

Christian Foundations

The Essentials



Session 1 – Introduction
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Session 4 – Discipleship

Session 5 – Bible Study
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By Pastor Jesse Hall

Instructions for Leaders

Thank you for answering God's call to equip and mentor his people. The key to success in using this *Foundations* course is the leader's personal commitment to abiding in Christ, dependence on the Lord's anointing and leading, genuine concern for students' growth, and praying for students to hear with open hearts.

Remember, as a course leader, you're not simply providing information, but God is using you to fill his people with his Word so they can walk in his image and perfect will.

Be friendly, encourage questions, facilitate discussion, and ensure students are "getting it;" summarize,

repeat and clarify key points to ensure retention and comprehension.

This course is intended to be visually engaging, employing slides, videos and task-oriented material to aid learning. You can add to or alter visual elements that accompany the course material to accommodate your specific points of emphasis. Keep in mind that no matter how you communicate the text, it must remain focused on building students' walk with Jesus and his Word.

Please use the guidelines below to successfully navigate and teach the coursework. If you have any questions, please contact the author, Pastor Jesse Hall, at ministryjwhall@hotmail.com.

Guidelines

- Study the material thoroughly before teaching to ensure you understand its progression, Scriptural support, themes and intended messages
- Small blue boxes with numbers **1** show how to progress through each section on a page; reference notes are marked by red numbers **1**.
- Slide references are marked with red text and yellow highlight **SLIDE 1**; slides with videos are identified as **SLIDE 1.V**.
- There are boxed "sidebar" articles within or at bottom of the pages that you can either go through in class or assign as personal reading.
- To keep students engaged, ask individuals to read portions of the material orally in class
- Ask students to guess at answers for some of the fill-in-the-blanks before you provide the missing information
- Underlined words or phrases in the Leader's Edition represent answers for fill-in-the-blanks in the Student Edition.

1 Opening Remarks

Before we get started, let's quickly go around the room and each person give your name and how long you have been a follower of Jesus

This course isn't presented in lecture or preaching format, but rather the teaching and engagement model; therefore, we highly encourage questions and discussion as we move along in the material.

Let's start by going over brief summaries of each session (look at bottom of front cover and explain topics).

Review book quickly

- Articles
- Fill-in-the-blanks
- Exercises
- Margin space for notes
- What we can't complete in class, will be homework

In the book's supplemental section, there is an answer key for exercises we don't do in class.

¹You may "feel" sometimes as if you're walking alone, but truth is independent of feeling. If God says he will be with you, he IS WITH YOU!

Introduction

GROWING IN THE FAMILY OF GOD!

We're happy to have you with us as a follower of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. Because you have accepted Jesus as your savior, you are God's child and are called to grow and mature in our Father's image. The Lord will take you on an often challenging, but wondrous journey through life on your way to an eternity with Him. Rest assured that **you will never walk alone¹** on this journey as you walk with Christ, who will "never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5)

This Foundations course is designed to anchor you in the absolute truths of God's Holy Word, so you will learn what traditional Christians believe and why we

believe it. Such knowledge will strengthen your faith and help you share the good news of salvation with others. It will also equip you to navigate the trials and temptations of life, and to answer questions from seekers and cynics alike.

Further, we hope to help you become a more fruitful disciple of Jesus. To equip you for service in the church to build God's Kingdom. Our Lord says in John 15: 5,8 -"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing...This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."





Session 1

Overview

1 SLIDE 2 – Discuss the evolutionary process of the Big Bang to human life – what’s wrong with this picture?

Evolution’s chaos to order theory was destroyed by the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics

Law states all things move from order to disorder (entropy); energy within structures is being expended until the structure becomes “disorganized”

This means all things decay and die, stop functioning; there are no exceptions

SLIDE 3 – Discuss

Scientists in Europe and Russia were persecuted for good science that showed a beginning; governments wanted an eternal universe with no God

2 Fine tuning

Moon’s gravity stabilizes earth’s tilt at 23 degrees; if tilt altered, would result in climate disasters

SLIDE 4.V - Balance of forces within Solar System (orbit of earth sustained by balance of centrifugal force vs sun’s gravity)

SLIDE 5.V – Fine tuned

3 - SLIDE 6 – DNA

Introduction



¹A universe marvelously designed

Christians and scientists generally agree that the universe started with a sudden and rapid introduction of space, time, and energy. This leads to an important, yet simple question: if the universe had a beginning, what caused it? Genesis 1:1 states, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

Our precisely ordered universe shows remarkable evidence it was crafted by an Intelligent Designer. Only a Supreme Intelligence with unimaginable creative power could have brought forth such an immense and well-ordered cosmos. For decades, committed atheists and materialists have resisted this truth; good science, however, has shown their resistance to be based on personal philosophy, not scientific evidence.¹

Evidence shows the entire universe is built to support life on Earth. This life depends on the precisely balanced laws of physics and forces of nature.

For example, if gravity was just a bit stronger or weaker, or light traveled at a slightly different speed, stars, planets and life could not exist. This fine tuning of physical constants must be a product of intentional design rather than random chance.²

Further, life itself is very complex. Inside every living cell is a molecular factory driven by an elaborate coding language within DNA. This language provides detailed instructions that guide cells in carrying out all functions required to sustain life (e.g., repairing wounds, growing skin).³ Whenever we see complex information, such as computer code or writing, we know it comes from intelligence; thus, DNA points to a Creator.

The famous physicist Sir Isaac Newton proclaimed the world’s diversity and complexity “could arise from nothing but the ideas and will” of a self-existent, all-powerful Creator.

²**Romans 1:19-20** - Since what may be known about God is plain to them...for since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

1 How can we know the Creator?

God reveals himself through the reliable Christian Scripture

The Christian Bible is the most sought-after book in history with an estimated 7 billion copies distributed in the last 1,500 years. Ironically, one wonders how the world could be so chaotic when that many Bibles have been in circulation.

Sadly, only a small fraction of people who possess a Bible actually read it consistently, and fewer still meditate on it and apply its truths to their daily lives. This

is unfortunate because the sciences, history, and philosophy validates the Bible as the one true source of God's revelation; it is how He shares with us His nature, and His good and perfect will.

The Bible is literally the Creator's direct message to humanity. In its pages, God speaks to us, instructs us, encourages and rebukes us. His Word is food for our souls and wisdom for living.

2 The Bible is a historical record of actual events

2 Peter 1:16-18 - "For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses¹ of his majesty.... We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable² and you will do well to pay attention to it....He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. **SLIDE 7**

The Bible is divinely inspired by God

2 Peter 1:20-21 - Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation³ of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.⁴ **SLIDE 8**

The Bible is the center of Christian life

2 Timothy 3:15-17 - and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man or woman of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work.⁵

1 The Scripture contains eyewitness accounts of actual events, including the miraculous ministry of Jesus...it isn't made-up mythology

2 These eyewitness accounts are made by people fully committed to truth. In fact, Jesus taught that lying was evil; therefore, it made no sense for the writers to write false reports. Further, they wouldn't die for something they knew was a lie.

3 This word is not open to personal preference or interpretation; the Spirit explains its meaning as God intends, not man

4 When properly interpreted, the Bible answers all of life's ultimate questions
- Who is God?
- Who is man?
- Why pain and evil?
- What is our purpose and destiny?

5 Because it is ultimate truth, the Word/Bible has divine authority to dictate Christian doctrine, practice and lifestyle

- 3 **Manuscript evidence** - We have 25,000 manuscripts and fragments from New Testament; to include a fragment of John potentially dated in 1st century or very early 2nd century
- 14,000 from Old Testament, including 140 from Dead Sea Scrolls dated to 400 B.C.; previously oldest OT - Hebrew Bible were dated at 920 A.D. Nearly 1,000 years back in time (95 percent match rate)
 - The Bible is the most well-supported ancient document in existence (nothing compares)

Who is the God of the

1 SLIDE 9 – Discussion of God’s immensity; stellar distances demonstrate the vastness of the universe, and yet God sees it all and knows every star. **Click 9** for size of Milky Way; make note there are billions, if not trillions of galaxies in the universe.

2 There is enough energy within the atoms of a small melon-sized ball of uranium to destroy a large city. There is enough energy within the atoms of a single large tree (if it were possible to release it) to likely roast all of America and create a world-altering climatological catastrophe.

Imagine all the power locked in the atoms of the entire universe. Always keep in mind that an immensely powerful God is the source of all this energy.

3 Pass out the *Who is Jesus* pamphlet and refer to it if questions about the Trinity arise.

1 The most important question a person can ask is “Who is God?” Ask that question of random people in the street, and you will get a whole host of interesting replies:

- He’s the man upstairs
- He’s whatever you want Him to be
- He’s the Universe
- He’s a figment of our imagination
- God is nature
- We are all God

Such thinking is a product of a world steeped in darkness and deception. The Apostle John wrote, *“In Him was life, and the life was the Light of mankind. And the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not grasp it. This was the true Light that, coming into the world, enlightens every person. He was in the world, and the world came into being through Him, and yet the world did not know Him (John 1:4-5, 9-10).”*

God is not an angry Zeus-like deity hurling lightning bolts at everyone who offends him; nor is he the kindly old man who welcomes all but the most wicked people into Heaven. These are merely products of human imagination. So who is God? What is he really like?

A Being of Unimaginable Power

Think about a being who exists outside of time and space. **1** Now imagine this being with the ability to create and manage all the energy needed to produce every particle of matter in the universe. **2**

SLIDE 10 - Hebrews 12:29 says our God is an all-consuming fire, while Psalm 97:5 declares the mountains melt like wax at his presence. Nahum 1:5 declares, “The mountains quake before him, and the hills melt; the earth trembles, and its people are destroyed.” God is infinitely powerful and holy; he holds individuals and nations accountable for their actions and brings his just wrath against all who do evil.

God is love

Though the Lord is just, holy and judges sin, John the Apostle tells us that “God is love” (1 John 4:7-8). The apostle declares that God is the source and very essence of love; it is an integral part of his being. Jesus showed us that divine love is self-giving, sacrificial, and redemptive—a love that serves others even at great personal cost.

Human love is limited and is often conditional and corrupted by selfishness. God’s love, however, is pure and deep; it is what moves him to offer forgiveness to fallen human beings who don’t deserve it, but ask for it through repentance.

God is a Trinity – SLIDE 11

Our Lord’s love has its origin in the affection that binds Father, Son and Holy Spirit into the one God. God is the original “family” and “community” grounded within himself. We see the Trinity best showcased in **Matthew 3:13-17**, where all three are present at Jesus’ baptism. The three operate with complete unity of purpose. Again, it is love that binds the three persons of the Trinity as one being. **3**

EXERCISE

Circle the **most correct** answer

1. The universe shows evidence of being:

- A. Evolved through time and chance
- B. Started by an intelligence
- C. Precisely designed by a Supreme Intelligence
- D. Created by an exploding energy source

2. When did space-time begin to exist?

- A. Space-time is eternal, it had no beginning
- B. Space-time started at moment of Creation
- C. Space-time always existed, but God filled it with the universe
- D. We can't know when it started

3. If God created the universe, he must exist...

- A. at the heart of the universe
- B. outside the universe
- C. in equality with space-time-matter
- D. Both B and C

4. The laws of physics tell us what?

- A. That we're lucky to be alive
- B. That the universe resulted from a Big Bang
- C. That nature could have created itself
- D. That the universe is finely tuned for human life

5. The physical laws governing the universe can change a tiny bit with no major effects.

- A. This statement is true
- B. This statement is partially true, some can change without effect
- C. The statement is not true, because a change in any of them alters the nature of the universe
- D. This statement is not true because we don't know how it would affect the universe

6. The most vital question a human can ask?

- A. How big is the universe?
- B. Who is God?
- C. Why do people get sick?
- D. What is energy?

7. Why is the Bible a reliable source for knowing God?

- A. Because the Bible says so
- B. Science, history and philosophy confirm it
- C. Because the biblical worldview is best
- D. Some of its claims are easy to prove true

8. As God's chosen medium for self-revelation, the Bible is sufficient for...

- A. explaining all the mysteries of physics
- B. countering evolutionary theory
- C. instruction, discipline, and wisdom for living
- D. Both A and C

9. Which statement best validates the Scriptures?

- A. It contains eyewitness accounts of actual events
- B. Its authors can be trusted
- C. Millions of people have believed its words
- D. It speaks best to the human heart

10. What does "a divinely inspired Bible" mean?

- A. The Spirit told writers exactly what to write
- B. The Spirit moved through the experiences and personalities of the writers to shape Scripture
- C. The Spirit guided collection of the Scriptures
- D. Both B and C

11. The Bible answers all of life's ultimate questions when...

- A. it is understood by a majority of people
- B. believers apply it to their lives
- C. it is translated properly
- D. interpreted properly via the Holy Spirit's leading

12. Why does it make no sense for Christians to have "made things up" in the New Testament?

- A. Because critics could examine their claims and refuted them using local evidence
- B. Because Christians considered lying evil and offensive to the God they served
- C. Because they wouldn't die for something they knew was a lie
- E. All but C
- F. All of the Above

EXERCISE

Circle **the most** correct answer

13. What is the first main attribute (characteristic) of God taught in the lesson?

- A. God is quiet and distant
- B. God is a being of unimaginable power**
- C. God is the universe
- D. God is part of nature

14. Where did all the power and energy that is the foundation of the universe originally come from?

- A. The sun
- B. The Big Bang alone
- C. Human invention
- D. God**

15. Why are human beings in trouble before God, according to the lesson?

- A. They are not smart enough
- B. They do not live long enough
- C. They are sinful and not perfectly good**
- D. They do not know enough science

16. What is the second main attribute of God taught in the lesson?

- A. God is mysterious
- B. God is distant
- C. God is love**
- D. God is changeable

17. According to the lesson, what did God do to save people from judgment?

- A. He ignored sin
- B. He made new laws
- C. He sent angels to punish everyone
- D. He sent His Son, Jesus, to take our punishment**

18. What part of our world best reflects the Lord's triune nature?

- A. The family: father, mother, child**
- B. The three-part nature of the egg
- C. The socialist idea that we are all "one people"
- D. The events of Matthew 3:15-20

Apply your knowledge

A good friend of yours says he finds it hard to believe in the God of the Bible. He thinks of the Lord as a mean old man with a long, grey beard, much like the gods of myth, such as Zeus or Mars. Another friend disagrees and says God is a warm, loving and gentle being who wants everyone to be happy. Neither value the Bible as a reliable and inerrant source of information about God. What do you tell each of your friends based on today's lesson?

Answer should reflect that the Bible is a trustworthy historical document comprised of eyewitness accounts of actual events. The events are supported by the various sciences and extra-biblical sources. Paul, one of the greatest figures in the Bible – the most tested and committed and educated – claimed the Bible was divinely inspired, both in its writing and gathering into a complete collection. The nature of God is revealed plainly in Scripture. It tells us of a God who is utterly powerful and holy and is justified in any acts he takes. He does not excuse sin. However, he is also the very source of love and forgives anyone who repents and asks for salvation through His Son Jesus Christ.



Session 2

The Fall & Salvation

² **John 3:3,5** - Jesus responded and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God; Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

³ Discuss the question: Are we born "God's Children" and are all people "God's Children"

SLIDE 18 - Read

1 Will discuss in more detail in the Session 8

2 The first step in salvation is to agree with God that we are fallen

1 John 1:8-10 - If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

The Fall and Salvation

The Basics!

- 1 ■ God is love, and true love always shares of itself...God shared of Himself by creating the universe for his favored creation, humanity (1 John 4:8-9) **SLIDE 13.V**
 - God created man as his image-bearers to share in his rule and live in a love relationship with Him and one another (Genesis 1:26) **SLIDE 14**
 - Love requires free will to be truly free, Adam and Eve had to choose to love God. They chose to disobey, thinking they could be "gods" (Genesis 2:16-17)¹
 - The penalty of disobedience (sin) is spiritual and physical death...this is the decay of our physical bodies and eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23a)
SLIDE 15, then SLIDE 16.V to explain the gap (God's holiness)
 - God intervened to save his creation from eternal death (Romans 6:23b)
 - God became flesh and died on the cross to become a sacrifice for our sins and to take our punishment upon himself (John 3:16) **SLIDE 17 – closes the gap**
 - Those who accept this sacrifice are born again as God's children (John 3:3)

The six Bs of becoming a child of God

Based on John 3:3-16, Romans 10:9-11, 12:1-2



BELIEVE that we are sinners who are fallen by nature and destined for eternal darkness apart from God.²

BELIEVE that Jesus is God the Savior; he was sent by God the Father to rescue us from death.

BELIEVE that Jesus was born of a virgin and lived a sinless life.

BELIEVE that Jesus died on the cross, rose from the dead and ascended to Heaven.

BELIEVE that it is faith in Christ alone that makes us right with God. **SLIDE 19**

BECOME a disciple of Jesus by repenting, which means to turn away from our old nature (ways of the world and seek the will of God

The Fall and Salvation

What is my part in sustaining my salvation?

3 Ephesians 2:8-10

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the **gift** of God; not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

For we are **His** workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God **prepared** beforehand so that we would walk in them. **3**

4 John 15:4-5

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it **abides** in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, **bears much fruit**; for without Me you can do nothing.

5 What does "abide" mean?"

Give students time to look up "abide"

Definition: live in, tarry, remain, endure, continue

In your own words, explain what abiding in Christ means:

Abiding is trusting Christ with your whole person. Surrender to the Spirit's leading and convictions to confess sin, and to follow where he takes you. CLING TO CHRIST as the soul source of your salvation and resist the urge to "earn your salvation" by works. Endure the pruning process discussed in John 14. (Hold up under testing and trials by trusting that God has your best interests in mind. – SLIDE 21.V



2 If we sin, what does God do?

Hebrews 2:17 - Therefore, he (Jesus) had to be like his brothers and sisters in every way, so that he could become a merciful and faithful **high priest**¹ in matters pertaining to God.

1 John 2:1 - My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an **Advocate**² with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous

1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness

When you fall short, repent, confess and ask forgiveness; this isn't to restore your salvation, but to ensure a quality relationship with the Father.

1 Jesus' work on our behalf didn't stop with his earthly activities. He continues to account for the sins of believers.

1 In ancient Israel, only the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies and make intercession for the people. They had to be ritually clean and elected by God; otherwise, they would be struck dead. Jesus is the last and ultimate high priest; he is the perfect intermediary between God and man

2 Satan, "the accuser," brings our "case file" before God containing our wrongdoings. Anyone not in Christ is declared guilty and condemned to eternal darkness.

For those in Christ, Jesus acts as our defense lawyer; Jesus stands in our place, so our case files are empty (no sins), and God declares us innocent! **SLIDE 20.V**

3 Prevents "Hey, look what I did!" mentality of self-righteousness. What great part do you play in receiving a gift? You reach out your hand and take it. Even our ability to respond positively to the Gospel is the work of God who enlivens our minds and activates faith in us.

Therefore, the first truth of salvation is that we must rest in what Christ has done for us. In that rest, let love and appreciation grow in your heart and compel you to do works of faith. Don't put works before faith; faith rests in Christ and works when *carried along* by the Spirit.

1 How do you know you have the Spirit?

The first proof is that you believe Jesus is the Son of God and you believe God when he says you are a sinner in need of repentance and a Savior.

Secondly, you will notice God begin to convict you about your thoughts and actions.

3 Notice the phrases (1) "neither death nor life;" (2) "will not perish;" (3) never leave nor forsake you;" and (4) "never perish." What do they tell us? We have assurance/confidence.

The Apostle Paul experienced times of plenty and times of scarcity. He enjoyed times of great spiritual victories and spent time in prison. He was welcomed warmly by Gentiles but was brutalized by hostile Romans and Jews. And yet, he was content in all things.

Why? Because he knew God had sealed him in his salvation and would never abandon him.

This is the great blessedness of our salvation...assurance!

1 How secure is my salvation when I confess Jesus as Savior?

Many Christians may doubt their salvation in times of trial and testing. However, God assures us that his gift of grace and his Holy Spirit marks us as his eternal children. Paul writes in Ephesians 1:13 that "after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were *sealed* in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise..." As long as we cling to Him as Savior and trust in his love, we can be confident in our salvation.



2 Throughout history, governing authorities used a seal to assign their authority to a document. When people saw the royal seal, they knew it was from the king and represented the king's interests. Thus, when you believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit in you¹ is your seal...it is the divine mark upon you identifying you as the king's possession. Further, "seal" also means to secure an object, to protect it from leakage or spoiling; it means you are secure in your salvation.

Romans 8:35, 38-39 - Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ...For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

4 **Can you lose your salvation?** ² Context: Romans required public renouncing of Jesus to avoid death.

²Hebrews 6:4-7 - *For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away to restore them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.*

- 1) This passage doesn't apply to Christians who struggle with sin or temporarily backslide, but to those make the willful choice to walk away from Jesus and reject him as Lord and Savior.
- 2) You cannot "lose" your salvation; God doesn't "take it away." However, a person can choose to give it up.

1 Knowing the truth shall set you free

One of the most destructive results of the fall is the incredible blindness that afflicts all of humanity. By “blindness,” Christians mean the inability to see reality as it is created, sustained and willed by Almighty God. In other words, as maker of all things, God establishes what is real and true; his moral law and his physical laws of the universe dictate how all things operate as they should.

Fallen humans reject this idea and follow the big lie that they, not God, determine what is real and good. This “blindness” causes them to walk the path of darkness, unable or unwilling to understand spiritual truths and defiantly opposing God’s work in the world. This blindness makes humanity slaves of the great deceiver, Satan. This fallen archangel despises humans and desires to drag them away from their Maker through deception.

However, when Jesus came to earth, he came to “bear witness to the truth.” The Son of God came in human form to speak God’s Words to “allow us to see.” Those who come to believe in Jesus have heard God’s voice and received God’s truth. This gives us access to God’s wisdom and allows us to see humanity, the universe and the supernatural world as God sees it.



2 What is my eternal destiny as God’s child?

In 1 Corinthians 2:9, the Apostle Paul states, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” What an incredible statement. Paul is saying that our eternity is beyond human imagination. No painting, mental image or oral description can capture its magnificence.

Romans 8:16-17 states that we are children of God and fellow heirs with Christ. If we suffer with him, we will be glorified with him in eternity.

Ephesians 2:4-7 explains that because God is rich in mercy, he has seated us in heavenly places in Christ Jesus that in ages to come, he will show his abundant riches and kindness toward us. **SLIDE 22 Read**

EXERCISE

Circle the **most correct** answer

1. According to John 3:3, what must happen for a person to see God's kingdom?

- A. They must obey the Ten Commandments
- B. They must be baptized in a church
- C. They must be born again**
- D. They must live a good moral life

2. The first step in salvation is to:

- A. Attend church regularly
- B. Agree with God that we are fallen**
- C. Give money to the poor
- D. Learn Bible history

3. The penalty of disobedience (sin) is described as:

- A. Loss of happiness
- B. Temporary separation from God
- C. Spiritual and physical death**
- D. Loss of blessings only

4. According to the lesson, God intervened to save humanity by:

- A. Sending prophets
- B. Creating a new law
- C. Teaching moral lessons only
- D. Becoming flesh and dying on the cross**

5. Which of the following is NOT one of the Six "B's" of becoming a child of God?

- A. Believe Jesus was born of a virgin
- B. Believe Jesus lived a sinless life
- C. Believe good works earn salvation**
- D. Become a disciple by repentance

6. What does "born again" mean in this lesson?

- A. Becoming God's child by His grace**
- B. Becoming religious
- C. Going to church and reading the Bible
- D. Being baptized as an infant
- E. Joining a church denomination
- F. All of the above

7. What provides believers assurance that they will not be separated from God's love?

- A. God's promises in Scripture**
- B. Their own good behavior
- C. Church membership
- D. Fear of judgment

8. The Holy Spirit is described as a "seal." This means:

- A. He makes believers perfect immediately
- B. He marks believers as God's possession and secures salvation**
- C. He replaces the Bible
- D. He removes free will

9. Can a Christian lose his or her salvation?

- A. A person can choose to walk away, but God does not take salvation away**
- B. Yes, by committing any sin
- C. Yes, if God revokes it
- D. No one can choose to leave Christ

10. What does "abide in Christ" mean?

- A. Trying hard to earn salvation
- B. Trusting Christ as source of salvation and power**
- C. Living in a monastery
- D. Avoiding all non-Christians

11. What separates from a loving God?

- A. God's holiness
- B. God's wrath
- C. God's wrath and holiness
- D. God's holiness and man's fallenness**
- E. Man's fallenness

12. Why do you think people resist God's grace?

Biggest factor is human pride, the desire to chart our own path, make our own decisions. We think we can make it our own without God's help. There are some who are trapped in legalism or self-righteousness, thinking they can earn God's acceptance, and don't understand the concept of grace.

Apply your knowledge

You're looking at TikTok videos, and a famous influencer posts her opinion on religion. She said God embraces everyone whether we're Christians, Buddhists, Muslims or Hindu. She adds that we are all God's children and that's what Jesus came to tell us. The influencer claims going to Heaven depends only on believing in God and being nice to people. It also means accepting people for who they are. What would you say in a post responding to this person based on today's lesson?

The holiness of God requires that anyone who comes into his presence must be equally holy. Holiness means God is perfectly powerful and righteous. Fallen humans cannot fellowship with him or enjoy his presence, because there is a huge, insurmountable gap between a holy God and sinful man. The Bible tells us God made one way, and one way only to bridge that gap. A way that would make man holy and righteous before God. That way was sending his Son Jesus Christ to earth in human form to live among us. He died on the cross to pay for our sins. If we put our faith in his finished work, God assigns his righteousness to us (Romans 4:1-5). Jesus said he is the only one who could accomplish this work. "I am the way, the truth, and the life and no one comes to the Father except through me. All other religions fail to make man holy before God; they rely on human effort, which always falls short.



Session 3

Who is Jesus?



Who was this humble carpenter many call Son of God?

2 Two thousand years ago, a humble carpenter stood before a riotous crowd of religious Judeans and boldly proclaimed, ***“Truly, truly I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am!”*** The crowd collectively gasped, screamed “blasphemy” and took aim with large rocks to stone him on the spot.

What was it about Jesus Christ’s amazing words that so enraged the Jewish crowd that they sought to execute him without a trial? Did Jesus claim to exist before Abraham, a man who lived centuries before Christ’s own time? Was Jesus asserting he was equal with God, the only being who existed before all things? Those driven to end his life certainly thought so. SLIDE 25

The issue regarding Christ’s identity has survived the two thousand years since his birth, death and resurrection.

Priests, heretics, skeptics and scholars have argued for centuries, and still do today, about the true nature of Jesus of Nazareth. They’ve called him the one God, a god, simply a good teacher, and even a failed religious rebel.

Who is right? The question is a vital one...so vital that every human being’s response to it will shape their eternal destiny. ***Jesus proclaimed, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father (enters eternal life) except through me” (John 14:6). Jesus declared he is the ONLY path to eternal life.*** Simply put, our belief about who Jesus is, and how we live based on that belief will determine whether or not we are truly Christians and truly “born again” children of God. (John 3:3).

In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God...and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us...John 1:1,14

1 If God is loving, why couldn't he allow a diversity of opinions on the identity of Jesus? Couldn't he accept all people into Heaven who have a respect for Jesus regardless of what they believe about Him? Muslims believe he was a prophet; Mormons believe he was one of multiple sons of God; others see Him as a good man adopted by God. Some people even claim Jesus was a special creation of God. Aren't such reverent thoughts good enough?

The answer is a resounding **NO!** For a person to be born again and made righteous before God, he or she must believe God's Word. The Bible tells us that Abraham "believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:3).

Is the question "Who is Jesus" important?

The first step in becoming a child of God is to believe what God says; to take His every Word as truth! Jesus said, "I came into this world to bear witness to

the truth; everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice" (John 18:37).

Further, Jesus declares He would send the Holy Spirit to guide us into "all truth" (John 16:13). Therefore, those who believe God's Word have the Holy Spirit, and one of the Holy Spirit's missions is to testify about the identity of Jesus Christ (John 15:26). Those who are "saved" will know precisely who Jesus is based on who the Father says He is. In summary, to be a Christian, one must believe the truth about who Jesus really is! To believe wrongly about Him is to deny God's Word and Spirit.

Examining the Scriptures

5 1 Kings 8:60

That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God, and there is no other (god).

Isaiah 43:11

I, even I, am the Lord and apart from me there is no savior.

Isaiah 45:21-24

And there is no other God besides Me, A just God and a Savior; There is none except Me. "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other...to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance. They will say of Me, surely in the Lord I have righteousness and strength...

2 Many skeptics and false teachers claim Jesus never said He was God. They scan the first three Gospels and say there is nothing in them that clearly points to Jesus as divine in origin.

There are statements alluding to Jesus' divinity in Matthew, Mark and Luke, but they are not as obvious as they are in John's Gospel. John makes very direct and clear statements that Jesus is indeed God.

Skeptics get around this by claiming John's book is simply too different from the other three and can't be trusted.

Though it is quite different, John's Gospel is the cornerstone of the Bible; it is a theological biography that uncovers the identity of a mysterious divine figure woven throughout the Old Testament. The "Angel of the Lord," the "us" in Genesis 1, the promised Messiah, the coming King of Israel, the general of God's armies, the God of Light and Living Water.

John tells us these are OT references to Jesus Christ, who is the eternal Son and Word.

3 John ascribes to Jesus many of the Old Testament titles and functions of God. The apostle is proclaiming that Jesus is an eternal part of a triune Godhead and is the Word of God that become human and dwelt among men.

4 Is there biblical evidence beyond John's writing that proves Jesus is God in human flesh?

There is much evidence in both testaments, but we will use a simple logic chain with a few passages to prove the point.

1 According to the Old Testament, there is ONE GOD who is the ONE SAVIOR

If that's the case, then what are the New Testament writers telling us when they proclaim:



Philippians 2:10-11

So that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Colossians 2:9-10

For in Him (Jesus) all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in bodily form and you are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power.

3 Matthew 3:16-17

And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

1 John 4:14

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be Savior of the world.

Acts 5:31

Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

4 What is the logical conclusion about Jesus' identity?

If God alone is Lord and Savior, according to the Old Testament, then the New Testament writers are referring to Jesus as God because they call him as Lord and Savior. And because God is one, then he must be a triune being (Father, Son, Spirit) whose "persons" are a perfect unity.

2 These two passages are Paul's response to false teachers who Jesus below or among other spirit beings, such as angels.

This title he uses "LORD" is deep in meaning. The Greek word is *Kurios*, which in its simplest form means "master." However, ancient Jews used this Greek term to replace the Hebrew word Jehovah (Yahweh) in the Greek Bible, the Septuagint. Jehovah essentially means the one and only I AM. In referring to Jesus as "Lord," Paul is intentionally identifying Him as part of a triune Jehovah God.

Further, Matthew, John and Peter proclaim Jesus as Savior.

Read each verse or watch videos and ask the students to provide their perspectives and have them fill in the appropriate blanks.

Seeing Jesus through eyes of others

List character traits of Jesus based on his engagement with the people below:



- **SV26** - She was a Samaritan – a mixed race hated by Jews
- Jews didn't engage with woman who were alone
- She was sexually impure
- Jesus broke barriers of ethnic hatred, sexism, and marginalization of sinners by engaging with a promiscuous Samaritan woman.
- He proved there are no barriers he won't cross (that don't involve moral compromise) to reach a person who will hear and receive the Gospel. Her testimony led many of the "unclean Samaritans" to receive Jesus as savior.



- **Refer to SV24** - Reflects mix of John 9 and Matthew 23
- Miracles of healing confirmed his divine authority and identity while demonstrating his compassion
- **Matthew 11:28 -30 READ**
- We see in Jesus' several interactions with Jewish religious leaders, that he has little patience with hypocrites. His fire and brimstone messages were aimed primarily at them.
- They sought to usurp God's authority for their own power and wealth. Jesus boldly exposes them as rebels against God wrapped in religious clothing and attitudes.
- Jesus is impressed with godliness on the inside in terms of clean motives and attitudes, rather than keeping rules and looking good. Love for God and people, not religious show, is what he desires.

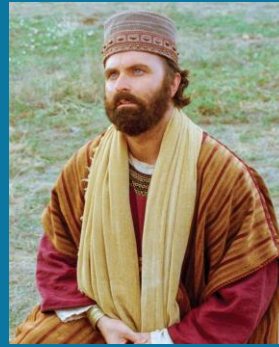


- Woman with the issue of blood (**Mark 5:25-34**)
- Again, Jesus crossed many barriers, including disease, to get to the people he to whom he wanted to minister.
- He would even embrace lepers, whose disease ate away their flesh and was highly contagious (**Matthew 8:1-4**)
- They were often confined outside cities and would be chased out of their homes and public places. Jesus asks us to minister to outcasts who others reject or ignore.

Who is Jesus?

▪ READ Matthew 19:16-24

- The rich young ruler came to Jesus with a very important question: what must I do to inherit eternal life?
- No doubt he was sincere and wanted to ensure he was right with God. But Jesus saw something in him the man had to deal with.
- He was wealthy and loved the things he had more than God.
- Man cannot serve two masters – money and God; God demands sole allegiance...He is a jealous God...**what does that mean?**
- Jesus will not compete for our loyalty with things or people. He will address idols in our lives and demand we dispense with them.



Rich young ruler

- **SV27** - Just like the Samaritan and adulteress, tax collectors in Jesus' time were despised and marginalized by the Jewish people.
- They were considered unclean sinners and were to be avoided. But Jesus was unconcerned about class, job, level of sin, age, etc.
- He made a hated tax collector one of his intimate followers, one of the 12 disciples whom he used to change the world.



Tax collector

▪ READ John 8:1-11

- The Jewish mob was ready to stone her, but Jesus put a stop to it by reminding them of their own sin.
- Jesus showed that no sin, even adultery, is too bad for him to forgive.
- But notice he told her to "sin no more." Jesus' forgiveness is coupled with a required change of heart and direction.
- He is holy and wants his people to be like him. He loves us too much to allow us to continue wallowing in the mud of sin.
- **SV28** – Jesus responds to a broken and contrite heart with love and mercy. God's love knows no boundaries, and He gives it freely to all who come to Him in repentance.



The adulteress

1 Note: The Lord's resurrection is the moment history changed course. The Lord proved his deity by his works and words, but it was defeating death that verified his claim to messiahship and set the world on a new path of faith and hope. (Assign as self-read)

Resurrection of Jesus – ultimate proof of His deity

- A) Multiple lines of evidence demonstrate the historicity of Christ's victorious conquering of death:
- 1) Varied independent sources testify that Jesus did indeed die by crucifixion at the hands of Pontius Pilate
 - 2) The tomb used for Jesus' burial was known publicly, therefore anyone could attest to its empty condition post-resurrection
 - 3) Hundreds of people saw the resurrected Christ and could testify to its validity...there was no chance it was a mass hallucination
 - 4) The apostles began preaching in the area of his resurrection (Jerusalem) soon after the event, making their claims easily refuted or verified
 - 5) The apostles underwent a dramatic transformation following the resurrection: from cowering in hiding, to boldly preaching in public
 - 6) There was a massive shift in belief and practice among the Jewish people; many became Christians, including Paul and James, both former skeptics
 - 7) The rapid spread of the faith throughout Palestine, and then across the Roman world and into Persia and India, could only be fueled by real, miraculous events (without force or coercion)
 - 8) Masses of people died for their faith...they would not do so if they thought the resurrection was a religious hoax

Applying your knowledge

A friend of yours says he respects Jesus as a good teacher and proclaims he is a Christian. However, he doesn't believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God and thinks "truth is relative;" in other words, everyone has their own truth. He believes God will accept anyone who is sincere in their beliefs and lives a good life even if they aren't followers of Jesus. Use the material presented in this session and refer to the article "Knowing the truth shall set you free" on page 13 to answer the questions below..

1. Is your friend born again? Why or why not?
2. What would you tell him about truth and the identity of Jesus?
3. Can you think of Bible verses that support your responses?



Sample Response

The person is likely NOT born again, because his statements tell us he is not under the influence of the Holy Spirit. He does not recognize Jesus as the eternal Son of God, nor does he recognize the authority of Scripture. He thinks as the world thinks. The Paul tells us, "Be not conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2).

Dealing with his specific claims, we could answer:

(1) 2 Timothy 3:14-17 tells us that Scripture is divinely inspired, which means God moved through men to write it, ensuring they delivered his message. God's Word is truth, and meets every test of truth.

(2) John 1:1 tells us that God's Word is Jesus, and Jesus has always been with God and is God. Therefore, those who are in truth, must believe Jesus is God. Also, Jesus said that he alone is the way, the truth and the life and no one goes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6)

(3) Further, the Scriptures tells us that the God of the Bible is the only Savior, therefore, no other religions lead to Heaven. Jesus told Pilate that he came into the world to bear witness to the truth and everyone who loves the truth will hear his voice (and believe his words) (John 18:37).

If time permits, have students work this exercise in small groups.

If time doesn't permit, quickly discuss the questions as a single group.

Application Exercise

Read scenario and give students 20 to 30 minutes to discuss and craft a response. Allow students to share their perspectives.

This exercise requires reading of Session 1 article "Knowing the Truth...".

Assign as homework, if time doesn't permit this exercise in-class.

Conclusion

Romans 10:9-11

"That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Now, we know who Jesus is, let's explore what he's like; what is his character?



Session 4

Discipleship



1 Take up your cross and follow me

For many, the term *disciples* brings to mind images of the 12 apostles who followed Jesus during his roughly three-year ministry. They must have hung on his every word as he shared with them the mystery of the Kingdom of God. This mystery wasn't some mystical secret of power revealed only to a few men in Christ's inner circle. Instead, it was the declaration to all that God was going to pour out his Holy Spirit on generations of undeserving sinners who put faith in His Son Jesus and empower them to change the world.

Every single one of these spirit-filled Christ-followers, from Jesus' time to our own era, are "disciples." The term *disciple* means "a follower or student of a teacher or leader." *Disciple* is the root word of *discipline*, which is defined as

"training to obey a code or set of rules." The basic understanding of discipleship is to submit oneself to a system of training under the supervision of an experienced and knowledgeable instructor. The objective is to acquire the knowledge and skills of the master so the pupil may carry on the teacher's work.

Christian discipleship has a similar process and objective but goes much deeper. As Christians, we are called to submit to Christ's teachings not only to carry on his work, but also to grow closer in fellowship with Him and to become like Him in character. Christian discipleship transforms us into God's "image-bearers," so that when people see us, they see Christ in us; this is the essence of true discipleship.

2 SLIDE 30.V – Greg Laurie on Discipleship: What it means to take up the cross

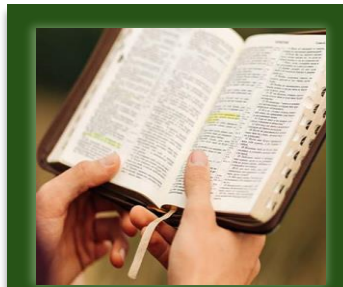
As a Christian, you've been put on a new path...off the path of self-centeredness and onto the path of being centered on the Lord.

The will of God is opposed by fallen human nature; we seek health, wealth, happiness, comfort, pleasure, power

The Holy Spirit prompts us to put off this type of thinking; we take up the cross by putting God and others first, crucifying selfish desires in doing so, we find the abundant life...we become what God originally intended.

We change – put on Christ – through a process called *sanctification*.

Pillars of Christian growth



Devotional Life

1 Personal Bible Study

Prayer

Praise



Fellowship

Church Attendance

Group Bible Studies

Social Activities



Service

Using your Spiritual Gifts

Giving

Evangelism

Devotional Life

A. Purpose

- 3 1. To gain intimate fellowship with our Lord
2. To hear God's voice as He reveals his character and will
3. Conviction of sin and areas needing work...confess and allow God to work
4. Grow in trust, faithfulness and Christlike character¹
5. To intercede for others and make known our own needs

4 **A** disciple of Jesus will always "bear fruit." This means good will naturally flow from His people because they have His Spirit living in them. There are two types of fruit we should see in our lives.

The first comes from using the spiritual gifts God gives us to build His kingdom. Jesus wants us to invest ourselves in the lives of others so we can bring them into God's family and help them mature. The "fruit" here is the changed lives of people to whom we minister and serve.

The second type is the "fruit of the Spirit," which the Apostle Paul discusses in Galatians 5:22-23. These are Christlike attributes we take on as our walk with Jesus deepens and our faith grows.

Paul writes, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, kindness, longsuffering, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. We bear the fruit of the Spirit as we "abide in Christ" through prayer, Bible Study, fellowship and obedience to the Lord's calling.

2 The order of these pillars is important; the flow is from left to right. It shows that all of our Christian activity should begin with a quality devotion life.

Our devotion life is where we gain intimacy with Christ and his Word, which is the fuel for everything else we do.

Taking your place in the church among God's people is the second priority; much of the service you do will extend from your fellowship life

1 There is a folk tale written by Nathaniel Hawthorne called "The Great Stone Face," which helps illustrate this point. The story tells of a boy who constantly looked at a man's face carved by nature into a mountainside. The face seems kind, wise and noble and is admired by all. By his constant staring at the face, the boy takes on its characteristics. Likewise, as we meditate on the person of Christ, we become more like him.

3 Romans 12:1-2

From caterpillar to butterfly; the call to transformation

Therefore, I **urge**¹ you, brothers and sisters, by the **mercies**² of God, to **present**³ your bodies as a living and holy **sacrifice**⁴, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

5 Word study

SLIDE 34

Conform

To shape one's thinking and behavior after the pattern of another

World

Popular culture; belief systems focused on this life's benefits; ideas that contradict God's ways

Transformed

To change into another form, to undergo metamorphosis

Renewing

Transforming something old into something new; fixing a broken item



Clay in the Potter's Hand

1 Sanctification

The word *sanctification* comes from the Latin word *sanctus*, meaning "holy." It means to be set apart for a special purpose or use.

Process

Sanctification is a process of transformation involving a change in heart, mind, and body. Some changes take place at salvation, but the process of maturing occurs over a lifetime. Sanctification is not "trying hard," or "becoming religious," but takes place as a Christian surrenders to God's will and grows under testing.

2 Corinthians 4:16-17

Therefore, we do not lose heart, but though our outer person is decaying, yet our inner person is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond comprehension.

Philippians 1:6

Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to perfection until the day of Christ Jesus.

2 SLIDE 31.V on sanctification

Metamorphosis – from caterpillar to butterfly

SLIDES 32-33

Go to 3

4 Ask for students' thoughts on this passage, then guide them through a word study of both paragraphs. Explain this is part of an effective Bible Study, so remember this exercise for next week's session.

1 **Urge:** to call upon with emotion, to entreat to take action

2 **Mercies:** compassion from the bowels, deeply felt

3 **Present:** place yourself at God's disposal

4 **Living and holy sacrifice:** What's put on the altar of sacrifice does not come off

We're not simply taking on a new religion, or code of ethics; we're undergoing a transformation; a change from one type of being to another.

EXERCISE

Circle the most correct answer

1. Why are devotional practices important?

- A) They earn God's acceptance through religious effort
- B) They are disciplines God ordained to keep us close to Him and protect against deception
- C) They replace the need for church fellowship
- D) They guarantee material blessings

2. The story "The Great Stone Face" is used to illustrate what spiritual principle?

- A) Salvation through good works
- B) Judgment of unbelievers
- C) Becoming like Christ by meditating on Him
- D) The dangers of false prophecy

3. What is the key point of the Greg Laurie video?

- A) God wants fulfill our dreams and ambitions
- B) God is the co-pilot of our lives
- C) A disciple of Jesus aligns his life with God's will
- D) Christians desire God to bless their works
- E) Both A and C

4. What is the objective of discipleship (pg. 25)?

The objective of a disciple is to acquire the knowledge and skills of the master so he or she may carry on the teacher's work.

5. Circle the true statements about Christian discipleship?

- A) Jesus' disciples never make mistakes
- B) Jesus' disciples grow closer to him
- C) Jesus' disciples just say "yes" to Jesus
- D) Jesus' disciples become more like Jesus
- E) Jesus' disciples are very popular

6. What is the priority activity for a disciple of Jesus?

- A) Making sure we obey the 10 Commandments
- B) Ensuring we have quality time (devotions) with Jesus
- C) Reading the Bible at least 3 times weekly
- D) Tell everyone "I'm a Christian"

7. Devotional practices are compared to "spiritual vitamins, guardrails, and fences." What is the main idea of this comparison?

- A) They replace salvation
- B) They are optional religious traditions
- C) They promote growth, keep believers in truth, and protect from harmful influences
- D) They guarantee freedom from suffering

8. Circle the two purposes for devotions

- A) Gain intimate fellowship with other believers
- B) To hear God's voice
- C) Gain intimate fellowship with Jesus
- D) To ensure we're dealing with distractions

9. Why was the master angry with the servant in Matthew 25:14-30

- A) The servant didn't invest the money he was given, so it would make more money
- B) The servant had a bad attitude
- C) The servant made too little money
- D) The servant tried to steal the money given to him by the master

10. What things keep you from spending quality time with Jesus in a personal devotional life? How can you deal with these things to enhance your discipleship?

EXERCISE

Unscramble the words below and write them in the blanks. Then use these words to complete the paragraph below. The words are all found in the “Discipleship” section.

fpelwlshio fellowship

srutt trust

iksticrlhe Christlike

eiugt quiet

eraplsno personal

vecio voice

rpeary prayer

liwl will

tacrarceh character

raepis praise

isaodnscttri distractions

rthefa Father

hotnig nothing

iftha faith

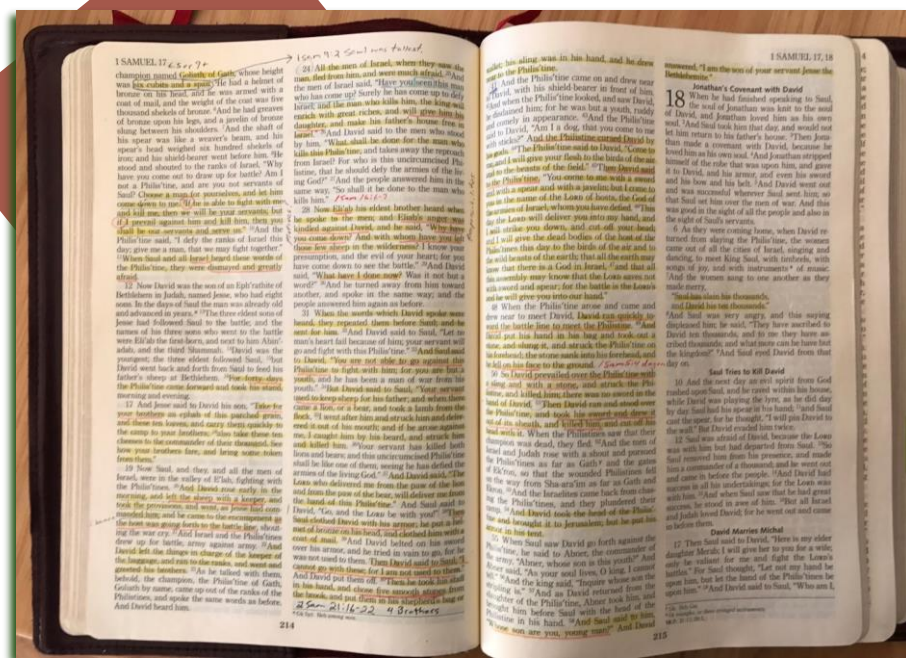
ibelb uystd Bible study

utifr fruit

tpncieae patience

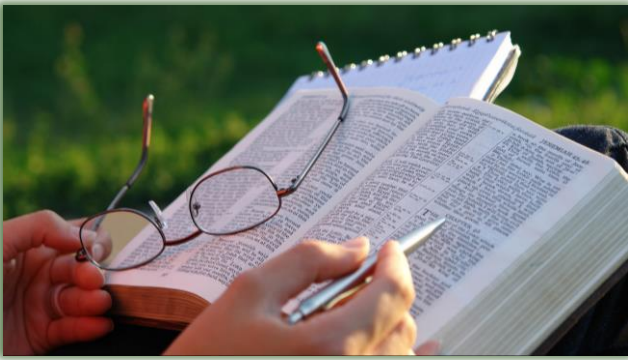
eryans years

The three elements of a quality devotional life consist of Personal Bible Study, Prayer and Praise. These help us gain intimate fellowship with the Lord Jesus. This closeness to Jesus is vital because without it we can accomplish nothing truly acceptable to God. Fellowship with Jesus results in the disciple growing in trust, faith and a Christlike character. When spending time with the Lord, it is good to find a quiet place that is free from distraction. This will help us hear God’s voice. Hearing the Lord depends on our exercising patience. Our Lord desires to reveal His will to us, so we can bear much fruit. God is our Father and yearns for us to walk in closeness to Him.



Sessions 5

Bible Study



Principles of Context and Interpretation

4 **Context:** *The circumstances that form the background of an event, statement, or idea, in terms of which it can be fully understood and assessed.*

To correctly interpret and understand the Bible correctly, *context* is vitally important. We need to know the background of certain verses, particularly those that are difficult

to understand or seem contradictory. Understanding factors, such as the writer's identity, the audience, time written, language, literature type, and author's intent, ensures we receive the message as God intended. **[6]** *Use Interpretation Principles on pgs. 32-34 to complete the statements below.*

- [7]** 1) You can answer any difficult question by referring to God's essential character.
- 2) Proverbs are often general principles rather than absolute truths.
- 3) All actions recorded in the Bible are approved by God. T or F
- 4) Any command you read in the Old Testament applies to Christians today. T or F
- 5) The Bible uses figures of speech, such as allegories, to paint word pictures.
- 6) Be careful to know why a verse/chapter was written and who wrote it, when, where and to whom.
- 7) Prophecy is often described as echoic, fulfilled often in stages over time.
- 8) List two key factors of context: genre, language, culture, intent, audience
- 9) Explain how Acts 9:7 and Acts 22:9 are NOT contradictory.

5 **SLIDE 39, then read Matt 13:10-12 and discuss briefly, then play SLIDE.V 40** – Kenneth Copeland claims Matthew 13:10-12 supports 100-fold health and wealth doctrine; however, the chapter is dealing with evangelism and salvation

The seed is the Word of God, the sower is the evangelist, and the mystery is that the Gentiles are welcomed into the Kingdom of God as the Jews are hardened against it Copeland is interpreting the Bible through the lens of his own selfish philosophy

1 In the course introduction we talked about we study the Bible...It is God's Word that is historical, divinely inspired and the foundation of our Christian faith.

Further, it provides a fluid narrative that follows logically and consistently from beginning of time to its end and with major prophetic events occurring as God said they would. The Bible gives us the clear impression that God is moving time along according to his will –

SLIDE 36

2 Additionally, **SLIDE 37**

How do we study the Bible to gain maximum understanding and discernment?

3 **SLIDE 38** – Discuss process of good study

Most people are content with a surface reading of a chapter or perhaps use a devotional.

This is fine because it keeps us in daily touch with the Word.

But I highly recommend that at least once a week you take a deep dive into the Scripture.

Pick a book and go through it chapter-by-chapter, verse-by-verse; meditate on it, pray over it, and go deep with the Lord in His Word

1. Ask vital questions

- a) Who wrote the text and why was it written?
- b) When was it written and to whom was it written?
- c) Where was it written?
- d) What genre is it written in? Is it poetry, history, prophecy, parable or a mix of genres?
- e) What literary tools are used? Hyperbole (exaggeration), allegory, contrast and compare, repetition, figurative, etc.?
- f) Does the message apply only to the original audience or beyond them?
- g) The answers to these questions provide us with important contextual clues we use to interpret the Scriptures as God intended.

2. Interpret all Scripture in light of God's character:

- a) He is the very essence of love, justice, truth and patience
- b) He never contradicts himself nor acts arbitrarily without purpose
 - 1) How can I serve a God who murders entire people group?
- c) All of his acts are according to his perfect will
- d) You can answer any difficult question by defaulting to God's character.

3. Proverbs are often general principles rather than unwavering truth claims

- a) In other words, don't look to ALL Proverbs for "hard theology," but rather evaluate each based on logic, experience and especially other Bible passages. Here are examples:
- b) "Dishonest money dwindles away, but whoever gathers money little by little makes it grow (Prov) 13:11." *There are many cases throughout history where people become quite wealthy with dishonest money...**what is the general principle here?** The honest and patient means to prosperity is the godly way. In many cases, people who are dishonest and unwise will waste their resources.*
- c) "All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty" *Not always...many people have worked hard, but barely scrape by in life economically...**what is the general principle here?** Those who don't do an honest day's work are more likely to end up financially challenged. Those who work hard are more likely to at least provide the basic needs for their families.*

d) “The wages of the righteous is life, but the earnings of the wicked are sin and death.” *This is true in all cases.*

3. **Not all actions recorded in the Bible are approved by God** – good or bad, they are included because they are historical and relevant...demonstrates credibility of Bible

a. Noah getting drunk; or Judah sleeping with his daughter-in-law; thinking she was a prostitute; Samson marrying a Philistine; kings having hundreds of wives, and concubines

4. **Differentiate between Old Testament laws that are universal and timeless, and those that were temporary and Israel-focused.**

a. Marriage, sex and worship commands are eternal; but dietary, clothing and ritual laws changed or were eliminated with Christ’s life, death and resurrection

5. **Prophecy can be *echoic***: it finds partial or complete fulfillment soon after the foretelling, at different times in history and/or in the last days

a. Advent of the antichrist – Antiochus, Nero, Hitler, Mao Tse Tung, the final antichrist.

6. **The Law is patterned after ancient Near East covenantal language**... much of the promises of the Old Testament are limited to ancient Israel (wealth and health in exchange for obeying the Law, for example)

7. **All seeming contradictions are not contradictory when understood in context**...if the Bible seems to contradict itself, you can deconflict it by doing contextual and analytical studies.

a) Acts 9:7 (KJV) states, “The men which journeyed with him (Paul) stood speechless, **hearing a voice, but seeing no man.**”

b) Acts 22:9 (KJV) reads, “And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but **they heard not the voice** of him that spoke to me.”

1) Which is it? Did they hear or not hear the voice?

c) The Greek word for *hear* is **akouō**, which can mean the physical hearing (our ear picks up sound waves) or the hearing with the mind (our brains translate sound waves into meaningful language).

d) An American who can’t speak French can physically hear a Frenchman talking, but cannot translate the sound into something meaningful.

- f) The American hears, but doesn't *hear (comprehend)* the Frenchman.
- g) In the Acts passages, the sense of what is being said is that the men with Paul heard the voice, but did not comprehend it. In essence, they heard, but did not really hear (with understanding). To them, it was likely a thunderous sound with no tangible words.

8. The Bible often uses metaphors or hyperbolic language ...be careful not to take literally what is meant as a figure of speech

- a) Much of the harsh and "loud" language of the Old Testament is designed to get the attention of a hard-headed people through visual/emotional word pictures
- b) Such language was necessary in an ancient era dominated by heavily pagan and self-glorifying clans, kingdoms and empires
- c) Examples: (1) *Is the Lord's arm too short?* (Num 11:23) (2) *Ishmael will be a wild donkey of a man* (Gen) 16:12.; (3) *God will sharpen his sword and he will string his bow* (Psalm 7:11-13).

9. Carefully consider era, culture and God's intent.

- a. A lot of Old Testament laws were designed to keep the Jews healthy in an era before food and water could be managed for safety
- b. Laws were designed to make the Jews stand out from the pagans of their day.
- c. Some Christian guidelines based on a similar purpose – to ensure Christians stood out as salt and light,
 - 1. Women shouldn't wear make-up and jewelry, avoid showy dress, and keep their hair long to distinguish themselves from temple prostitutes of the Roman era
 - 2. These don't apply today because they don't carry the same cultural stigma

IMPORTANT! The best context for a passage is provided by nearby verses, its chapter, book, testament and the Bible as a whole. **Don't isolate passages;** ensure you interpret based on surrounding texts and the grand narrative of the Bible: (1) God is creator of all things; (2) man is fallen and destined for darkness; (3) man is made right with God by faith in God's mercy and provision; (4) God promised a Savior to renew man; (5) Jesus, the Son of God, is that Savior; (6) Jesus died for our sins, but rose on the third day; (7) all who believe Jesus is Savior and obey his commands receive eternal life; (8) Jesus will return and rule the earth.

(Back to pg. 31 - bottom)

4 The process

- Select a book (e.g., Acts, Genesis, etc..)
- Read the first chapter
- Write down first impressions
- Read verse-by-verse; analyze each verse
- Meditate prayerfully and thoughtfully
- Write down impressions of “verse groups”
- Pray over difficult verses until you “get it”
- Use Blueletter Bible commentary
- Take more notes
- Summarize the chapter
- Write lessons learned



Blue Letter Bible Tutorial for PC ([try to mirror phone on TV to show app procedures](#))

Blue Letter Bible at blueletterbible.org (or the app by the same name) is an excellent study aid that provides several user-friendly tools. In this class, we focus on its commentary by David Guzik. The commentary provides verse-by-verse analysis that is easy to understand.

1. Go to blueletterbible.org and type in a Bible verse in the Search box
2. Change the Bible version from KJV to NASB, then hit “search”
3. Click on the “Tools” link to the left of a specific verse, then click “Commentaries”
4. Find “Text Commentaries,” “David Guzik,” then click on the verse “Study Guide”
5. In the app, simply click on any part of a passage, then click on “Text Commentaries”



5 Use the Blueletter Bible tool to analyze John 1:16-18. Read the Guzik commentary, then use the interlinear tool to do a word study on the words below. Finally, rewrite the passage to reflect an expanded understanding.¹

- *Grace: Unmerited favor, given freely. Grace for grace means that God keeps on giving it.*
- *Truth: That which reflects reality...the revelation of God’s character, works and will*
- *He has explained: Jesus has revealed God’s character and will*

1 SLIDE 41 – What not to do

What people often do when they misinterpret Scripture is rip it out of context. They isolate it apart from the rest of the Bible

Result is they infuse meaning into the passage that was never intended

Or, they make a bad judgments about the passage and the faith

Here are 2 examples:

2 SLIDE 42 – Ehrman’s take on Jesus’ prophecy – see the notes section of Slide 24.

3 SLIDE 43 – What Jesus actually said...speaking to future

However, Jesus was actually correct in his day and in the future:

His generation saw the great tribulation of Jerusalem when the Romans in 70 A.D. destroyed the city and the temple; full fulfillment will take place in the last days

¹ Original - Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

Rewritten - For of His fullness we have all received unmerited favor that God keeps on giving us. For the Law was given through Moses; but undeserved favor and the revelation of God’s character works and will are realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; Jesus, who is God the only Son, who has shared an eternal, intimate bond with the Father; He makes him known.

EXERCISE

Circle the most correct answer

1. What are the three parts of a good Bible study?

- A) Prayer, Meditation, Devotional
- B) Contextual, Analytical, Meditation
- C) Contextual, Research, Devotional
- D) Contextual, Analytical, Devotional

2. Why is knowing the context of Bible passages so important?

- A) It makes us sound smarter when asked questions
- B) Helps us understand the author's original intent, how to properly apply the passage today, and avoid misinterpretation
- C) Helps apply Scripture today, provides flexibility in interpretation, and aids in knowing an author's intent
- D) Both A and C

3. How do we deal with supposed contradictions in Scripture?

- A) Ignore them because the Bible is Spirit inspired
- B) Explain God has a purpose for contradictions
- C) Analyze the passages and deconflict them
- D) Explain humans are fallible, but the Bible remains inspired

4. Google the question "What does the word *meditate* mean in the Bible?" Summarize the answers you get.

Biblical meditation is the active, intentional practice of filling the mind with Scripture, God's character, and His works to foster obedience and spiritual growth. Unlike emptying the mind, it means "musing" (siyah) on God's Word day and night to internalize it. It involves pondering, studying, and focusing deeply on verses, often by speaking them aloud. The purpose is to reflect on God's truth, His deeds, and His promises so one can align one's heart with Him. The ultimate result is life transformation into the image of Christ.

5. How should you approach Bible passages that are difficult to understand?

- A) Avoid them until you are more mature
- B) Ask your Aunt Lucy who seems to know everything
- C) Use a good Bible study aid
- D) Continue praying and meditate on the passage until God gives you understanding
- E) Both C and D

7. Use the BLB app to answer the following:

Summarize what David Guzik says about "The Word" as used in John 1:1?

The Word of God, who is Jesus, was in existence before all things. He had no beginning, and therefore, must be God. The term Logos, which is Greek for "word" has deep meaning for Jews and Greeks. It points both to the divine origin and sustaining of the universe. The Word is part of a triune being that is one God. Guzik highlights that any attempt to alter John 1:1 to change the nature of the Word is a bad interpretation of the verse (e.g., Jehovah's Witnesses).

How does David Guzik explain the bond between the Father and Jesus described in John 1:18

Jesus, the Word, is the revealer of the Father nature, his character. Jesus alone has intimate insight into God's mind and heart because he is at one with the Father. Together, with the Spirit, they are God. "In the bosom of the Father" illustrates this closeness.



Session 6

Praise & Prayer

3 Praying without ceasing means that we acknowledge God's constant presence and His interest in the thoughts and needs of our minds and hearts...

There is nothing going on in our lives that God isn't interested in

1 Very relevant song for this topic:

What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear
What a privilege to carry,
Everything to God in prayer

O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry,
Everything to God in prayer



Quotes

1 ***"Prayer at its highest is a two-way conversation and for me the most important part is listening to God's replies."*** — Frank C. Laubach

"Nothing tends more to cement the hearts of Christians than praying together. Never do they love one another so well as when they witness the outpouring of each other's hearts in prayer."

— Charles Finney


"God shapes the world by prayer. The more praying there is in the world the better the world will be, the mightier the forces against evil."

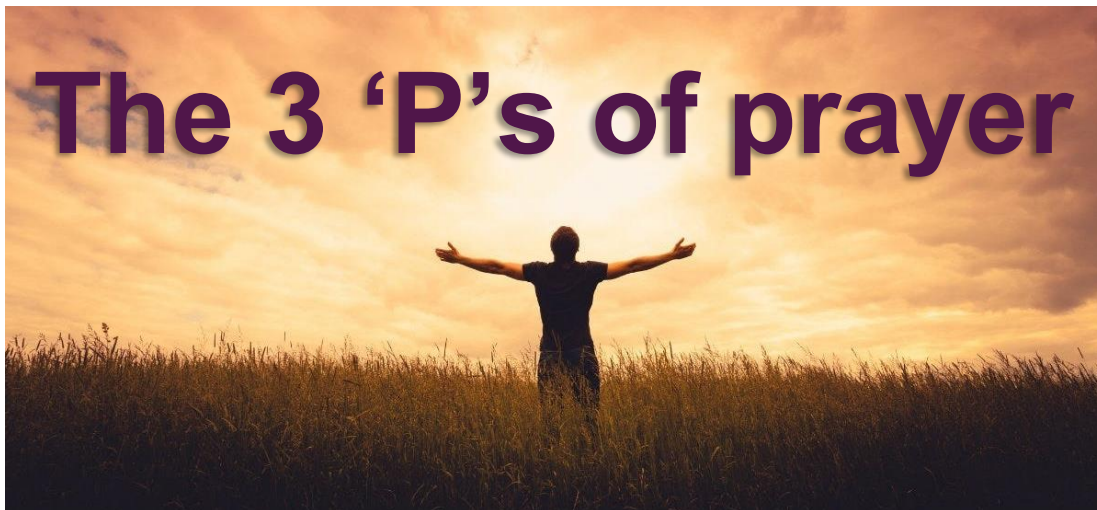
— E.M. Bounds

2 ***Believers! Pray without ceasing!***

Paul's letter to the Thessalonian church tells us to never stop praying (1 Thess) 5:17. Never stop? How is that even possible? It isn't hard because prayer is simply talking to God about everything in life. We can talk to him while driving, eating, working, cooking, swimming, etc. Prayer is making our thoughts known to the Lord no matter where we are and what we're doing. When we need the Lord's guidance, his help, his forgiveness, or want to share our frustrations, we can pray.

There are times of devotional prayer during which we find a quiet place and spend time with the Lord in deeper fellowship for longer periods. This "alone time" with God is vital to growth because it allows us to dispense with distractions. But when we "pray without ceasing," we acknowledge that God is present and listening at all times, and in all places. He cares about us that much.

4 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. *Philippians 4:6-7* 



Psalm 56 – In time of great trial, David puts his full trust in God and praises him despite his trial...he doesn't let fear build a wall between him and the Lord because he fully well knows from whom his help will come – key point is complete dependence on God

Psalm 51 – David is burdened by his great sin, knowing that the greatest offense is against the heart of God himself. He is trusting the “greatness of his compassion. Something to remember when battling with sin, guilt and shame. The end result is forgiveness and praise for the God whose mercies are new everyday.

Praise takes our eyes off ourselves and off the problem and puts them on God.

Pointing to the problem and asking God to address versus looking to God.

SLIDE 46 - God-focused, rather than giant-focused

Offer Praise even when suffering...does God change? Isn't he still great when things seem to be melting down in your life.

1 Praise *“I will give to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the Lord, the Most High” (Psalm 7:17).*

Praise is acknowledgment of God’s greatness, his holiness, love and provision. It is worship offered because of who He is and the awesomeness of His works. It isn’t based on our emotions or happiness levels, but solely on God being God. Praise includes singing songs and reading aloud Bible verses that reflect on God’s person, and speaking words that come from our hearts that glorify God. Praise allows us to orient ourselves to God’s power, rather than our own, and to rely totally on Him for what we need. It reminds us that we serve a big God who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and prevents us from allowing our problems to overwhelm our faith.

3 Persistence *“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, persistent in prayer” (Romans 12:12).*

Sometimes God’s people grow impatient with Him because he doesn’t answer their prayers as quickly as they would like. There are times when the Lord wants us to be persistent - to keep knocking at Heaven’s door - until He answers. This builds in us the godly character of patience. If God has laid something or somebody on your heart to pray for, don’t stop until the answer comes or the Lord redirects you.

Luke 18:1-9 – Parable of unjust judge

4 Patience *“The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him” (Lamentations 3:25).*

The ability to “wait upon the Lord” is a vital one. Patience is based on trust; we have faith that God knows best and will answer our prayers in good time. We can wait upon his guidance and avoid acting hurriedly out of fear or selfish ambition.

SLIDE 47 - Journey

5 Example of persistence and patience

Missionary to India Mark Buntain prayed for a drug abuser and pusher named Ram Dutta

“No one has ever prayed for you as many prayers as I am going to pray in the next few weeks. Some nights we won’t sleep. Sometimes a group of men will pray all night long for you. Once we start to fight this thing, we aren’t going to stop until we win.” **SLIDE 48 – Power of Prayer**

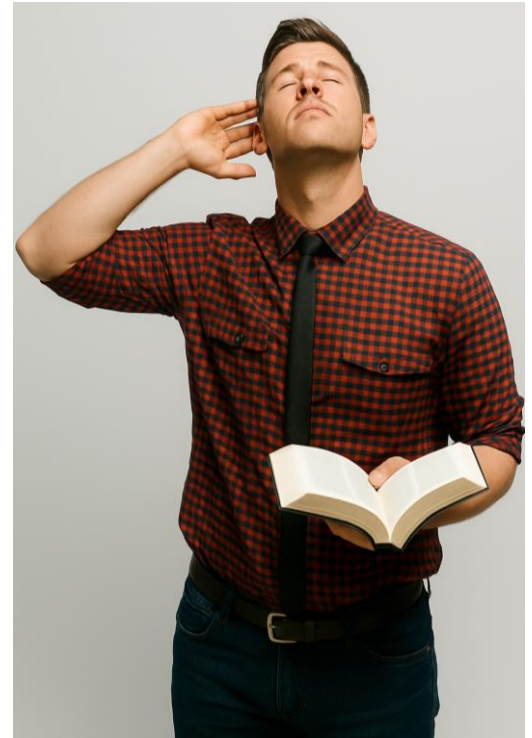
1 Hearing God

Drama and fireworks or the whisper of a still, small voice?

In a world where people often plead for or even demand obvious and dramatic messages from the Lord, what should his people expect as the norm? How does God speak to us in response to our prayers? The key to hearing God is to learn to discern; to be able to detect God's gentle voice that speaks into our hearts and minds.

In 1 Kings 19, the prophet Elijah runs away from Israel due to death threats issued by the wicked Queen Jezebel, wife of King Ahab. Elijah hides in a cave and waits to hear from the Lord. God shows him a mighty whirlwind, a giant earthquake and a raging fire, but the prophet doesn't hear God in any of them; the Lord's voice, instead, comes in a small whisper.

God speaks to us gently in many ways; through a friend, a radio program, a song, a pastor, or the Bible. A word comes to us that speaks to a specific concern, need or request. We know it's from the Lord if it aligns with God's Word and doesn't violate His character.



Further, God's speaks in a way that draws us to Him; it is never oppressive or guilt-inducing. However, the Lord may speak through pain and suffering, either to discipline us for wrongdoing and correct our walk, or to build in us the qualities of patience, humility and mercy.

Spiritual Warfare

1 Devil, flesh will seek to discourage and accuse during your devotion times; therefore, always remember:

- 1) God loves me
- 2) God forgives me
- 3) God hears me
- 4) God will answer me

2 Fighting Distractions



- Minimize time with poor influences, time wasters and brain busters
- Start by reading and meditating on the Word
- Start with praise and singing
- Keep a prayer journal to help you focus
- Remember! God wants to meet with us!
- Use Spiritual Warfare tactics in Session 8¹



Assignment

Read together Matthew 6:5-14.
Answer the first five questions, then read John 14:13 and 16:23 and answer the remaining question (Context!).

- 1) What is a hypocrite? Someone who pretends to be religious, but does everything for show; this person's faith is not real...he wants the praise of men, rather than God.
- 2) To ensure our prayers are sincere, what should we do? Pray to God in secret, and when we pray with people, talk with God, not to the people around you.
- 3) God is impressed with people who pray for a long time, repeating words over and over again so they get God's attention. T or F
- 4) If God knows what we need before we ask, why pray? Because God values our time with Him and uses it to help us to grow in trust and faith.
- 5) The Lord's Prayer in verses 9-14, has five key areas we should devote ourselves to in prayer. What are they?
 - 1) Lifting up praise to a Holy God...this gives the right attitude in prayer.
 - 2) Focusing on God's will, not our own. His will is ALWAYS best!
 - 3) Prayer for God's provision of needs.
 - 4) Confess sin, ask for forgiveness, and forgive those who have sinned against us.
 - 5) Guard us against evil and sin.
- 6) Based on what you read in Matthew and John, what do you think Jesus means when he says he will give us what we ask in prayer? That if we are focused on the right things – particularly God's will in every aspect of life – we will eventually receive what we ask for in **God's way and timing (emphasize persistence and patience)**

EXERCISE

Circle the most correct answer

1. According to the material, what is praise primarily based on?

- A) Our happiness levels
- B) Our emotions
- C) God being God and His greatness**
- D) Our answered prayers

2. Which of the following is listed as one of the “3 P’s of prayer”?

- A) Power
- B) Persistence**
- C) Prosperity
- D) Popularity

3. Why does God sometimes delay answering prayers, according to the text?

- A) Because He forgets
- B) To test whether we stop praying
- C) To build patience and godly character**
- D) Because prayer is optional

4. What does “praying without ceasing” mean in the lesson?

- A) Only praying in church
- B) Repeating memorized prayers constantly
- C) Talking to God about everything throughout life**
- D) Fasting without stopping

5. What practice is recommended to help fight distractions in prayer?

- A) Watching more television
- B) Keeping a prayer journal**
- C) Sleeping more
- D) Skipping Bible reading

6. How does God most commonly speak to believers, according to the “Hearing God” section?

- A) Only through miracles and visions
- B) A loud voice from heaven
- C) A gentle whisper aligned with God’s Word**
- D) Through dreams every night

7. Which test helps determine whether a message is truly from God?

- A) Does it feel exciting?
- B) Does it agree with God’s Word and character?**
- C) Do others applaud it?
- D) Is it a mystical, unique experience

8. What reminder gives us strength in prayer?

- A) God loves me, God forgives me, God hears me, God will answer me**
- B) God helps people who help themselves
- D) God answers immediately or not at all

9. Why should we pray if God already knows what we need?

- A) To impress other believers
- B) Because God needs reminders
- C) Prayer helps us grow in trust and faith**

10. A friend of yours is struggling with his faith because prayers for his sick mother haven’t been answered. What do you tell him?

- A) I understand your pain and disappointment, but it seems you don’t have enough faith. If you pray harder and longer, she will be healed.
- B) I know you’re hurting terribly, but as Christians, we must learn to trust our Lord who is perfectly good and praise him despite our circumstances.**
- C) Perhaps it’s God’s will that your mother stay sick; be happy for that and thank God for it.

11.) David picks up five smooth stones from a brook and places them in his bag. The young man is fully confident in his ability to kill Goliath by tossing a stone directly into his head. David has already killed a lion and bear, so he will take this enemy of God just as easily. *What’s wrong with this paragraph? It looks as if David is trusting in his own skills. David’s confidence against Goliath came from his trust in a God who empowered and protected him.*



Session 7

Church & Spiritual Gifts

Church & Spiritual Gifts



1 We are the 'Body of Christ'

When Christ entered our world, He took on a physical body so that he could truly experience human life. Through His physical body, Jesus demonstrated the love of God clearly, tangibly, and boldly, especially through His sacrificial death on the cross. After he ascended to Heaven,, Christ continues His work in the world through those He has saved who make up the Church; the Church now demonstrates the love of God clearly, tangibly, and boldly as Jesus did. In this way, the Church functions as "the Body of Christ." **SLIDES 52,53**

2 Circling of the musk oxen

Herd animals are social species who live in groups. The herding mentality helps keep its members from being isolated and taken by predators. In fact, when threatened by wolves or other hunters, animals, such as the musk ox, gather in tight circles; the strong are on the outside with their sharp horns aimed at their attackers. Christians, too, are called to be members of a close community – the body of Christ – so that we can build up and protect one another, and present a united fight against worldly forces set against us. **SLIDE 54V.Church**

4 **Prayer** – sows transparency – opens up Christians to one another's needs.

1 Apostle's Teaching

Doctrine is vital! It is the anchor of church activity because if the church becomes unmoored from truth, its activities will be corrupted

Several of Jesus' rebukes of the seven churches involved ignoring biblical authority...they were acting in a way that showed they weren't rooted in good doctrine. Without good doctrine, church becomes a social club

2 Fellowship – Binds

Christians in godly relationships that lead to encouragement, exhortation, discipline and material support. Provides unity that supports growth of the individual and the church...good mentally, spiritually and physically; the alternative is socializing in the world with poor influences

3 Breaking bread – the

great equalizer; sharing a meal without regard for people's status or class; it remembers Jesus' death; Paul rebuked the Corinthians for abusing community meals

3 Acts 2:41-44

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all the believers were together and had all things in common.

Members of the church were devoting themselves to (describe each function in your own words):

4 Ask what each student thinks of terms:

Apostles' teaching – the application of the apostle's teaching regarding the words and deeds of Christ and Old Testament references to Jesus¹

Fellowship – Spending time with fellow Christians in social, worship and ministry activities.²

Breaking bread – Shared meals with each other, a common activity of fellowship. Signals intimacy...also remembered Christ's sacrifice³

Prayer – Prayer that unites believers in seeking God for joint desires that meet personal needs and glorifies God.⁴

Dealing with Excuses for skipping church

I don't believe in organized religion, because its full of hypocrites

If by “hypocrite,” you mean people who are not perfect and make mistakes, then Christians are guilty as charged. However, it is our admission of our brokenness that commends us to God and enables us to receive his free gift of grace; this grace, in turn, helps us grow in God’s image. We are flawed, but forgiven and are growing spiritually.

If by “hypocrite,” you mean people who claim to be Christians, but live unchristian lives; why would that keep you from church? You’re forming your opinion based on people who abuse the faith rather than the faith itself. Honest seekers disregard the pretenders and find fellowship with those who truly follow Christ. Those who reject the church because of so-called “hypocrites” are often people who are simply looking for an excuse to live as they please apart from God’s authority.

I can't find the perfect church that meets all my needs and preferences

There are no perfect churches. Even if there was a perfect church, it would cease to be so if you or I entered it. Avoid having a church-shopper’s attitude; the most important question you should ask yourself when looking for a church is where does God want me to serve, not what’s in it for me. Where can I best develop and use the gifts God has given me?

I was offended by someone in the church

Superficial or immature Christians tend to run for the escape hatch when their feelings are hurt. Rather than staying on and working with the relevant people for a resolution, they hop from church to church telling people how awful the previous church was. Mature Christians don’t run away from offenses...and they don’t exaggerate or gossip about them either; they go directly to **the people involved** to work it out. Finally, unless the offense involves false teaching or leadership ignoring a recurring legitimate problem; we stay in place and seek peace until God clearly calls us to move on.

I don't the need the church...I can worship God by myself

If you’re not in church, you’re missing out on vital teaching, fellowship, support, protection and service to your brothers and sisters. If you cut yourself off from the body of Christ, you may be in danger of becoming the fruitless fig tree that Jesus cursed (Mark 11:12-13) or the faithless servant whom Jesus condemned because he hid his master’s talent instead of investing it for profit (Matthew 25:14-30). Christians need to be in church so we can be a fruitful part of his body (1 Corinthians 12:24-27) and obey Christ’s command that we “love one another” (John 13:34-35).

2 SLIDE 56.V-Church Functions

Group read 1 Cor 12:4-14, 27-31 and discuss gifts below

Points of emphasis in verses 6-7: (1) The Lord gifts ALL Christians (2) for the common good.

Gifts below are situational, rare or ended in apostolic era

3 Wisdom – The ability to apply knowledge in practical application for beneficial or just ends; you use knowledge in a right and just manner.

Doesn't act impulsively or emotionally; guides people to most beneficial conclusion.

Word of Knowledge – Less broad than wisdom – person receives a specific "word" from God that speaks to an individual's or group's specific need.

Discerning spirits – A gift that should be longed for. The ability to perceive, understand and judge things clearly, especially things that aren't obvious

a.. The ability to detect false teaching, hypocrisy, a lying spirit.

b.. Every Christian has a measure of discernment; it can increase with time

Tongues – ability to speak in foreign languages as an evangelism tool; also a heavenly prayer language.

Interpreting tongues – ability to understand a word given in an unknown language

Healing/Miracles – Ministerial and evangelism gifts – designed to spark faith and renew hope



NOTE: See page XVII in supplemental section for talking points to insert next page

1 Hebrews 10:25

Do not forsake the meeting of yourselves together, as is the manner of some, but encourage one another especially as we see the Day of the Lord approaching (paraphrased).

4 One Body, but... many gifts, many parts

After the group reading and discussion of 1 Corinthians 12, answer the following questions:

- 1) Only "special" Christians are gifted to serve the church. T or F
- 2) How do God's spiritual gifts emphasize the importance of church attendance? *God gives us the gifts so we take part in the ministry of the church. They aren't for selfish use, but to glorify God through the church. Without all its members, the church will lack in its ability to accomplish God's will.*
- 3) What is the purpose of the spiritual gifts? *They equip Christians to build the Kingdom of God. They enable us to love and serve one another, to know and teach truth, and help us discern falsehood.*
- 4) Do you sense that God is calling you to take your place in the church to serve? How so?

Three horizontal lines for writing answers to question 4.



Apostles – those who walked directly with God and led the church

Prophecy – to speak a word heard directly from God, often speaking to a specific situation

Faith – The ability to believe God to come through in most or all situations.

The following are service gifts that are always in operation.

- Teachers / Pastors / Evangelists / Leaders
- Encouragement / Giving / Showing Mercy
- Leadership

EXERCISE

Circle *the most correct answer*

1. How should we respond to the statement “I don’t believe in organized religion because it’s full of hypocrites?”

- A) Agree and advise people to keep faith private
- B) Christians are imperfect, but are forgiven and maturing**
- C) Hypocrisy is a weakness of Christianity

2. Rejecting the church because of hypocrites is often an excuse to:

- A) Seek deeper prayer life
- B) Avoid God’s authority**
- C) Practice evangelism
- D) Study Scripture more

3. If you are not in church, you are missing:

- A) Vital teaching, fellowship, support, service**
- B) Good worship music, fellowship, exhortation
- C) Personal Bible study, fellowship, shared meals
- D) Prayer, fellowship and networking

4. Which biblical examples are given to warn against avoiding church fellowship?

- A) David and Goliath
- B) The parable of the sower
- C) Fruitless fig tree and the servant who hid his master’s talent**
- D) Jonah and the whale

5. Christians need the church in order to:

- A) Earn salvation
- B) Be a fruitful part of Christ’s body and obey the command to love one another**
- C) Use their spiritual gifts to show their maturity
- D) Replace family relationships

6. How should we answer the claim “I can’t find a perfect church”?

- A) Keep searching until you find one
- B) There are no perfect churches, and church-shopping is discouraged**
- D) Attend online services only

7. When someone is offended at church, mature Christians should:

- A) Leave immediately
- B) Gossip about the problem
- C) Go directly to the people involved and seek peace**
- D) Ignore the issue completely

8. What are two main functions of a church?

- A) To show people how blessed we are
- B) To fellowship
- C) To study the apostles’ teaching
- D) To operate in the miraculous gifts of the Spirit
- E) Both B and C**
- F) Both B and D

9.) Which of these are considered gifts for service?

- A) Evangelism, Prophecy, Teaching, Giving
- B) Evangelism, Tongues, Teaching, Mercy
- C) Mercy, Giving, Teaching, Encouragement**
- D) Encouragement, Apostles, Teaching, Mercy

10.) Do you sense that God has given you one or more spiritual gifts? How are you using it/them? What gifts would you like to have? Why?

Homework: Read pages 53-55 and complete the exercises on page 52.



Session 8

Spiritual Warfare

the World the flesh and the Devil


When you were born again, you not only became a child of God, but a soldier as well. You are equipped to ward off attacks on your faith, defend the faith against critics, and rescue the lost from moral slavery.

Spiritual Warfare: What is it?


Paul states in Ephesians 6:12 that we “wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers in high places.” Paul is saying that the root source of evil in the world – sickness, temptation, deception, war, etc. – is not humanity, but “spiritual powers,” or demons. Led by Satan, they seek to undermine faith in God and cause people to trust in their own knowledge, beliefs and talents rather than turn to Christ for true wisdom and salvation. When their attacks are successful, people become increasingly carnal, turning cowardly and fearful, unable or unwilling to stand for truth; or they become arrogant and rebellious, and actively work against God’s will. The enemy’s attacks come on three levels: directly at the mind, appeals to the flesh and through the world.

The devil is your enemy Slide 55a

The devil is a fallen archangel whom the Bible describes as the original rebel. Based on Old and New Testament verses, Satan was originally called Lucifer, which means “Morning Star,” indicating his elevated status among the angels, on par with Michael and Gabriel. His magnificence led to pride, and he eventually attempted to overthrow God. Cast from God’s presence, the devil and a third of the angels became the Lord’s opponents, intent on corrupting His creation and spoiling his relationship with humanity. He is a deceiver and murderer, and no human can stand against him. However, James 4:7 tells us that if we submit to God, we can successfully resist the devil.



After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. (1 Peter 5:10)



3] The devil doesn't make people sin...he uses lies to appeal to our sin nature. Demons excite our innate desire for pleasure, power, wealth and influence. Says things like:

"If you leave your wife and hook up with your co-worker, you will be happy"

"Cheat on your taxes, everybody does it"

"Compromise your principles just a little so you can be accepted and popular"

"The Lord understands that viewing things we shouldn't is simply a way to reduce stress"

Our responsibility is to resist these lies with the truth of God's Word, which includes and awareness of how poor decisions and disobedience can have short- and long-term consequences.



Christians suffer persecution worldwide because "the world" is naturally hostile to God's Spirit)

(Slide 55c)

4] Your enemy is the world

- 1) The "World" is the common set of beliefs and customs set against God's moral law) For example, the "World" believes that wealth, beauty and power are the highest human goals)
- 2) People in the world oppose and persecute Christians) Why? According to Matthew 5:10-12 , they despise both Jesus and righteousness because they don't want to be accountable for their sins)
- 3) How should we treat those who oppose us (Read Matthew 5:16, 44, Ephesians 4:15)?
 - a) Love them
 - b) Bless them
 - c) Do good to them
 - d) Pray for them
 - e) Be consistent in godliness
 - f) Speak the truth in love

1] Your enemy is the Flesh

(Slide 55b) The flesh refers to the sin nature. The Bible calls it the "old man" – the old you (Ephesians 4:22-24). This nature still lives inside of you, but so does a new spiritual nature. This new nature is called the Spirit (Galatians 6:16-17).

A story is told of an Indian chief who was born again. Soon after his conversion, he sensed a battle raging within himself. He told a missionary it felt like two dogs were fighting inside him. One wanted to do good, the other evil. The missionary asked, Which one of them wins?" To which he replied, "The one I feed the most."

Christians must feed the new nature and starve the old in order to walk in the Spirit and please the Lord Jesus. We do this through a good devotion life and obedience to the Spirit's leading. This process can be difficult because it "cuts off" lifelong habits.

2] The flesh in action!



But each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death (James 1:14-15).

1 How does the enemy draw us into sin?

- 1) What is his chief weapon against Christians? Deception
- 2) What is the progression he uses to tempt? (SLIDE 56)
 - a) Causes us to doubt our understanding of God's Word
 - b) Contradicts God's Word, calls God a liar, defames His character
 - c) Shrinks and corrupts our image of God
 - d) Activates the god complex in us (the biggest lie) SLIDE 57.V – “we are gods”
 - e) Appeals to the senses

2 Fighting the war

There are a number of weapons Christians can use to defeat the enemy's evil designs. They are all God focused.

Learn and speak God's Word.

God's Word is the ultimate weapon against Satan's lies.

When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, he didn't argue with the devil, but rather quoted Old Testament Scripture to shut him up. Slide 58

Remember God's promises. God's many promises in the Bible remind us that he will never leave nor forsake us, never refuses to forgive when we ask, guarantees he will give us what we need, and is patient with our flaws. When the enemy tries to tell us we aren't good enough for God, that is correct. But God's promise is that his righteousness is our righteousness and nothing the enemy does can change that. Slide 59

Keep your mine focused on good things: The Philippians epistles tells us to focus our minds on things that are beautiful and godly, rather than worldly.

Default to God's character: God is always loving, just and holy. No matter what he does – even if it is confusing to us – is always rooted in his unchanging character. Slide 60



3 Be persistent in prayer...Daniel 10:12-13 – “Then he continued, ‘Do not be afraid Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.’”

Time permitting, play SLIDE 61.V – How to resist temptation

If time permits, go through with class.

If short on time, assign as homework; answers are in answer key in the student workbook.

Spiritual Warfare

In Ephesians 6:10-18, the Apostle Paul associates certain pieces of ancient Roman armor with spiritual “weapons” we can use to defend against attacks. Read the articles on the Armor of God and then match the shield pieces below with their functions.



A) Shield of faith

B) Helmet of salvation

C) Sword of spirit

D) Prayer

E) Belt of truth

F) Feed shod with Gospel of Peace

G) Breastplate of righteousness

1) Covers our center of gravity and is our chief weapon against Satan's lies) E

2) Protects vital organs and is based on Christ's righteousness, not our own) G

3) Prepared to enter enemy territory to speak the message of reconciliation) F

4) Trusting in God's promises) A

5) Knowledge of the Word and assurance of salvation defends against the enemy's mind assaults) B

6) An offensive weapon; speaking the Word of God) C

7) Meeting with God to seek his will and power, and to intercede for others) D

Assurance in the Battle

- 1) When you are tempted, what does God do on your behalf (1 Cor 10:13)? Makes a way of escape and ensures we're not tempted beyond our strength.
- 2) When we face difficult times, who helps our weaknesses and prays for us? (Romans 8:26-27)? The Holy Spirit
- 3) When things seem to go wrong, even when you are seeking to do right, what does God promise (Romans 8:28)? All things work together for good.
- 4) Who is on your side (Romans 8:31)? If God is for us, who can be against us.
- 5) From where do we derive strength in spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10)? The Lord
- 6) Truth and faith are essential elements in winning spiritual battles.

What is the Full Armor of God?

From Got Questions?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/full-armor-of-God.html>

and Jesse Hall

Calvary Chapel Pearl Harbor

[Ephesians 6:12](#) clearly indicates that the conflict with Satan is spiritual, and therefore no tangible weapons can be effectively employed against him and his minions. We are not given a list of specific tactics Satan will use. However, the passage is quite clear that when we follow all the instructions faithfully, we will be able to stand, and we will have victory regardless of Satan's strategy.

The first element of our armor is the **belt of truth** ([Ephesians 6:14](#)). This belt immediately sets the believer apart from the world, since Satan is the "father of lies" ([John 8:44](#)). Deception is high on the list of things God considers to be an abomination. A "lying tongue" is one of the things He describes as "detestable to Him" ([Proverbs 6:16-17](#)). We are therefore exhorted to put on truth for our own sanctification and deliverance, as well as for the benefit of those to whom we witness.

The Roman soldier's belt could hold a variety of things needed for battle, including his sword. Further, the waist is the center of gravity for human beings. Taken together, this shows us that the belt of truth is critical to our success in warfare. Truth is the center of our fight because Satan's chief tool is deception. To be girded with truth is to know and use God's Word to defend against lies.

Also in verse 14, we are told to put on the **breastplate of righteousness**. A breastplate shielded a warrior's vital organs from blows that would otherwise be fatal. This righteousness is not works of righteousness done by men. Rather, this is the righteousness of Christ, imputed by God and received by faith, which guards our hearts against the accusations and charges of Satan and secures our innermost being from his attacks.

In other words, the knowledge that our salvation is grounded in Christ's work and not ours, helps fend off the enemy when he says things like, "you're not good enough," or "you're too weak," or "you're sin is unforgiveable, or any other attacks that attempt to weaken our standing in Christ.

Verse 15 speaks of the **preparation of the feet** for spiritual conflict. In warfare, sometimes an enemy places dangerous obstacles in the path of advancing soldiers. The idea of the preparation of the **Gospel of Peace** is that we need to advance into Satan's territory, aware that there will be traps. The message of grace is essential to winning souls to Christ, and we must be prepared with the gospel. The Gospel of Peace brings reconciliation between God and man, and relieves hostility between people groups. Our call is to go and preach this peace unto all nations.

Spiritual Warfare

The **shield of faith** in verse 16 “can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.” When we bear the shield of faith, Satan can cast all the aspersions, doubt, and dismay he wants, but they will be ineffective. Our faith—of which Christ is “the author and perfecter” ([Hebrews 12:2](#))—is like a shield, solid and substantial. Christ is our shield and in him we trust even in the most difficult circumstances because his promises are always true. Jesus will never leave nor forsake those who cling to him.

The **helmet of salvation** in verse 17 is protection for the head, keeping safe a critical part of the body. We could say that our way of thinking needs preservation. The head is the seat of the mind, which, when it has laid hold of the sure hope of eternal life, will not receive false doctrines or give way to Satan’s temptations. The unsaved person has no hope of warding off the blows of false doctrine because he is without the helmet of salvation and his mind is incapable of discerning between spiritual truth and spiritual deception.

Verse 17 interprets the **sword of the Spirit** as the Word of God. While all the other pieces of spiritual armor are for defense, the sword of the Spirit allows us to take the offense. The sword analogy speaks of the holiness and power of the Word of God. There is no greater spiritual weapon. In Jesus’ temptations in the desert, the Word of God was always His overpowering response to Satan. What a blessing that the same Word is available to us!

The Word of God is truth! It reflects all reality and all wisdom. When spoken in faith, it can tear down strongholds, refute lofty arguments, and soften or harden hearts. The Bible refers to God’s Word as “living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, even penetrating as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to ^[a]judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

In verse 18, we are told to **pray in the Spirit** (that is, with the mind of Christ, with His heart and His priorities) in addition to wearing the full armor of God. We cannot neglect prayer, as it is the means by which we draw spiritual strength from God. Without prayer, without reliance upon God, our efforts at spiritual warfare are empty and futile. The full armor of God—truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, the Word of God, and prayer—are the tools God has given us, through which we can be spiritually victorious. Satan is a defeated foe.

How to Pray on the Armor of God

From the Navigators

<https://www.navigators.org/resource/pray-armor-god/>

and **Jesse Hall**

Calvary Chapel Pearl Harbor

I take on the **belt of truth** (Eph 6:14). May Your truth rule in my heart and be in my mind and on my lips today. Give me discernment to determine what is true and what is not.

I take on the **breastplate of righteousness** (Eph 6:14). Apart from You there is no righteousness, but through Jesus I have been redeemed and made righteous in Your sight. May I live as a righteous person, not in my strength, but in the power of the Holy Spirit and by God's grace.

I have my **feet fitted with the readiness** that comes from the gospel of peace (Eph 6:15). May I reflect the gospel in my words and actions, that through me, with my every encounter, others may be drawn one step closer to You.

I take up the **shield of faith** (Eph 6:16). May I take You at Your word concerning promises about the present and future—promises of everlasting love, abundant life, and so much more. When I feel depressed, uneasy, or doubt, let your many promises of love and provision come to my mind.

I put on the **helmet of salvation** (Eph 6:17). Remind me that nothing can separate me from Your love and that I've been saved by grace. In Your grace, help me to say "no" to all ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live a self-controlled, upright, and godly life ([Titus 2:12-13](#)).

And with the **sword of the Spirit**, the Word of God (Eph 6:17). May Your Holy Spirit reign in my life and bring to my mind just the right Bible verses to be in my heart and on my lips. May I be "filled with the Spirit" and ready with Scripture as You were, Jesus, when the devil tempted You. Let me speak God's Word in love to all whom you call me to minister.

Finally, keep me in an **attitude of prayer** (Eph 6:18). Remind me to "pray in the Spirit on all occasions." Cause me to be alert and always praying for the saints; to be joyful and to give thanks in everything ([1 Thessalonians 5:16-18](#)).

EXERCISE

Circle the most correct answer

1. According to the Spiritual Warfare section, what is Satan's chief weapon against Christians?

- A. Physical illness
- B. Poverty
- C. Persecution
- D. Deception

2. What progression does the enemy use in temptation?

- A. Blessing, Comfort, Pride, Sin
- B. Evil, Doubting, Deception, Sin
- C. Doubt God's Word, Contradict God's Word, Corrupt image of God, Appeal to senses
- D. Fear, Faith, Victory, Peace

3. How did Jesus respond to Satan's temptation in the wilderness?

- A. By quoting Scripture
- B. By arguing logically
- C. By performing miracles
- D. By calling angels for help

4. Which of the following is listed as a key weapon in fighting spiritual warfare?

- A. Learning positive affirmations
- B. Remembering God's promises
- C. Studying psychology
- D. Isolating from others

5. According to the notes, what should believers keep their minds focused on?

- A. Worldly achievements
- B. Political systems
- C. Avoiding all hardship
- D. Good and godly things

6. What does "defaulting to God's character" mean in spiritual warfare?

- A. Believing God only acts when we understand Him
- B. Trusting that God is always loving, just and holy
- C. Assuming God changes to accommodate us
- D. Ignoring difficult questions

7. What does Ephesians 6:12 teach about the nature of spiritual warfare?

- A. We fight against governments
- B. We wrestle against flesh and blood
- C. We wrestle against spiritual powers
- D. We only fight internal emotions

8. Why is truth called the center of our fight against Satan?

- A. Because Satan's chief tool is deception
- B. Truth makes us popular
- C. Truth guarantees material success
- D. Truth replaces the need for Scripture

9. What is the purpose of the "breastplate of righteousness"?

- A. To make believers sinless
- B. To guard the heart against Satan's accusations
- C. To increase self-confidence
- D. To protect physical health

10. According to the material, who is Satan originally described as?

- A. A human king
- B. A fallen archangel originally called Lucifer
- C. A symbolic metaphor
- D. A Roman emperor

11. What must believers do in order to successfully resist the devil?

- A. Study philosophy
- B. Submit to God authority and care
- C. Avoid church
- D. Trust their own strength

12. Spiritual warfare attacks come on three levels; which of the following is one of those levels?

- A. Financial markets
- B. Weather disasters
- C. Appeals to the flesh
- D. Scientific skepticism



Supplemental

Up movie clip

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2bk_9T482g

This video represents the best of human marriage. Two people loving one another until death parted them. This is what God intended for human beings.

And it is in this marriage relationship where sex is kept pure and acceptable before God..

The division of him to male and female occurred in Genesis 2 when God formed Eve using Adam's rib as her physical foundation. After Eve's creation, God commanded the pair to reproduce through a sexual union in which they become "one flesh." In essence, male and female become one again in spirit and in the process, create a third being, a child. We see here a family structure that is triune in nature.

It appears God created marital unions to reflect his own being. Through their complementary biological and psychological make-ups, Adam and Eve reflect the reality of the triune Godhead itself: multiple beings united in love and harmony as a singularity.

Marriage and Sexuality

Human sexuality

"Then God said, let us make man in our image, according to our likeness...in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them...and they become one flesh." (Gen. 1:26-27, 2:24). These verses give us the foundation for our understanding of human sexuality.

God designed the sexual union as a means for a man and woman to form an intimate bond in marriage that would last a lifetime. Further, this bonding act would result in the birth of children to expand the human race. Remember, the first command God gave to his most prized creation was "be fruitful and multiply." Sex is a beautiful thing ordained by God to bring joy, unity and little ones in the world.

It makes perfect sense then that all biblical laws regarding sexuality were designed to preserve God's original intent for sex and protect its sacredness. These laws weren't designed to suppress human sexuality, but to ensure we enjoy sex in its fullest sense – to achieve a new sense of wholeness and pleasure with the one person to whom we've dedicated our lives.



Applying God's Word

- 1) Why do you think God established so many laws protecting male/female marriage in the Bible? *Marriage reflects His image and is a sacred act of bonding & reproduction*
- 2) If male/female marriage reflects God's image, what does this say about homosexuality? *A violation of his image and His will. It is a twisting of human sexuality*
- 3) Read Matthew 19:3-9. How does God feel about divorce and why? *God hates divorce because it breaks a sacred oath, harms families, and hurts society.*
- 4) In Ephesians 5:22-23, we see how men and women are to relate to one another. Summarize Paul's thoughts: *Paul exhorts women to submit to the God-given authority of men, while men are called to love their wives, to protect and provide for them. Submission is not slavish, but an act of respect for men who value them highly like God does.*

x

Thus, in the monogamous male/female relationship, we see the image of God and the natural, divine template for human sexual activity.

Like the atom is the basic foundation of all matter, the family unit is the foundation of all societies; healthy families make for healthy societies.

How to Evangelize Effectively

By Greg Laurie

May 31, 2204

When I was younger, I had the privilege to get to know the great evangelist, Billy Graham. And when he asked me to help him with illustrations in his sermons, I felt like I'd been enrolled in the finest evangelistic university on Earth. No one did it better than Billy. And he didn't just do it publicly; I saw him do it privately.

We were at a restaurant once, just talking, and our table happened to be by a walkway. He was so gracious and took the time to meet everyone who recognized him. It was a beautiful quality to see. When you would sit down with Billy, it wouldn't be long until he would say something like, "Well, tell me about yourself." He didn't like to talk about himself. I think he always had that heart.

Being around him inspired me because he kept it simple. He once said in an interview with David Frost that he studied to be simple. I think one of the secrets to his success was delivering the gospel in an understandable way. It was always clear. And he preached for a decision. Billy once said to me, "I don't think I'm a very good preacher. But I believe God has given me the gift of giving the invitation." It was one of the rare times I had to disagree with him. He was both a very good preacher and given that gift by God.

Every Christian Is Called to Evangelize

There is a God-given gift of an evangelist, and Billy had it. But, though some are gifted to be an evangelist, and some may not be called to be an evangelist per se, every Christian is called to evangelize.

Paul said to Timothy, "Do the work of an evangelist," (2 Timothy 4:5). We're all called to preach the Gospel. We've been entrusted with the Great Commission—to go into all the world, preach the gospel, and make disciples of all nations, teaching them all things that Christ has commanded.

By the way, evangelism and discipleship are really inseparable. Our mission from Christ is to proclaim Jesus, lead people to Him, and then get them grounded in their faith. New believers need older believers to stabilize them, but older believers need new believers to energize them, right?

That's why I always encourage older people to get some younger people in their lives, because younger people need older folks, older folks need younger folks.

How Not to Evangelize

Maybe there's someone reading right now who has someone they want to share the gospel with but feels nervous or even scared to offend. Let me give you an example of what *not* to do.

One day, I was in a hamburger restaurant, and a lady recognized me. She said, "Are you Greg Laurie?" I said, "Yeah, I am." She said, "Well, nice to meet you." And then she gestures toward her husband, "This is my husband; he's a heathen. Can you say something to him to help him believe in Jesus?" And the poor guy was just getting ready to take a bite when this happened. He just froze and looked at me like a deer caught in the headlights. I felt so bad for the guy. I said, "Hey man, enjoy your burger. Okay, God bless you."

Sharing Jesus

So, that's how you *don't* do it. Don't embarrass a person. Don't create unnecessary friction. When it comes to evangelism—if you have the luxury of some time—you want to build a bridge, not burn one.

How to Evangelize Effectively

Jesus was not only the Messiah, the Savior of the world, and the Creator of the universe, but He also happened to be the greatest evangelist of all time. And look at the way He interacted with people. Look at Jesus in John 3 with Nicodemus. Look at Jesus in John 4 with the woman at the well. Nicodemus is religious and moral. The other is immoral, living with a man, married and divorced many times. Yet, Jesus built bridges with both of them.

Stepping Stone, Not Stumbling Block

Our objective is to be a stepping stone, not a stumbling block. If you want to win some, you need to be winsome. So talk to a person. Everyone's favorite subject is themselves. Say to someone, "Tell me about yourself. . . What do you think about this? What do you think about that?"

I was in a cab once in Hawaii and the driver was named Tom. We're driving along and I prayed, "Lord, if you want, open a door for me to share the gospel with Tom."

We ended up coming across what's called a ghost bike. It's a bicycle painted white on the road with flowers in front of it. It was put there as a memorial to someone who died in a road biking accident. So they called them ghost bikes.

I said, "Tom, what are those bikes and why are they painted white?" He said, "Those are ghost bikes." And he explained it to me. I said, "That's so sad. Tom, what do you think happens when you die?" It took

him about five minutes to give me his philosophy. He thought you died and came back as a higher or lower life form. Basically reincarnation.

I listened to him, didn't interrupt him, and didn't say you're wrong. When he was all done, he said, "Well, what do you think about the afterlife?" Then, I shared the gospel. After I was done, he said, "I like your version of the afterlife better than my version." I said, "Well, Tom, it's not my version. This is what Jesus said."

Give and Take

See, it's give and take. When you're a preacher, it's a monologue. But when you're in conversation with people, it's a dialogue. So be a good listener. Find out about the person you're talking to so you can then appropriately bring the message of the gospel.

When it's all said and done, it's about sharing the message of the death of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection from the dead.

The Power of the Gospel

Coming back to Billy Graham. I once asked him, "If an older Billy could speak to a younger Billy, what would you say to yourself? What would you tell yourself to preach more on?" And he said, "I would say preach on the cross of Christ and the blood because that's where the power is."

I think what's true of preaching is also true of one-on-one evangelism. The power of the gospel is when you get to the message of the death of Jesus for them and why they need their sin forgiven.

I'll leave you with this last bit of encouragement. . . I have a friend who is a pastor and he'll just say to someone, "Let me ask you a question. Has anyone ever told you

Sharing Jesus

there's a God in Heaven who loves you?" Sometimes they say no, and they move on. Other times they'll say no, and they'll be moved by it. I've seen it open the door for really interesting conversations.

You might be surprised where a simple

sentence like that gets you. The hardest part about evangelism is getting started. It's breaking the ice. But sometimes, you just have to take that little step of awkwardness. And I tell you, if that person responds, that will be a life-changing moment for you both.

<https://harvest.org/resources/gregs-blog/post/how-to-evangelize/>

What is Evangelism?

By Jessica Brodie

Christianity.com / Oct. 6, 2023

Evangelism means preaching, announcing, or otherwise communicating the gospel, our salvation. It's delivering the message that Jesus Christ is not only the Son of God but also gave His life as a sacrifice for our sins. In doing so, He ensured eternal life for any-one who believes.

What Is the Purpose of Evangelism?

Evangelism, which is spreading the gospel, is important to Jesus. As the Bible tells us, Jesus came so that we may live. Jesus wants everyone to know this truth so they, too, can be part of God's holy kingdom. His directives to evangelize are peppered throughout Scripture.

In [Matthew 28:19-20](#), Jesus tells us, "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." We are to spread this good news everywhere — to the ends of the earth — secure that He is with us always.

<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-terms/what-is-evangelism.html>

Answer Key for Exercises

Pages 7,8 - Introduction

1C, 2B, 3B, 4D, 5C, 6B, 7B, 8C, 9A, 10D, 11D, 12E, 13B, 14D, 15C, 16C, 17D, 18A

Apply your knowledge - *Answer should reflect that the Bible is a trustworthy historical document comprised of eyewitness accounts of actual events. The events are supported by the various sciences and extra-biblical sources. Paul, one of the greatest figures in the Bible – the most tested and committed and educated – claimed the Bible was divinely inspired, both in its writing and gathering into a complete collection. The nature of God is revealed plainly in Scripture. It tells us of a God who is utterly powerful and holy and is justified in any acts he takes. He does not excuse sin. However, he is also the very source of love and forgives anyone who repents and asks for salvation through His Son Jesus Christ.*

Pages 14,15 - Fall and Salvation

1C, 2B, 3C, 4D, 5C, 6A, 7A, 8B, 9A, 10B, 11D

Q12 – *Biggest factor is human pride, the desire to chart our own path, make our own decisions. We think we can make it our own without God’s help. There are some who are trapped in legalism or self-righteousness, thinking they can earn God’s acceptance, and don’t understand the concept of grace.*

Apply your knowledge – *The holiness of God requires that anyone who comes into his presence must be equally holy. Holiness means God is perfectly powerful and righteous. Fallen humans cannot fellowship with him or enjoy his presence, because there is a huge, insurmountable gap between a holy God and sinful man. The Bible tells us God made one way, and one way only to bridge that gap. A way that would make man holy and righteous before God. That way was sending his Son Jesus Christ to earth in human form to live among us. He died on the cross to pay for our sins. If we put our faith in his finished work, God assigns his righteousness to us (Romans 4:1-5). Jesus said he is the only one who could accomplish this work. “I am the way, the truth, and the life and no one comes to the Father except through me. All other religions fail to make man holy before God; they rely on human effort, which always falls short.*

Pages 23 – Who is Jesus?

The person is likely NOT born again, because his statements tell us he is not under the influence of the Holy Spirit. He does not recognize Jesus as the eternal Son of God, nor does he recognize the authority of Scripture. He thinks as the world thinks. The Paul tells us, “Be not conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2).

Dealing with his specific claims, we could answer:

(1) *2 Timothy 3:14-17 tells us that Scripture is divinely inspired, which means God moved through men to write it, ensuring they delivered his message. God’s Word is truth, and meets every test of truth.*

(2) *John 1:1 tells us that God’s Word is Jesus, and Jesus has always been with God and is God. Therefore, those who are in truth, must believe Jesus is God. Also, Jesus said that he alone is the way, the truth and the life and no one goes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6)*

(3) *Further, the Scriptures tells us that the God of the Bible is the only Savior, therefore, no other religions lead to Heaven. Jesus told Pilate that he came into the world to bear witness to the truth and everyone who loves the truth will hear his voice (and believe his words) (John 18:37).*

Answer Key for Exercises

Pages 28, 29 – Discipleship

1B, 2C, 3C, 5B,C, 6B, 7C, 8B,C, 9A

Q4 – The objective of a disciple is to acquire the knowledge and skills of the master so he or she may carry on the teacher's work.

Fill-in-the-blanks paragraph – *The three elements of a quality devotional life consist of Personal Bible Study, Prayer and Praise. These help us gain intimate fellowship with the Lord Jesus. This closeness to Jesus is vital because without it we can accomplish nothing truly acceptable to God. Fellowship with Jesus results in the disciple growing in trust, faith and a Christlike character. When spending time with the Lord, it is good to find a quiet place that is free from distraction. This will help us hear God's voice. Hearing the Lord depends on our exercising patience. Our Lord desires to reveal His will to us, so we can bear much fruit. God is our loving Father and yearns for us to walk in closeness to Him.*

Pages 36 – Bible Study

1D, 2B, 3C,5E

Q4 – *Biblical meditation is the active, intentional practice of filling the mind with Scripture, God's character, and His works to foster obedience and spiritual growth. Unlike emptying the mind, it means "musing" (siyah) on God's Word day and night to internalize it. It involves pondering, studying, and focusing deeply on verses, often by speaking them aloud. The purpose is to reflect on God's truth, His deeds, and His promises so one can align one's heart with Him. The ultimate result is life transformation into the image of Christ.*

Q7a – *The Word of God, who is Jesus, was in existence before all things. He had no beginning, and therefore, must be God. The term Logos, which is Greek for "word" has deep meaning for Jews and Greeks. It points both to the divine origin and sustaining of the universe. The Word is part of a triune being that is one God. Guzik highlights that any attempt to alter John 1:1 to change the nature of the Word is a bad interpretation of the verse (e.g., Jehovah's Witnesses).*

Q7b – *Jesus, the Word, is the revealer of the Father nature, his character. Jesus alone has intimate insight into God's mind and heart because he is at one with the Father. Together, with the Spirit, they are God. "In the bosom of the Father" illustrates this closeness.*

Page 41, 42 – Praise and Prayer

1C, 2B, 3C, 4C, 5B, 6C, 7B, 8A, 9C, 10B

Q11 – *The paragraph makes it sound as if David trusts in his own abilities. David's confidence against Goliath wasn't based on his previous success, but his full trust in a God who had proven his faithfulness to protect and empower David.*

Assignment (pg. 42)

- 1) What is a hypocrite? Someone who pretends to be religious, but does everything for show; this person's faith is not real...he wants the praise of men, rather than God.
- 2) To ensure our prayers are sincere, what should we do? Pray to God in secret, and when we pray with people, talk with God, not to the people around you.
- 3) False
- 4) If God knows what we need before we ask, why pray? Because God values our time with Him and uses it to help us to grow in trust and faith.

Answer Key for Exercises

Assignment (pg. 42) continued

- 5) The Lord's Prayer in verses 9-14, has five key areas we should devote ourselves to in prayer. What are they?
- a) Lifting up praise to a Holy God...this gives the right attitude in prayer.
 - b) Focusing on God's will, not our own. His will is ALWAYS best!
 - c) Prayer for God's provision of needs.
 - d) Confess sin, ask for forgiveness, and forgive those who have sinned against us.
 - e) Guard us against evil and sin.
- 6) Based on what you read in Matthew and John, what do you think Jesus means when he says he will give us what we ask in prayer? That if we are focused on the right things – particularly God's will in every aspect of life – we will eventually receive what we ask for in God's way and timing (emphasize persistence and patience)

Pages 47– Church and the Spiritual Gifts

1B, 2B, 3A,4C, 5B, 6B, 7C, 8E, 9C

Pages 52, 56– Church and the Spiritual Gifts

Pg. 52 Matching – 1E, 2G, 3F, 4A, 5B, 6B, 7D

Pg. 52 Fill-in-the-blank

- 1) escape and strength
- 2) Holy spirit
- 3) all things work together for good
- 4) against us
- 5) The Lord
- 6) Truth and faith

Pg. 56 - 1D, 2C, 3A, 4B, 5D, 6B, 7C, 8A, 9B, 10B, 11B, 12C

This page is inserted as stand-alone notes between pg. 46 and 47.

Gifts of revelation...gifts that enable us to receive supernatural guidance and employ in godly decision-making and ministry

- 1) They are in the situational category because I wanted to emphasize these gifts are not “common use”
- 2) In other words, be suspicious of anyone who seems to regularly have a word of wisdom or knowledge or discernment or a prophecy...they are most likely abusing the gift
- 3) The temptation is to think every thought that pops into one’s head is a word from God and then feel compelled to share it
 - a) Friend of mine years ago visited by a group of “travelling prophets”
 - b) People who seem to have a word of the Lord for every situation
- 4) These gifts should manifest in times of need...when their application brings the greatest benefit to the operation of the church, in service to God’s will, or special ministry to individual believers
 - a) Praying for an outreach vision...need direction
 - b) When God wants to minister through you to someone he has prepared...for example, someone going through an intense trial
 - c) When the church or church groups are having to make difficult decisions or navigate difficult challenges
- 5) A note: practiced early in Calvary Chapel’s development during the ‘70s Jesus Movement... got out of hand as Lonnie Frisbee tried to sustain the movement on miracles and gifts rather than the Word
 - a) Not meant to sustain church ~~with~~ preach the word, live the word...gifts come occasionally to reinforce the Word

An Ending Exhortation

Blessed to be a blessing

From *Our Daily Bread* (January 28, 2025)

By Nancy Gavilanes

During my years as a journalist, I enjoyed telling other people's stories, but I was trained to not share my own opinions. So years after I had felt God directing me to write a blog and speak about Him, I was a little nervous about sharing my thoughts, especially about my faith. As I started blogging, I was afraid I'd run out of things to say. But week after week, I found encouraging words and insights to share. The more I wrote, the more ideas flowed. The same is still true now.

I have witnessed in my own life how God has filled me with more joy and inspiration when I've poured out my gifts and talents to serve others.

In 2 Kings 4, we read about a poor widow who went to the prophet Elisha for help. Her late husband's creditor wanted to seize her two sons. All she had at home was a small jar of olive oil. The prophet instructed her to collect empty jars from her neighbors and to keep pouring oil into the containers. "They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring (4:1-7). She kept pouring until all the jars were miraculously filled. She could pay her family's debts with the extra oil.

God is faithful and always provides. He's blessed us with gifts and talents, and resources to be a blessing to others. Let's not hide or dismiss our gifts but use them for His glory.

**What gifts and talents has God given you?
How are you using your gifts to serve others?**

