Our home lives can reflect the love that Jesus channels through us. From there that love will overflow into our neighborhoods, our classrooms, our jobs and all our involvements. The next logical step will be on to “Judea,” our communities and states, our nations. And from there it is a small step beyond into “Samaria and the uttermost part of the world.” The Great Commission is immobile unless we see our part and become personally involved in our homes and communities, and eventually our world!

What an exciting hour for Christians to get involved. We are on the brink of the greatest spiritual awakening since Pentecost! What men see as a dark and desperate hour is truly an hour of destiny for Christians, the hour for which we were born. It is time to shine like beacon lights and be part of a sweeping spiritual revolution that will reveal to mankind the glorious gospel of Christ—the need of every human heart.

Don’t get caught on the sidelines. Get involved! Do *your part* to help fulfill the Great Commission in this generation!

How do we share what we have?

People everywhere are lost and we who belong to Christ have the answer. When He said, “Go!” Jesus made it clear that this “answer” is to be shared. It is His will that we be actively involved in helping to fulfill His command—His Great Commission. And yet the questions linger: What does God want me to do? How do I begin?

We begin by developing individual, personal strategies that tie directly into the global strategy of our Lord. It is the only way this great task will be accomplished.

And what is a personal strategy? It is an individual’s deliberate plan of action to accomplish a specific goal. Since our goal is to help fulfill Christ’s command, our personal plans should include evangelizing and discipling—adding to the body of Jesus Christ and multiplying believers.

Spiritual addition is simple: One believer + the gospel + one non-believer = two believers. Spiritual multiplication is a little different. The formula is: One believer + one new believer + discipling = two believers evangelizing and discipling others. Spiritual multiplication is deliberately discipling new Christians so that *they will evangelize and disciple still others*.

Paul specifically commended this principle to Timothy, his “son” in the faith, when he said, “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB).

A personal strategy enables us to move forward in obedience to help fulfill the Great Commission. Paul said, “No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one

who enlisted him as a soldier” (2 Timothy 2:4, NASB).

“All right,” you say, “I’m convinced. I need to have a personal strategy. But where do I begin to develop a plan that will work in my life?” Allow me to make some simple suggestions based on Scripture.

Be committed to Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit. Of the millions of people active in churches, a frightening percentage are either not certain they are born again, or are living frustrated, fleshly lives, so far off-course that they cannot be used of God until they commit their lives to Him. If you struggle with a lack of faith, deal with it. Learn how to trust God and He will take it from there.

Pray in faith that God will guide you in developing your personal strategy. Ask Him to reveal an effective plan to you to reach your immediate area of influence with the gospel. He already has one designed; your part is discovery, and that usually happens a little at a time.

Jesus’ life was a perfect example of discovering the Father’s plan. He presented every major decision to God and waited for divine direction at each turning point. As you pray, *expect God to provide* the strategy, the wisdom and the strength to implement it. Expectant faith pleases God.

Outline the plan God reveals in answer to your prayers. List the names of specific people and groups in your life, and develop a plan to reach each one. Begin with your family. Your home, more than any other place, will reflect your testimony. Trust God continually to fill you with His Spirit so that your actions bear witness to what He has done in you.

Plan to reach the people at work. Seek out those who you know are Christians and ask them to join you in evangelizing your office building. In your church, make yourself available to teach Sunday school or be a part of (or begin) a visitation evangelism team. Be an encouragement to other members of your church.

Invite neighbors over for coffee or dessert with a purpose to begin to share the gospel. Start a neighborhood Bible study with an evangelistic emphasis. Tell others what Christ has done in your life and that He can do the same in theirs. Begin your own *Practical Christian Living* group.

Learn everything you can that will help accomplish your personal strategy. Thousands of students, laymen and pastors take advantage of the training and materials available through Campus Crusade for Christ every year. They learn effective skills for *winning* men and women to Christ, *building* them in their faith, and *sending* them to share the good news of God’s love and forgiveness.

Don’t wait. Write out your personal strategy today. List the names of peo-

ple God has placed on your mind and heart. Share Christ with them in love and sensitivity. Ask God for specific names of those He would like you to train to multiply spiritually with you through your own *PCL* group.

Take the initiative in fulfilling your part of the Great Commission right where you live. Claim your relatives, friends, neighbors and business associates for Christ in prayer. Then present the gospel to them. Tell them of the love and forgiveness Jesus waits to give them and allow them an opportunity to receive Him.

Share your faith as a way of life. As the people on your list begin to trust Him as Lord and Savior, disciple them and involve them in the cycle of spiritual multiplication. Encourage them to join you in an effort to reach your area with the message of Jesus Christ.

As you implement your personal strategy locally, ask God's guidance to stretch your thinking beyond local goals to worldwide responsibilities. Discover ways you can become a "world Christian" and make a contribution to help spread the gospel overseas. Inquire about the missions program in your own church.

In these days of change and chaos, sincere, thinking Christians dare not be satisfied with the status quo, or business as usual. Whoever and wherever you are, when you make yourself available to God, expect to be used to help change the world! Changed hearts make a changed world. Jesus specializes in changing lives, but He can only reach men and women through us. Let Him start with you!

If your desire is to help fulfill the Great Commission make the following your prayer:

"Dear Father, I am available to You to do with as You wish. Work through me to bring Your message of love and forgiveness to hearts that hunger to hear. Cleanse me, empower me, use me to bring honor and glory to Your name. Enable me by Your Holy Spirit to give my best to help fulfill Your Great Commission in my time. In the name of Jesus I ask this. Amen."

If you prayed this prayer, I wish you Godspeed in your endeavors. Prepare yourself for a great adventure. Investing your time, your talent and your treasure, you will be helping to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ in this generation. Your commitment is to Jesus Christ, not Campus Crusade for Christ, but if we can help in any way, we are available to serve you. Through the power of the indwelling Christ *you* can help change the world!

—*Transferable Concept 7*, from the *Transferable Concept* series by Bill Bright.

A large, stylized blue logo consisting of several overlapping, curved, arrow-like shapes that form a circular, dynamic pattern. The word "SUPPLEMENTS" is written in white, bold, uppercase letters across the center of the logo.

S U P P L E M E N T S

PRAYER-CARE-SHARE CARD

I will faithfully pray for, care for and share with these friends as God gives me the opportunity.

- 1. _____ Tel # _____
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SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSES

Session 11:

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them.

— ROMANS 8:28 (NLT)

Session 12:

A final word: Be strong with the Lord's mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the devil.

— EPHESIANS 6:10,11 (NLT)

Session 13:

But I tell you who hear Me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

— LUKE 6:27,28 (NIV)

Session 14:

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

— JOHN 13:34 (NIV)

Session 15:

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

— COLOSSIANS 3:23,24 (NASB)

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSES

Session 16:

For He Himself has said, “You must be holy because I am holy.” — 1 PETER 1:16 (NLT)

Session 17:

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
— HEBREWS 10:25 (NIV)

Session 18:

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. — 2 CORINTHIANS 4:18 (NIV)

Session 19:

Wherever your treasure is, there your heart and thoughts will also be. — MATTHEW 6:21 (NLT)

Session 20:

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” — MATTHEW 28:18-20 (NIV)

PRAYER REQUESTS

Date

Requests

Answer Date

PRAYER REQUESTS

Date

Requests

Answer Date

PRAYER REQUESTS

Date	Requests	Answer Date
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MY QUIET TIME

Date: _____

Prepare your heart in prayer: *“Lord, I expect you to speak to me through Your Word and Your Spirit, and to communicate truth to my heart.”*

Briefly review your last three quiet times.

Today's text _____ Key Verse _____

Write out the verse.

- **What questions do I have or what observations can I make from the verse?**
- **What is the meaning of the verse?**
- **How does God want me to apply this to my life?**
- **What is my prayer to God?**

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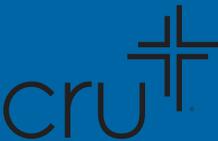
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