

Each Reach

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Rev. Jacky Cornell

“EACH ONE, REACH ONE” – 5 STEPS FOR DISCIPLING

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Connell, Jacky L. “Basic Christianity Class Manual of Eden Westside Baptist Church” 2014.

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To the Church at Eden Westside:

As the Senior Pastor of the church, I often pray for you. I pray that God will lead me on how to best equip you for the work He has for us all to do. Out of that prayer, this edition of “Each One, Reach One” is born. I think it is the number one resource for discipling a believer. I also believe that as you lead someone through “Each One, Reach One,” you will grow yourself. I imagine that you will teach your kids using these 52 weekly plans. Maybe you will lead a small group at work with it as well. The goal of this book is to help you fulfill the Great Commission:

And Jesus spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

---Matthew 28:18-20

May this book aid you in the endeavor to honor Jesus Christ and serve people.

Excellence honors God and inspires people.

Bro. Jacky Connell

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STEP ONE:

Today, _____, I was introduced to Christ. I accepted Jesus to become my Lord, Master, and Friend. Here's how it happened...

Proverbs 11:30b ...he that winneth souls *is* wise.

Romans 10:9-10 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

STEP TWO:

Today, _____ I walked down the aisle of the church where I made public the decision that I had accepted Christ. I am going to be baptized and join the church. What a day this was, as I walked down the aisle of my church. I felt.....

Matthew 10:32 Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

Romans 10:11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

STEP THREE:

Today, _____, _____ and I
(date) (my friend's name)
attended MIC class. I felt.....

1 Corinthians 12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

1 Corinthians 12:27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

STEP FOUR:

Today, _____, I was baptized. WOW, what a blessing. As we were going into this special place I felt...

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Colossians 2:12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

STEP FIVE:

Today, _____, _____ and I are
(date) (my friend's name)
beginning a year of discipleship together.

Right now, I feel.....

Matthew 28:19-20 “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.”

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

Acts 11:26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 1: What did I get myself into?

You have recently made the decision to accept Jesus Christ as your savior. Congratulations! The time and place of your decision is fully engrained in your memory. You now are experiencing joy and peace in your life that you had not known before.... but now you may be asking yourself, "What now? What does this decision mean for my future?"

The word "Christian" means to be "Christ-like". It should be a Christian's desire to become more like Christ as they grow spiritually. A Christian seeks to die to self: my wants, my goals, and my dreams; and to be alive in Christ. After we make the decision of salvation, spiritual maturity demands three things:

First, God wants us to have momentum. After salvation, He doesn't want us to just stay the same. God wants us to actively seek Him and His word.

Second, God wants us to develop virtue in our life. As we seek to know His Word, it will change the way we see others. This develops respect for the Word of God and those who are in authority over us.

Third, God wants us to understand that there is a right way to handle every circumstance in our life. He wants us to learn to trust Him and trust His way of doing things. We follow Him in obedience because He knows what's best.

In addition to those three things, there are three phases in a Christian's life. Phase one is the decision to accept Jesus Christ, also known as salvation. From that point forward, the Christian life begins. We live for the rest of our lives on earth, getting to know Him better and learning more about Him. During this time, God wants us to understand our spiritual responsibility to Him, other believers, and the lost. The third phase is the Christian in eternity. Our relationship with Him doesn't end when we die, it gets even better! Not only does God have an earthly plan for us, but He also has an eternal one!

Isaiah 64:4 Eyes have never seen, ears have never heard, and the heart has never felt the wonderful things that God has for those that love him.

Now that I'm a Christian
Week 2: How Does The Bible Describe God's Love Toward Me?

The Bible is God's love letter to us. We find countless examples of God's tender mercies, loving kindness, and faithfulness to us, His fickle creation. God's love is constant, patient, and welcoming. He gives us numerous opportunities to respond to Him. God loves us so much that He waits patiently for us to choose to come to Him. He won't force us to come to Him.

God's love is forgiving. God does not merely forgive sinners who come to Him, but tenderly searches for them and then joyfully forgives. It was this love that brought Jesus to earth. He came to seek and save those who were lost. According to Luke 15:7, *"Heaven will be happier over one lost sinner who returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!"*

God's love cannot be measured and is eternal. No matter where we go or what we do, we can never lose God's love. No matter our circumstances, God's love is profound. Even when we are suffering, God's love reaches out to us for comfort and strength. God tells us of His love for us so that we can feel secure in Him. During times of hardship and pain, Christ's presence is constant. We do not have to fear or feel abandoned. Christ's death on the cross and His resurrection is proof of His unconquerable love. According to Romans 8:38-39, *"I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from His love. Death can't and life can't. The angels can't and the demons can't. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away. Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

God's love is sacrificial. God's love is not self-centered. His love reaches out and draws others in. God shows us true love, even love that cost Him everything. God paid the highest price He could ever pay when He sent His son Jesus to take the punishment for our sins. Then once the price had been paid, God freely offered us the new life He had purchased for us. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life."* --- John 3:16 Because of our experience with this great love, we are excited to let everyone know about our relationship with Christ so they can experience it too! When we share Christ with others, we must have a love like Jesus. We must be willing to give up our own comfort and security so that others might have the chance to receive God's free gift.

God's love is inexhaustible. We never have to worry that God will run out of love. We don't have to be concerned that He will grow bored or tired of us. His love does not grow cold as we grow older, but God's love flows from a well that will never run dry. Psalm 136: 1 *"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever."*

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 3: What's The Point Of Getting Baptized?

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?' But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" ---Matthew 3:13-17

Jesus is the picture of perfect obedience. He demonstrated this when He asked John the Baptist for baptism. Now that you're saved, it's your turn to be obedient in baptism. Also, baptism is a wonderful symbol of your new life in Christ. Some people think that getting baptized is the same thing as getting saved, but it is not. Baptism doesn't save you; it is you telling the world that you have been saved, and it is a picture of the change that has happened in you.

Romans 6:3-5 says, *"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."* As you walk into the baptismal waters, you are letting everyone know that you are a new creation. When you are put under the water, it represents the death of your old life. When you rise out of the water, you rise anew, a picture of your new life in Christ.

Don't allow fear or nervousness to stand in the way of participating in the beautiful picture of your salvation. It's a wonderful way to begin your Christian walk and to introduce yourself to your brothers and sisters in Christ. Our church celebrates your new life with you!

Now That I'm A Christian...

Week 4: What's the Bible?

Do you own a Bible? Have you ever read one?

If you don't have one, let us know, and, we will find you one! It is so important that you read your Bible. Think of the Bible as a spiritual GPS. When we become a Christian, God does not expect us to figure out how to live on our own. God knew that we would have many questions along our journey. Reading God's word enables us to understand where we are going, why we are going, and what we are doing along the way. His word gives us clear direction concerning right and wrong. We find blessings and consequences there. It strengthens our faith and resolves us in a sinful-based world. When we become saved, our spiritual eyes are opened and, we are better able, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, to comprehend important truths that He wants us to know. The way we do that is by reading God's Word, The Holy Bible.

It is important to know some basic facts of the Bible. The word Bible means book and it was written in the languages of ancient Palestine: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. There were about 40 authors of the books of the Bible, all inspired by God. We know who most of them were, although there are some anonymous writers.

We can break up the Bible into two main divisions, the Old Testament and the New Testament. Sometimes these two divisions are called the Old Covenant and New Covenant. A testament is simply a covenant or promise between two people. The Testaments (Covenants) can be further divided into sections:

There are 39 books in The Old Testament—
Books of Law (sometimes called the Books of Moses)
Books of History
Books of Poetry
Books of Major Prophets
Books of Minor Prophets

There are 27 books in The New Testament—
Books of History
Pauline Epistles (also known as the Letters of Paul)
General Epistles
Book of Prophecy

At over 5 billion copies sold, the Bible is still the most read book in the world. Regardless of efforts to destroy and disprove it, God's word still stands as a beacon of light and truth in an otherwise darkened world. At our church, we use a Bible reading plan called "Fill the Void". This is where you can read the whole Bible in a year. At the end of "Each One, Reach One", we will talk more about that. Until then, if you have any questions about what you are learning in the Bible ask me. I may not know the answer, but I will ask someone until I find out!

"Every Word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him." --- Proverbs 30:5

“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your Word is truth.” --- John 17:17

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Words will by no means pass away.” --- Matthew 24:35

*** Each One Reach One uses the King James Version.*

Now That I'm A Christian... Week 5: What Is Bible Study?

The Bible is its own best teacher. God desires for us to learn more about Him and has left us His Word as a guidebook for life. It is important to understand that the Bible is not arranged like an encyclopedia. When reading the Bible, it is also important to note that the verses and chapter breaks are placed in the scriptures by man. Regardless of where you begin to read, there are some good guidelines to follow:

- Pray first before opening God's word. Ask God for guidance. Be willing to accept what is written and to be able to apply His will to your life.
- When you are reading and come across something that does not make sense, reread the paragraph or chapter again. If you still do not understand, write down the problem area and continue onward. You may discover the answers later in your reading.
- Do not read large amounts of the Bible in one setting. Take breaks often. Stay with a few chapters a day. By reading smaller amounts, you can really focus on what you are reading and see how you can apply it to your life. Reading large amounts at one sitting may cause you to lose focus and miss something important.
- Start with the New Testament. By reading the New Testament first, you will find many things that will enhance your life almost immediately. Also, starting in the Gospels helps you to get to know Jesus. I recommend starting in the book of John.
- Leave pre-conceived notions about the Bible behind. Don't let doubts of your ability to understand God's Word prevent you from reading. You need to read the Bible just like you need to breathe, eat, or sleep. It is a must-do!
- Never read the Bible in an attempt to try and prove your belief on any subject. It is human nature to take ideas out of context.

Here are some other thoughts: Mark is an excellent book to start with because it is written in chronological order. After that Matthew and John because they go into better detail of some events, and John, in particular, contains a lot of the life of Jesus not before read, especially his last two weeks before the crucifixion. Luke and then Acts, were both written by Luke, the Apostle Paul's traveling companion. Acts describes the early church and contains examples of New Testament conversions. Galatians is a great book to read after these because it deals with why we don't follow the Old Testament Laws anymore. Romans is basically a textbook of what we believe and why. It is especially helpful when you are sharing your faith with others. The most important thing is to start reading! Wherever you choose to begin, your reading will bless you!

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 6: Why Do I Need To Memorize Scripture?

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart." --- Deuteronomy 6:6

Scripture memorization is an important, vital part of the Christian life. God's Word is powerful, so we need to know what it says!

"How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your Word. Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I might not sin against You." --- Psalm 119:9,11

Scripture memory can help you get victory over sin. When temptations come along, God will remind you of a verse you read that specifically addresses that temptation. Jesus used Scripture that He had memorized to overcome temptation by the Devil. Jesus valued memorizing the Bible and used it during times of need. If Jesus saw the importance of this, then we definitely should do the same!

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." --- Colossians 3:16

Memorizing Bible verses will give you wisdom on how to live. We live in a world full of relationships, and a lot of those relationships are with unbelievers. The Bible is full of wisdom on how-to live-in peace. Memorization will also produce great fellowship, because if you have Christ's words in you, then you are able to teach another person about the Lord that you know. Knowing God's Word leads to a life of worship.

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." --- I Peter 3:15

Having God's Word memorized gives you the confidence to tell others about Him. If you are indeed ready to share the Gospel with others, God can and will use you! He will use the verses you have memorized to bring others to Him. This is so helpful because you don't always have a Bible handy when you need it.

So, are you ready to memorize some Scripture? Consider this to be your homework. Let's memorize John 3:16. May it be the first verse of many that you memorize!

Memory Verse:

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." ---John 3:16

Now That I'm A Christian...

Week 7: What is Prayer?

Prayer is quite possibly the simplest, hardest, grandest thing that you may do after you become a Christian. At its most basic sense, prayer is a conversation with God. The thought of holding a conversation with the Supreme Creator of the Universe might feel a little overwhelming, though, so let's talk about prayer today.

The prayers that are recorded in the Bible are marked by humility and honesty. Take Joshua, for instance. Joshua was a man who poured out his real thoughts to God. The Bible says, *"And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads."* ---Joshua 7:6. Joshua is stressed out and overwhelmed, and he cries out to God for help. God welcomes honest prayers that express your true feelings. God already knows how you think and feel. We can't hide our feelings from God, but we come to Him anyway. When we try to hide these things from God, we refuse the one who can truly help.

Prayer can be both specific and broad. When Solomon led the people in prayer, he asked God to hear them concerning a variety of situations, from crime to famine and from drought to war. *"And said, O LORD God of Israel, [there is] no God like thee in the heaven, nor in the earth; which keepest covenant, and [shewest] mercy unto thy servants, that walk before thee with all their hearts:"* ---2 Chronicles 6:14

Prayer can be about anything. God is concerned with everything that we face, and He is able to help. Even when we are being disciplined by Him, He wants us to turn to Him in prayer. We should never feel like we have to "clean up" before we go to Him in prayer. He longs for us to come as we are so He can change and heal us. He loves us! Prayer is personal. Prayer recognizes God's position and reminds us of our position. Prayer demonstrates complete dependence and asks for God's guidance. Jesus wanted to teach us the importance of prayer and provide a beautiful example of prayer. *"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as [it is] in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."* --- Matthew 6:9-13

Prayer recognizes the spiritual warfare around us. Jesus prayed for His disciples, including those who follow Him today. Because the forces under Satan's power are at war with those under God's authority, Jesus asked the Father to keep His chosen believers safe, set apart, pure, holy, and united. *"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, [art] in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.."* --- John 17:20-21

Prayer is the way we ask God to use us with non-believers. Jesus didn't ask God to remove believers from the world but rather to use them in order to be salt (a preservative) and light (something that makes darkness vanish) to the world and to do the work that God sent us to do. *"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."* --- Matthew 5:13-16

Prayer binds us to other believers. Knowing Jesus prayed for us should give us the confidence we need as we work for his Kingdom. *"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we [are]."* --- John 17:11

Memory Verse:

“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as [it is] in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.” ---Matthew 6:9-13

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 8: Is there A Right Way To Pray?

Some people pray formal prayers, full of thees and thous. When others pray, it sounds like a conversation with a close friend. God strongly desires a sincere, heartfelt, meaningful relationship with us. Prayer can be a struggle for people because they worry about praying correctly. Maybe as a child, you prayed, "God is Great, God is Good," or "Now I lay me down to sleep..." and feel you need a more adult prayer. You may struggle with how to pray, but prayer is a powerful connection between us and God. But, how should we pray? After today's time together, I hope you will feel more comfortable with prayer.

First, we should pray with an attitude of deep respect for God. Sometimes our prayers become superficial lip service. Prayer requires concentration and a desire to be in touch with God's will. We can trust God to take care of us when we ask Him to in prayer. Ezra did not take God's promises for granted. He knew that only through prayer could he have access to God's blessings.

"Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance." --- Ezra 8:21

We should also pray with confidence in God's grace. It's important to remember that God is always in charge, is always present, hears and answers our prayers. Nehemiah prayed often, whenever he felt like He needed to, and even while talking to others! He could confidently do this because he has established an intimate relationship with God during times of extended prayer. We, too, need to cultivate such a relationship with in-depth prayer so we may also reach out to God with our emergency prayers and feel like we have been heard. Nehemiah not only prayed, but he received the answer he hoped for:

"Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it." --- Nehemiah 2:4-5

We should pray with humility and sincerity. Jesus quickly saw through the self-righteousness of the religious leaders of the day who wanted to be seen as "holy" during their displays of public prayer. While there is an appropriate time and place for public prayer, Jesus taught prayer is private communication with God.

"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen [do]: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." --- Matthew 6:7-8

We should pray for others. Regardless of whether we know someone personally or not, as believers we should pray for others. Paul had never met the Colossians, but he faithfully prayed for them. We, too, can follow Paul's prayer pattern when praying for others because all believers have the same basic needs. We can request that they understand God's will, gain spiritual wisdom, please and honor God, bear good fruit, grow in the knowledge of God, be filled with God's strength, have great endurance and patience, stay full of Christ's joy, and give thanks always.

"We always pray for you, and we give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard that you trust in Christ Jesus and that you love all of God's people." ---Colossians 1:3-4 NLT

Memory Verse:

"Pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Now That I'm A Christian...

Week 9: What Is Intercessory Prayer?

"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess [your] faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." --- James 5:15-16

Intercessory prayer involves our hearts being broken for another person or situation. It is a passionate cry to God for His intervening power. We will not always see an immediate result when we are praying for others. Pray anyway! Here are some ways to intercessory prayer.

- Your prayer must come from a heart filled with love, compassion, and forgiveness. When you are in prayer for someone, it is important that your heart is properly prepared. Pray for God's love and compassion for others to fill your heart. Also, pray for the power to forgive them fully if you have had an issue with them in the past.
- See them with the eyes of Jesus. In order to have a true feeling of compassion, we must seek to look at people through the eyes of Jesus. It is only then compassion can be released, and one can feel the full depth of another's need.
- Desire the highest good. Ultimately, God desires wholeness for all of us: wholeness of spirit, mind, body, emotions, relationships, and finances. God may not reveal to you the highest good in a person's life, but you can pray for them to receive it.
- Recognize your prayers are a link between a person's need and God's resources. Ask God to reveal to you the true needs of the person you are praying for and to fill you with a desire to help meet those needs.
- Be prepared to be a part of the solution. When praying for another's needs, be aware and willing that God may use you to answer their prayer. Jesus never backed away from people in need, regardless of how dire the situation, nor did He pass them on to someone else. Be willing to act the same way.

Keep praying, and persevere, even when it seems that nothing is happening. The longer we pray for someone, the more we feel their need. The more we feel the full depth of their need, the more tightly knit we become to each other.

Memory Verse:

"Confess [your] faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16

Now That I'm A Christian... **Week 10: What Are Spiritual Gifts?**

Each believer has been given spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit. We also know these gifts are meant to build up the body of believers within the church and while everyone has a different set of gifts, we should not view one gift as more important than another. Rather, we should strive to work together and allow our gifts to complement and strengthen each other. Now we are going to turn our focus to specific spiritual gifts and what they involve. The Bible makes clear references to what many of the spiritual gifts are. In Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Galatians 4, we see the following gifts:

- **Exhortation:** Rom. 12:8 - to come alongside of someone with words of encouragement, comfort, consolation, and counsel to help them be all God wants them to be (Greek Word: paraklesis - calling to one's side).
- **Giving:** Rom. 12:8 - to share what material resources you have with liberality and cheerfulness without thought of return.
- **Leadership:** Rom. 12:8 - to stand before the people in such a way as to attend to the direction of the body with such care and diligence so as to motivate others to get involved in the accomplishment of these goals.
- **Mercy:** Rom. 12:8 - to be sensitive toward those who are suffering, whether physically, mentally, or emotionally, so as to feel genuine sympathy with their misery, speaking words of compassion but more so caring for them with deeds of love to help alleviate their distress.
- **Prophecy:** Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; Eph. 4:11 - to speak forth the message of God to His people (Greek Word: prophetes - the forth-telling of the will of God; 'pro'=forth; 'phemi'=to speak).
- **Service:** Rom. 12:7 - to identify undone tasks in God's work, however menial, and use available resources to get the job done (Greek Word: diakonia - deacon, attendant 'diako'=to run errands).
- **Teaching:** Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11 - to instruct others in the Bible in a logical, systematic way so as to communicate pertinent information for true understanding and growth.
- **Administration:** 1 Cor. 12:28 - to steer the body toward the accomplishment of God-given goals and directives by planning, organizing, and supervising others (Greek Word: kubernesis - to steer, guide, helmsmen).
- **Apostle:** Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28 - to be sent forth to new frontiers with the gospel, providing leadership over church bodies and maintaining authority over spiritual matters pertaining to the church (Greek Word: apostolos - 'apo'=from 'stello'=send; one sent forth).
- **Discernment:** 1 Cor. 12:10 - to clearly distinguish truth from error by judging whether the behavior or teaching is from God, Satan, human error, or human power.
- **Faith:** 1 Cor. 12:8-10 - to be firmly persuaded of God's power and promises to accomplish His will and purpose and to display such confidence in Him and His Word that circumstances and obstacles do not shake that conviction.
- **Healing:** 1 Cor. 12:9,28,30 - to be used as a means through which God makes people whole either physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually.
- **Helps:** 1 Cor. 12:28 - to render support or assistance to others in the body so as to free them up for ministry.
- **Knowledge:** 1 Cor. 12:8 - to seek to learn as much about the Bible as possible through the gathering of much information and the analyzing of that data.
- **Miracles:** 1 Cor. 12:10,28 - to be enabled by God to perform mighty deeds which witnesses acknowledge to be of supernatural origin and means.
- **Tongues:** 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:27-28 - to speak in a language not previously learned so unbelievers can hear God's message in their own language, or the body be edified.
- **Tongues Interpretation:** 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:27, 28 - to translate the message of someone who has spoken in tongues.
- **Wisdom:** 1 Cor. 12:8 - to apply knowledge to life in such a way as to make spiritual truths quite relevant and practical in proper decision-making and daily life situations.

- **Evangelism:** Eph. 4:11 - to be a messenger of the good news of the Gospel (Greek Word: euaggelistes - preacher of gospel; eu=well, angelos=message - messenger of good).
- **Pastor:** Eph. 4:11 - to be responsible for spiritually caring for, protecting, guiding, and feeding a group of believers entrusted to one's care.

Memory Verse:

"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:" --- Romans 12:4

Now That I'm A Christian... Week 11: Do I Have Spiritual Gifts Too?

Once we are saved, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of us. He is the source of our spiritual gifts. *"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all."* --- 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 Spiritual gifts are special abilities/talents given to each person and are to be used to minister to and enhance the body of believers. There are many gifts and most people have more than one area of giftedness. God does not make any gift superior to another. The focus of our gifts should be to build up the church.

In the New Testament, Paul urges the believers to find out how they can best serve the church with the gifts God has given them. Your spiritual gifts were not given to you for self-advancement, self-interest, or for the manipulation of others, nor are you "more spiritual" because of the gifts that you have; but our gifts are at good use if they are helping the church function more effectively. We can cause division within the church if we insist on using our gifts in our own way without being sensitive to others. Some gifts may be viewed as controversial. Paul also writes that we should not ignore or toss aside the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given us by warning that we should not "stifle the Holy Spirit." Rather than try to smother someone's gift if they are unsure of the best way to use it, we should encourage the person to seek out the proper, full expression of their gift as it benefits the church. *"Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil."* --- 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

Paul uses the human body as an example to teach Christians how we should live and work together. Our body functions properly under the direction of the brain, and as Christians, we work properly under the direction of Jesus. *"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, [being] many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."* --- Romans 12:4-5

While our gifts differ in nature, power, and effectiveness, God gives us the spiritual power needed to carry out our responsibilities. We should actively seek ways to serve others with what Christ has given us. When we use our gifts as God intended them to be used, an

exciting fellowship emerges. To be effective, realize all gifts and abilities come from God, understand not everyone has the same gifts, know who you are and what you do best, dedicate your gift to God's service, and be willing to use your gift wholeheartedly without holding anything back from God's service.

Take the Spiritual Gift Survey included in Appendix D and ask God how you can use your spiritual gifts to build up His family.

Memory Verse:

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all."

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

Now That I'm A Christian...

Week 12: Is Church Attendance Really Necessary?

Is church attendance really necessary? In a word, YES! Many people view attending church as something to be done during at Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. Many people feel going to church is an optional activity and those who faithfully attend church are very religious or extremely dedicated. They are wrong!

Maybe you are wondering if regular attendance is really all that important. You may have people around you telling you, you don't need to go to a church to have a close relationship with God. The Bible teaches us church attendance is a necessary thing. Here's why:

"Let us hold fast the profession of [our] faith without wavering; (for he [is] faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some [is]; but exhorting [one another]: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." ---Hebrews 10:23-25

These words were written to people who were close to losing their hope because of hard times. Some of them were not going to the meetings of the church. The writer of Hebrews came right to the point: he told them not to forsake the assembly. Church attendance has to do with holding fast to our hope without wavering, stimulating others to love and good deeds, and encouraging one another. Those who forgo the assembly put themselves in danger of exhibiting the very opposite tendencies: they waver in their faith, they don't stimulate others to love and good deeds, and they get discouraged in their faith. Some people not only waver but walk away from Christ. We are in need of each other's support and encouragement, and the church is the place to get it. One cannot say he or she lives by the teaching of the Bible and willingly forsake the assembly of Christians. The two simply don't match up.

Church attendance provides a pillar and support to a Christian's faith. According to *1 Timothy 3:14-15* "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." The church is the assembly of God's people. Notice its role in the above verses. It is "the pillar and support of the truth." If you take away the church, you

take away the pillar and support of the truth in your life. Collapse of faith is inevitable. One cannot forsake the assembly and stay strong in the truth.

Staying faithful in church is not so that you can get a checkmark on the roll, it is to help you stay connected to Christ and to encourage you as you grow. The church is a blessing to you, and you are a blessing to us!

Memory Verse

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some [is]; but exhorting [one another]: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” --- Hebrews 10:25

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 13: Which Church Do I Attend?

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:" --- Ephesians 4:11-12

We've learned it is vital that we attend church. So, knowing how important it is to regularly attend church, it is equally important to pick the right one. Many people choose to attend the church where they were saved, but sometimes circumstances, such as moving to another city, may necessitate locating a new place of worship. How do you know where to go?

First of all, SEEK. Pray for God's guidance on the issue of where to attend. Ask Him to help you in your search. Many people have said they felt at peace when they found the church for them. Others have said when they visited the church where they eventually joined they felt the presence of God there.

Next, CHOOSE. Only consider a church that firmly believes in the inerrant Word of God. It is very important you know what a church believes before you join it. A solid church will have a Church Covenant, Statement of Beliefs, or a similar document that outlines their beliefs. Examine the Covenant carefully and make sure it is scripturally sound. If you find anything questionable, then ask for clarification. If you aren't happy with the answer given, then most likely, you should keep searching.

Also, LISTEN. Choose a church where the pastor preaches from the Word of God. Beware of pastors who never open their Bible and appear to be teaching personal opinions that don't line up with the Word of God. A good pastor will teach from the Bible. Be alert to any teaching that appears to be a "feel good" message with no convicting power of the cross behind it or for Biblical passages that appear to be twisted to meet a personal agenda.

Finally, EXAMINE. If you have other family members, then look at the programs that are offered for them. Make sure all members of your family are being properly taught the Word of God so they can grow spiritually.

Once you select your new church, don't forget to get connected through small group Bible study like LIFE Discovery and Discipleship U. Not only will you grow spiritually, but you will connect with others and form new relationships. Church is an awesome place to be!

Memory Verse

*"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:" ---
Ephesians 4:11-12*

Now That I'm A Christian...

Week 14: How Should I Evaluate My Lifestyle?

Evaluating our lifestyle is something we need to do. It is amazing how a little thing here, a little concession there, can add up to a great big dose of the world in our lives. The most important way to evaluate your life is to ask God to evaluate it for you. No one knows you better than the Lord. The Lord sees the things that others don't. He knows our private thoughts, our motivations, and intentions. Often times it is difficult to be honest when evaluating our lifestyles, the fleshly nature we wrestle with is ever present to make convenient excuses for us in order to make lifestyle choices we make ok. But God won't sugarcoat anything He doesn't want in our lives. His love for us is so great that He wants only the best for us. He wants us to avoid choices that can lead to unfavorable consequences down the road. He cares enough that if we allow Him to speak to us through the Holy Spirit and His Word, He will reveal to us areas in our lifestyle that need to change. King David, in Psalms, wrote of his need and desire for God's evaluation. Even though the evaluation can be painful at times, it is necessary.

"O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known [me]. Thou knowest my downsitteing and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted [with] all my ways. For [there is] not a word in my tongue, [but], lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. ... Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if [there be any] wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." --- Psalm 139: 1-5; 23-24

Our lifestyle should be consistent in two ways. There should be consistency in discipline and consistency with the Word of God. God's Word is what we should build our lives on, and it should be built into our lives. It is the lone authority that specifically tells us how to live for Him. Without consistent, diligent study of God's Word, we will be easily lulled into thinking "everything is ok", and we'll ultimately be neglecting not only God; but our true purpose for living as well. We must be disciplined in prayer, Bible study, and worship. By being disciplined in these areas, they create checks and balances for our lifestyle. *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." --- 2 Timothy 2:15*

Our lifestyle is a reflection to everyone around us. It is a reflection to our family, friends, co-workers, and strangers on the street. What are you reflecting? If we are in tune with God, then our lives should reflect what we believe, and our lives should reflect God's kingdom. Worldly ambitions are all about wealth, power, and authority. When we become a part of the Kingdom of God, these ambitions change. Those things aren't important anymore. We seek different blessings, benefits, and attitudes. We should reflect humility, a servant's heart, and self-sacrifice. In other words, the people around us should see Jesus in us. No amount of religious jewelry, bumper stickers, or t-shirts will mean anything on us if Jesus isn't in us. When Jesus is at work in us, we reflect Him.

Evaluating your lifestyle isn't always going to be easy. You have to be honest with yourself and God, and you have to be willing to make tough choices and give some things up from time to time. There will be people around you who won't understand or agree with some of the choices you make. Satan would prefer you be complacent; he will attempt to sneak things into your life in an effort to turn your attention away to where it really needs to be...on the Lord's business. By allowing God to consistently evaluate your life, you can cut away the things that distract you from your God-given purpose.

Memory Verse

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." --- 2 Timothy 2:15

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 15: What About Sharing My Faith?

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." --- Mark 16:15

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." --- 2 Peter 3:9

God's Word shows us that it is His desire that all people should come to know Him. It is God working through us that prompts others to receive God's promise in 2 Peter 3:9: *"Because of the power of the Holy Spirit we have three supernatural change agents to help us in sharing our faith."* In 2 Timothy 1:7 the Apostle Paul writes, *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."* God primarily uses three agents: power, love, and a sound mind.

The first agent we have is power. Do not attempt to share your faith without prayer, making sure you are fully depending on the power of God through the Holy Spirit. The power of the gospel is what will open blind eyes, sets the captive free, and brings the dead to life. We share our faith by declaring the saving power of the cross of Christ, His burial, and His resurrection. Any rejection you experience as you share with a non-believer is really a rejection of Jesus, not you.

"He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit." --- 1 Thessalonians 4:8

The second agent is love. Love is the greatest force on earth, and it can be shown in both word, and in deed. People know us by our actions. Kind words of encouragement, praise, and pointing out positive qualities coupled with selfless acts of kindness can show a lost person you sincerely care about them.

"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." --- John 13:35

The third agent is a sound mind. The media would like to portray the Christian as "fanatics". However, the Christian faith is based on facts not fiction. Sharing our faith does not mean we are unreasonable or irrational. Sharing our faith is offering up the trustworthy testimony of Scripture. Such evidence includes the fact of the resurrection, facts of fulfilled Scripture, and the fact of manuscript and archaeological evidence.

Memory Verse

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, [even] unto the end of the world. Amen." ---Matthew 28:19-20

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 16: How Does This Affect My Finances?

Salvation changes everything: our future, our lifestyle, and even our money. One act of worship Christians engage in is tithes and offerings. Tithing has an important place in the life of a believer. It is a clear way to show our priorities and what we value. It is also a show of faith as we are obedient to God in giving, He will be faithful to provide for us.

A tithe is a tenth, a literal 10%. Your tithe should be a tenth of your gross income. So, for example, if your gross pay was \$1,000.00, then your tithe would be \$100.00. By tithing, you are demonstrating you are putting God first. We are to give God the first and best of what we earn. Some people try to give what is left at the end of their paycheck, but what we do first with our money shows what we value most. Giving the first part of our paycheck to God reminds us everything we have belongs to Him. Regularly tithing will keep God at the top of our priorities and give us proper perspective on everything else that we have. We *get to* tithe every time we get paid. It is a blessing to us, and quickly grows our faith that God will be faithful! He is faithful all the time, so we should be faithfully consistent too.

Deuteronomy 14:22-23 Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always.

Another area of giving is an offering. This is when we give above and beyond our tithe. This is not in place of a tithe. Offerings might be an extra amount of money we give to the church. It might be a donation of food to the Food Pantry. It could be money given to a mission project, a missionary, or a person in need. God's desire is we be generous. The poor widow is an excellent example of this. In the Lord's eyes, the poor widow gave more than all the others put together, though her gift was the smallest. The value was not determined by the amount but by the spirit in which it was given. A gift given grudgingly or for show loses its value. Regardless of your income, God is pleased when your tithes and offerings are given out of a spirit of gratitude and generosity. He doesn't need our money, but He desires our obedience to Him, our compassion for others, and willingness to help others.

Mark 12:43-44 And he called [unto him] his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all [they] did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, [even] all her living.

Memory Verse

"Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: 10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." --- Proverbs 3:9-10

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 17: I Can't Wait To Serve!

When we serve others, we are involved in one of the best ways to become more like Christ. We can't earn our way to God by trying to follow a set of rules or constantly do good deeds within our own power. All that will get us is frustration, discouragement, and exhaustion. Let the Holy Spirit turn your eyes away from your own performance and turn toward Jesus. The way to God is already open because of the sacrifice Christ made. We don't have to try to reach God by trying to be good enough, it's by living with Christ day by day that we become more like Him. When we do this, we will be free to serve out of love and gratitude without feeling a need to try and earn anything. *"But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not [in] the oldness of the letter."*--- Romans 7:6

Serving others is a distinguishing mark of Christians in the world. It takes real leadership to actually serve, and when we serve others, we turn the world's values upside down. When you live for God, you must be ready to say and do what seems strange to the world. Giving up your own rights in order to serve others gains you everything that God has in store for you. Jesus taught that the greatest person in God's kingdom is the servant of all. With authority comes responsibility, and with responsibility comes useful service to God and His creation. Jesus' mission was to serve others and give his life away. The truly Christ-like servant sees the worth of those around them and realizes that they are not above any job. A servant won't wait to be asked to do a job; they take the initiative to get the job done because a true servant realizes that the task they are carrying out, regardless of how ordinary or small, has dignity and worth because, ultimately, you are serving God. *"But Jesus called them [unto him], and said, 'Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.'" --- Matthew 20:25-26*

Memory Verse

"Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."
--- Matthew 20:27

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 18: I Want To Grow, Grow, Grow!

After we are saved, God doesn't want us to be content with merely walking down the aisle. After we make a public profession of faith, He wants us to grow and become a mature believer. We should want this as well. There are a number of things that will bring growth in our lives. It will also prevent us from becoming stagnant in our walk.

Spiritual growth comes from listening and obeying God's Word. We have entered into a covenant with God through Jesus, and we should be responsive to what God expects of us. Moses gave advice to the Israelites after they entered into a covenant with God and this advice still applies to us today. *"And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, 'Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.'"* --- Deuteronomy 5:1. Listen- absorb and accept information about God, Learn- understand the meaning and the implications of what you have heard, and Follow- put what you have heard and learned into action.

Spiritual growth can also result from discipline and self-denial. Paul used the example of running a race to explain that the Christian life takes hard work, preparation, and self-denial. We are running the race toward our heavenly reward. Just like a marathon runner must be disciplined in his regimen, so must we in our spiritual race. We must be disciplined in prayer, Bible study, and worship. Spiritual progress depends on more than a couple of spiritual morning laps, but we must train purposefully and diligently. There are times we must give up something in order to do what God wants. Each person's special duties will oftentimes determine what must be given up in order to complete the task. Pleasing God is the goal we are striving for, and that keeps self-denial from being self-punishment. *"And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they [do it] to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible."* --- 1 Corinthians 9:25

Sometimes problems can be opportunities for growth. Many new believers become discouraged by mistakenly believing that becoming saved brings about a problem-free life. Rather than retreating when problems arise, take it as an opportunity to become an overcomer. While painful problems are inevitable, they can be an opportunity for growth as you realize God is with you in the storm. He has promised never to leave us or forsake us in our time of need. *"When thou passest through the waters, I [will be] with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."* --- Isaiah 43:2

Recognizing our weaknesses is also a sign of growth. Immature faith is one that has not developed the spiritual strength to stand against the external pressure of the world. We must remember that through our weaknesses, He is strong. When we fully and obediently rely on Him, He will use our weaknesses to help make us strong.

As we grow and mature, another measure of our growth is our own responses to others' weaknesses. Paul teaches we are to respond to those who are weak in love. Sometimes weaknesses are based on wrong ideas concerning our faith or personal issues and beliefs. *"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, [but] not to doubtful disputations."* --- Romans 14:1

Memory Verse

“Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.” --- Deuteronomy 11:18

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 19: What Kind Of Fruit Does God Expect From Me?

When we become a Christian, God expects us to produce fruit. Spiritual fruit is a natural result of God's presence in our lives. Just like a fruit tree is expected to yield forth its produce, God's people should produce a crop of good deeds. We are of no value if we are Christians in name only. If others can't see Christ in us and our faith by the way we treat them, then we are useless.

"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." --- Matthew 3:10.

Active obedience will produce spiritual fruit. God calls us to be active in our obedience. John compared people who claimed to believe in God yet don't live for Him as unproductive trees that will be cut down. To be productive, we must obey God's teachings, resist temptation, actively serve and help others, and share our faith.

God expects many different kinds of fruit to be evident in our lives. Fruit is not limited to only winning souls. There are additional fruits which are qualities of Christian character.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." --- Galatians 5:22-24.

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make [you that ye shall] neither [be] barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." - -- 2 Peter 1:5-8

It is the Holy Spirit that produces Christ-like fruit in us. The Spirit produces these character traits that are found in the very nature of Christ. We can't obtain them on our own. We must have help from the Holy Spirit. In order for the fruit of the spirit to grow in us, we must join our lives to Him.

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye [are] the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." ---John 15:4-5

Following Christ ought to yield fruitful results, apart from Christ, there is no real fruitfulness. Christ is the vine, and we are the branches. God is the gardener who cares for the branches to make them fruitful. True believers who are joined to Christ will produce much fruit. Those who make a superficial commitment are unproductive and will be separated from the vine. In order to live a truly fruitful life, we must stay close to Christ. Apart from Christ, our efforts are unfruitful. Christ offers us the nourishment and life we need to truly produce much fruit.

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." --- John 15:4

Memory Verse

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” --- Galatians 5:22-24

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 20: Tell Me About God's Grace.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."
--- Romans 5: 1-2

Grace...
it's undeserved
it's unmatched
it's unchangeable
it's unearned
it's immeasurable
it's inexhaustible
it's permanent
it's available
it's free
it's mine

What a sweet thing grace is! It is God's favor. Grace is God's love wrapped up in the gift of salvation to all men who choose to receive it. There is a limitless supply, and you don't have to check for an expiration date. Once you have God's grace, you have it forever. Grace doesn't stop at the point of salvation. His grace continues to flow over your life, bringing hope, peace, and security. God's grace is brought forth in love and displayed for all to see on the cross of Calvary. When Paul used the phrase "this grace in which we stand," he wanted to give a mental picture of God's grace in our lives.

Living in God's grace is all-consuming because He thinks, responds, and views us through eyes of grace. We are surrounded by His goodness, walk in his favor, and receive access to God the Father because of grace. God doesn't change, His love is a constant in your life. By acts of His grace, good things come your way. We receive comfort during disappointment and answers to prayer. God's grace does not depend on our circumstances. Furthermore, nothing in our lives can ever change the presence of God's grace. It does not operate more or less based on your actions or lack of actions. Grace will always be God's gift to each of us.

Praise God for grace!

Memory Verse

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."
--- Romans 5: 1-2

Now That I'm A Christian...,
Week 21: I Need to Forgive.

Forgiveness goes against the pattern of the world. We live in a time of finger pointing, lawsuits, and constant squabbling over legal rights. Paul tells us in Romans that when someone hurts us deeply, rather than giving the person what they deserve, we should befriend them. Paul instructs us to forgive our enemies for three reasons:

- 1-Forgiveness can break a cycle of retaliation and bring about reconciliation.
- 2-Forgiveness may make an enemy feel ashamed and change his or her ways.
- 3-Returning evil for evil will only hurt you.

Even if your enemy never asks for forgiveness, set yourself free from roots of bitterness and forgive them anyway. Forgiveness is not a feeling; it is a choice. When we experience God's grace, it opens our heart up. We realize we have been given undeserved favor and that in and of itself should cause us to want to pass forgiveness on to others. Forgiveness does involve both attitude and action. When we go on feeling alone, it can be very difficult to feel like forgiving someone. Our fleshly nature wants to stew over the situation. Instead of concentrating on feelings, put your energies into positive attitudes and kind actions. Many times right actions will lead to right feelings. *"Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but [rather] give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance [is] mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.'"* --- Romans 12:17-21

Real forgiveness follows God's pattern and does not keep track of offenses. When we really forgive someone, we do not keep an open track record that we review when the person makes a mistake. There should not be "Remember when you did that...." God has forgiven all of our sins and remembers them no more. Christ desires us to be generous with our forgiveness. If someone is truly repentant, we should forgive, no matter how many times they ask. *"Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."* --- Matthew 18:21-22

Finally, if we expect to be forgiven, we must practice forgiveness ourselves. Jesus gave a strong warning concerning forgiveness. He warned that if we refuse to forgive others that God will also refuse to forgive us. When we don't forgive others, we are refusing to recognize our common ground as sinners who all need God's forgiveness. While God's forgiveness is not a direct result of us forgiving others, it is based on our realizing what forgiveness means. *"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."* --- Ephesians 4:32 When we ask God to forgive us of our sins, we should also examine ourselves to see if we have truly forgiven those who have wronged us. It is easy to ask God for forgiveness but can be very difficult to grant it to others. We must remember because God wanted to offer us forgiveness, He made the ultimate sacrifice in order to be able to do just that. Let us also sacrifice the unforgiving spirit of flesh for a heart full of mercy to those around us.

Memory Verse

“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.” --- Matthew 18:21-22

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 22: I Need Humility.

Don't get humility confused with humiliation. In fact, humility is an important part of our spiritual life. It may be the very thing that will help you actually avoid humiliation. Humility keeps us from depending on our own strengths and clarifies our dependence on God. Humility is realizing and believing that God's way is better than our own. We may not always understand God's ways, but by humbly following Him, we receive his blessings. Too often, we try to rely on our own abilities when a task seems easy and only consult God when the obstacles seem too great. We must be mindful that God already knows what is ahead. By consulting him, we can save ourselves from making grave mistakes or misjudgments. Humility is good training in obedience and challenges our pride. Naaman, a great hero, was used to getting respect and became outraged when Elisha treated him like any other ordinary person. He was a proud man with an embarrassing condition---leprosy. A condition that made him a social outcast. Naaman expected royal treatment with a heroic cure. Instead, he was in a rage because he viewed the solution offered to him beneath his position. To wash in the dirty, small Jordan River was degrading to a man of his standing. Full of pride and self-will, he did not want to accept a simple cure relying on faith. In the end, Naaman had to humble himself and obey Elisha's commands in order to be healed. Just like Naaman, we, too, have to humbly accept God's mercy and obediently follow Him so we can have our sins washed away.

"And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, [if] the prophet had bid thee [do some] great thing, wouldest thou not have done [it]? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" --- 2 Kings 5:13

Humility is a deep awareness of unworthiness and an increased appreciation for God. When we view the vast expanse of creation, we at times must wonder how God could feel concern for us humans who constantly disappoint. But God considers us highly valuable, we have great worth because we bear the stamp of the Creator. *"So God created man in his [own] image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."*--- Genesis 1:27 When we think of God's majesty, His power, and His greatness, it is easy to feel small and insignificant; but when we examine the lengths, He has gone to to save us, it causes us to love and appreciate Him all the more.

Jesus is our model for humility, and it is necessary for service to others. Some people crave the spotlight. Instead of aiming for prestige, we should look for where we can serve others.

"And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any [man] to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor [thy] rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the

lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. --- Luke 14: 7-14

Memory Verse

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." --- James 4:10

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 23: I Reflect God?

God created each one of us, this gives us infinite value. The process of becoming a person is so intricate. So many things must go exactly right for life to begin and be sustained. This is the work of Someone so intelligent, so involved, so loving...Our God. He not only forms our bodies and shapes our personalities, but He gives us His character. In Genesis, we learn of the beginning of mankind, *"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...' (Genesis 1:26).* Notice that God does not say 'Let Me make man' but uses the plural forms us and our. The reason for this is because God is triune. "Tri" means three, "une" means one. Sometimes, people use the word "Trinity" to describe this: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Three distinct individuals, all co-equal, ruling over space, time, and man.

God also created us with three very important parts to reflect the Trinity. God created us as a tripartite (three-part) creation. We have a body, the physical part of us that moves, breathes, and feels. We have a soul, sometimes referred to as our mind, this is our personality. It is the part that makes us all a little different: the part that reasons, the part that feels emotions, the essence of who we are. We also have a spirit. This is the part of us that is able to connect with God. Because we have a spirit, we can have an intimate relationship with God. Sometimes people get the terms "soul" and "spirit" confused, but now you can see how they are different. As humans, we are wonderfully and fearfully made in the image of God.

What about the animals? Glad that you asked! We are not like the animals. Animals are bipartite (two-part) creations. They have a body and a soul. While Fluffy and Fido have lots of personality, they lack a spirit. We have no reason to believe that they will be going to Heaven since they lack the ability to be saved.

God created us to reflect His own nature. Just as the Trinity has fellowship with each other, we get to enjoy His presence as we reflect on who He is. It is the priority of our new lives to grow close to Him. This means we can have a positive, lasting impact on the world and the people around us. Daily, we lay aside our own desires and make the choice to follow Him in obedience. We can trust He will guide us. Once we are saved, the Holy Spirit resides in us. He instructs our spirits. Our personality is being changed through our relationship with Him. Our body now belongs to Christ. The Bible says He bought us with a high price: His very own life. Therefore, it should be our desire to obey God with our body, soul, and spirit.

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost [which is] in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." --- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Memory Verse

"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." ---1 John 4:16

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 24: I'm Going to Heaven One Day.

There are many songs about Heaven. In every generation and culture, there are ideas of eternal life and where one goes when they die. Jesus taught the faulty ideas of man are caused by the ignorance of God's Word. We cannot make up our own ideas about God, eternity, and Heaven. Heaven is the destination for those who believe in Christ. He is preparing places in Heaven for His followers. While the way to eternal life is unseen, it is secure because of your trust in Jesus. He prepared the way, and it's up to you to be willing to believe. We can look forward to eternal life because Jesus promised it to all who believe in Him.

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if [it were] not [so], I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, [there] ye may be also." --- John 14:2-3

Focusing on heavenly things and placing heaven's priorities as a part of life on earth puts things in perspective. Christ wants us to concentrate on the eternal rather than the temporary. Our real home is where Christ lives. Therefore, we should seek God's truth to help us view life on earth in a different perspective. When we look at God's perspective about life, we seek what He desires. The more we regard the world around us as God does, the more we will live in harmony with him. We must not become too attached to what is only temporary.

Memory Verse

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." --- Colossians 3:2

Now That I'm A Christian...

Week 25: What Caused Me To Be Separated From God In The First Place?

Have you ever been separated from a loved one? You probably longed for the time when you were able to be with them again. Was there something in your way? Miles? Money? Feelings? This is a pretty good illustration of the separation that comes with sin. Sin spiritually separates us from God the Father. Sin that stands in the way of having a relationship with God, so how did it all begin? How did we get separated from God?

To answer, we go back to the very beginning.... Creation. God created human beings in His image. *"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."*

---*Genesis 1:27* In the very beginning, God created mankind out of His desire for relationship. We were made to love and worship the creator. God desires this intimate relationship with us, but He will not force it upon us. He did not merely create us like a robot with no thought, He gave us free will. When Adam and Eve were created, they were given the power of choice. We, too, are given the choice to be in a relationship with Him or not. God placed Adam and Eve in a paradise containing everything needed to enjoy life, but the couple did not have unlimited freedom. God placed one stipulation: *"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:" Genesis 2:16.* They were free to choose to obey God or to disobey. Actions have consequences, though, and God warned Adam and Eve of the consequence of disobedience. If they were to choose to break His command, they would suffer spiritual death (separation from Him), and, eventually, physical death. It is easy for us to be judgmental of Adam and Eve--- after all, they only had one rule, it ought to be so easy to follow---we have to admit we would have made the same decision. We all are lured away to our sin. Eve and then Adam did succumb to temptation under the deception of Satan, who presented himself in the form of one of God's creations, the serpent. *"And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where [art] thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I [was] naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou [wast] naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest [to be] with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What [is] this [that] thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."* (*Genesis 3:9-13*)

Adam disobeyed God and made the choice to eat the forbidden fruit: he sinned. The consequence of his actions was that he became spiritually separated from God... spiritually speaking, he died. A further consequence of his actions is his sin affected all of his descendants. That's all of us, me and you! The problem was not only Adam's, but it is also ours to deal with. Every man, woman, and child from that point forward would live in a world that has been affected by sin. We all became separated from God in that moment. Any human born into this world inherits this sinful nature, this propensity towards sin, directly from Adam and passed through their father. *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"* (*Romans 5:12*). Because of our sin, we are separated from our most holy, most loving, most just God. Just like we long to be with those whom we are separated from, God longed to be with us. Knowing we could never undo what was done at Creation, He chose to endure the Cross and remove any and all barriers that separated us. We no longer have to remain separated because God gave us a way to once again spiritually awaken and reunite with him—through Jesus. This is the immeasurable love of Christ!

"But not as the offence, so also [is] the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, [which is] by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. ... 17 For if by

one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)" ---Romans 5:15; 17

Memory Verse

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

Congratulations!
You have made it halfway!

I want you to stop for a minute and celebrate this accomplishment.

What has changed in your life?

How have you seen God working in you and through you?

Take a minute and reflect on these things:

[illegible]

Also, take a few minutes to share this with the person who is going through “Each One, Reach One” with you.

It is a blessing to see you grow in your relationship with Christ!

We as a church are so proud of you!

Memory Verse

"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." --- Galatians 6:9

Now That I'm A Christian...

Week 26: What Is Sin?

We became spiritually separated from God at the fall of Adam, shortly after Creation. This was a direct result of Adam's choice to sin, and our separation from God was the consequence to that sin. Sin did not stop at that moment. From then on, mankind has sinned repeatedly. I have, and you have too.

Before you became saved, in your life, before accepting Christ, you determined right and wrong by how you were raised or how you felt about something. You were your own moral compass, so to speak. For example, the pen at the bank: is it wrong to take it? Before Christ, you got to choose for yourself if it was wrong. But now, you are saved. Everything has changed. Now, the Bible is your moral compass. Now you think about whether something is a sin. Now the Holy Spirit is helping you to understand and to make choices that reflect God more accurately.

So, what is sin? Sin is any action that is in direct opposition to God's Word. The Bible says sin begins in the mind. It is a thought you choose to dwell on. In other words, it is a choice you make. You have an internal conversation, "Will I, or Won't I?" Once you make the decision, you then decide how you feel about it. Often, we try to justify our actions, or we feel we are entitled to our sin. Finally, when thought becomes action, sin takes place.

Most sin falls into three categories. First, there are sins you commit with your mind, things like envy, worry, jealousy, hate, and bitterness. *"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:" (Matthew 15:19).* Second, there are sins that we commit with words. These are sins that you commit with your mouth: lying, gossiping, criticizing, and back-biting. *"But the tongue can no man tame; [it is] an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be." (James 3: 8-10)* Third, there are obvious sins. These are sins you do outwardly, things like stealing, murder, and adultery. *"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law [is] the knowledge of sin." --- Romans 3:20*

Now that you are a Christian, you are still living in the world, but the difference is you are operating under the power of Christ living in you and through you. Because of this, your spirit man has been revived and reunited with the Creator. You are now sensitive and aware of sin in your life because the Holy Spirit is within you. The Holy Spirit prompts us to avoid sin and confess it. Though we still sin as Christians, we are forgiven through Jesus.

Memory Verse

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God [is] faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear [it]." --- 1 Corinthians 10:13

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 27: Shouldn't I Stop Sinning?

Sometimes people have an idea when they clean up their life when they stop sinning, then they will get saved. Other people think once they get saved, sin will become a thing of the past. Both ideas are wrong!

Even after becoming a Christian, none of us have obtained perfection. You might look at your LIFE Discovery teacher, your pastor, or a deacon and wonder if you will ever reach the same level they are in their Christian walk. Maybe they look like they have it all figured out. But they don't! They have personal battles they struggle with daily, just like you. They look at others and think the same thoughts! We all struggle with resisting temptation, and we all still sin.

Maybe as a new Christian, you may feel like you have been given a clean slate, and the thought of messing up seems incomprehensible. But you will mess up, you will sin, and you will need to do something with it. It is going to happen. For the believer, there is no free pass from temptation. We still have inherited a sin nature from Adam. Galatians 5:17 says *"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."* There is a battle within us. We long to be free from sin, and yet we sin. It is a struggle.

The struggle is intensified by Satan. He would like for you to believe that you are a complete failure as a Christian when you sin. His desire is to keep you discouraged. His scheme is to make you feel guilty and defeated. If he can make you feel defeated, then he can make you ineffective.

As long as we live here on Earth, we will struggle with sin. It's going to be a battle. God has provided what we need to endure the battle. We are more than overcomers! God has created a way to handle sin and temptation. Good news, one day we will be like Jesus, and we will not sin anymore!

Memory Verse

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." --- Psalm 51:10

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 28: How Do I Handle Sin?

How do we control this sin nature and keep the Holy Spirit in control of our lives? God has provided us with a way of addressing sin in a believer's life. There is a way to overcome this: confession.

We should never try to hide from God that we have sinned. We must acknowledge when we have been disobedient. While we can sometimes hide poor decisions from those around us, we can never keep these things from God. It is natural to feel guilty about the sin, but guilt and shame are tools used by Satan to create a wedge between us and God. God desires to forgive us. A necessary part of that is our admission that we have messed up. Take David for example, he demonstrated this principle in Psalm 32:5. *"I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah."* This simply happens in prayer. We tell God about our sin, just as openly and honestly as we can. This is not like going to a judge for a sentencing; this is more like apologizing for a mistake to a kind friend. We must be willing to admit what we have done is wrong.

It might be easier on our pride to place blame on someone or something else when it comes to our sin. Sometimes we are shocked at our sin; we wonder how we could be capable of doing some of the things we have done. We search for a reason. It makes no sense to us. We feel ashamed.

While we may find our sin shocking, we have to remember God is in no way caught by surprise concerning our sin. He knew about our sins before we ever committed them. Even so, He loves us anyway. He is simply waiting for us to admit when we have done wrong and ask for forgiveness. He eagerly waits to fellowship with us. When we are controlled by our sin nature, we are unable to maintain right standing with God. When we admit our sin and ask for forgiveness we are then in fellowship with God.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." --- 1 John 1:9

Allow yourself to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. That still, small voice will guide you to handle your sin God's way.

Memory Verse

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

--- 1 John 1:9

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 29: What is Confession?

There are lots of things that are good for me that I don't enjoy:

Exercise...

Broccoli...

Going to the dentist...

Confession...

Sometimes it's hard to do things that are good for us. They say confession is good for the soul. Though it may not be the most comfortable part of our day, confession is one thing we don't want to put off. We must be willing to confess our sin, for this causes us to return to the enjoyment of fellowship with God. The longer confession is put on the back burner, the more God will turn up the heat on our life in order to bring us back to him. This is for our ultimate good and done because of His great love for us. This is not a mean, vindictive action, but one that encourages us to quickly deal with our sin.

Confession is simply the plan of God. He has made a way for us to obtain fellowship with him through confession. Confession has nothing to do with feelings, but rather on action. While feelings change based on circumstances, truth does not change. Truth in this regard is that we desperately need to have fellowship with God, so we must engage in confession to have hindered fellowship with Him. When you acknowledge what you have done, you are being obedient to God's plan of confession.

Be aware that Satan does not want you to ever forget your sins. He loves to make you feel like a failure so you will be ineffectual in the Kingdom of God. Satan knows that he has lost your soul, so all he has left is to play games with your mind... if you allow him to.

Confession does not carry over; we don't have to keep confessing the same sin to gain enough forgiveness to cover it. We don't continue to carry the emotional weight of our sins around. We confess it, we forget it, and we move on. *"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us"* (Psalm 103:12). God does not keep score of how many times we messed up today. Once we confess it, He forgets it too! Once we have confessed our sin, God has forgiven and forgotten about it. He wants you to do the same thing. God does not desire for you to grovel over some past confessed sin. He doesn't want you to think about it over and over again. He wants you to move on in forgiveness.

"I, [even] I, [am] he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."

---Isaiah 43:25

This is what it means to have victory over our sins. I am so grateful to have His victory in my life over my sins!

Memory Verse

“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” ---Hebrews 8:12

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 30: What Is God's Discipline?

I have a thing about going to the dentist. As I mentioned last week, it is one of those things that is good for me that I don't enjoy. Because I don't enjoy it, I have a tendency to put it off. I start avoiding those postcards that come in the mail reminding me to make an appointment. I purposely miss when the receptionist calls to book an appointment. I procrastinate, I avoid, and sometimes I even deny that I need to go to the dentist. More often than not, it catches up with me.

Confessing my sins is a little like this. We know that we have sinned. The Holy Spirit has reminded us that we should not have done that. We know we need to confess in order to receive God's forgiveness and to be in fellowship with him. Sometimes we procrastinate, we avoid, or we deny that we need to confess. Just like avoiding the dentist, un-confessed sin catches up with us... every time.

What happens if we choose to ignore the Holy Spirit's plea to make things right? Will God just choose to leave us alone and allow us to continue living contrary to His Word? Absolutely not, our Heavenly Father will resort to disciplining us in order to bring us back in line. This is actually a sign of love for us. He will not let us remain unchanged. He will discipline us to keep us holy and safe. The intensity of God's discipline is based upon our adherence to His plan of confession.

There are three levels of discipline. The first level is a warning. God gently urges you to confession. You feel the pull of the Holy Spirit as He leads you to understand you have sinned. It is a father pleading with his errant child to come home. God is warning you your actions are causing you to be out of fellowship with Him and confession is needed to rectify the problem.

If we choose to ignore God, He moves us on to intense discipline. By ignoring the voice of the Holy Spirit, we are choosing to learn the hard way. God will bring a measure of pain into our lives to get our attention. This pain is to bring us back to Him. It is pain with a purpose: restoration. This is not the vengefulness of God. This is God loving us enough to continue to discipline us.

Finally, there is dying discipline. If we become so arrogant, rebellious, and content to ignore God's plan for us; He can choose to cut our time on this earth short. We will not receive the full amount of time we could have had on earth. We will still go to Heaven, because while we might be out of fellowship with God, we are never out of relationship with Him.

Memory Verse

*"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" --
- Hebrews 12:6-7*

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 31: Who's My Enemy?

In any great story, you find there is a hero and a villain.

Superman and Lex Luther...
Frodo and the Ring...
Batman and the Penguin...
Peter and the White Witch...

Really, we love the pull between darkness and light, good and evil. There seems to be something inside of us that yearns for the epic battle between the good guys and the bad guys.

Stories mimic real life, and the real tale is better than any movie script or book plot ever written.

In our story, the Hero is Jesus. Hands down, He is the undisputed, best-ever, good guy. He is the Hero of Heroes. Just the mention of His name makes the bad guys run for cover. He is our Hero, and we love Him for it.

But if you have a Hero, you must have a villain or an enemy. Ever since creation, we have had an enemy. Our enemy has set out to destroy us from the very beginning of time. He is the "bad-est" of the "bad". He is wicked smart. He is a liar and a deceiver. He is good at what he does. This enemy is Satan. Satan is not some red suited, horn sprouting, pitchfork carrying, cartoon character. He is real. He wants to do everything he can to make you miserable and destroy those that you love. *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."* ¹ Peter 5:8.

God has given us a choice; our enemy has desired to take our choice away. As you read God's Word, you will find that Satan has tried many times to stop God's perfect plan of salvation. This would have meant no choice for us. Where God is offering life, our enemy offers death. Where God is about clarity, our enemy brings confusion. God brings a life raft of hope, whereas the enemy would sink you in despair. This enemy's mission is to keep you spiritually dead so you join him in everlasting torment. God's mission is to bring you to salvation and eternally with Him. Once you have made the decision to accept God's free gift of salvation, this enemy is defeated. He is unable to own your soul. Because of this, he will try to destroy your mind, disturb your peace, and dismantle your testimony. Making you ineffective in service to God is all the enemy has left.

While Satan is real, so is our Savior. Jesus defeated death, Hell, and the grave when he died on the cross and rose again three days later. God has not left us defenseless against our enemy either. He has given us tools that we can use to defeat our enemy, the Devil.

Memory Verse

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." ---Ephesians 6:11-13

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 32: What Does My Enemy Look Like?

We've learned we have an enemy, the Devil. In Ephesians 6:12, it names whom we are fighting against: *"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.."*

Our enemy is not something we can see but understand the enemy can use people and things to attack us physically, mentally, and spiritually. Since the enemy cannot have our souls, he is seeking to destroy our peace and sanity.

Let's take a closer look at Ephesians 6:12 to better understand who and what we are fighting against. Paul's writings in Ephesians give us a short look at the tremendous spiritual forces arrayed against the children of God. He wants us to understand while on the surface, it appears it's our earthly relationships that are the major battleground. This is why we sometimes feel like, "I could be a better Christian if it weren't for the people I have to deal with!" Paul reveals that the true battle is against a hierarchy of highly organized evil: invisible, supernatural beings who are determined through any means necessary to cause believers to doubt the Word of God.

We would be mistaken to believe Satan is a bumbling foe without organized plans and resources. Looking at the organization of Satanic forces better resembles a mafia than a cartoon angel on your shoulder. Here is the hierarchy Paul writes about in Ephesians:

- Principalities are organized demons in nations.
- Powers are demons against individuals.
- Rulers are demons controlling business and finance.
- Spiritual wickedness involves demons against the Christian religion.

Hell, itself is at war against you, sometimes your own thoughts are at war against you, but never fear! We have already overcome through Jesus. One strategy in defeating your enemy is to know what he looks like, who is on his team, and how he operates. In short, your enemy looks and acts like the total opposite of Jesus!

Memory Verse

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." ---1 Peter 5:8

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 33: Where Did My Enemy Come From?

In Ezekiel 28, the first ten verses talk about the prince of Tyre; but many Biblical Scholars are in agreement that verses 11-19 talk about a being known as Lucifer:

“Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone [was] thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou [art] the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee [so]: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou [wast] perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never [shalt] thou [be] any more.”

When we break this verse apart, we discover things about this “king” that can’t be said to be true of human beings. In the verses we find that he is an angel, blameless and sinless. He was on the holy mountain of God. He was also judged by God, and as a result he was cast out of the mountain of God and thrown to earth. He was described as being “full of wisdom,” “perfect in beauty,” and having “the seal of perfection.” This king was a created being and left the creative hand of God in a perfect state. He remained perfect in his ways until iniquity was found in him. What was this iniquity? We find in the passage that Lucifer became so impressed with his own beauty, intelligence, power, and position that he began to desire for himself the honor and glory that belonged to God alone. The sin that corrupted Lucifer was self-generated pride. Sin originated in the free will of Lucifer in which—with full understanding of the issues involved—he chose to rebel against the Creator. This mighty angelic being was rightfully judged by God. The scriptures indicate that while Lucifer was banished from living in Heaven, Satan still maintains access to Heaven. This means that he must come before God to account for himself. He was absolutely and completely cast out of God’s Heavenly government and his place of authority within the Heavenly realm. As a result of this heinous sin against God, he became corrupt, his power became completely perverted, and his name changed from Lucifer (“morning star”) to Satan (“adversary”).

Memory Verse

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” ---James 4:7

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 34: How Do I Face Conflicts?

Conflict: it happens every day. Sometimes it is just about who takes out the trash or which burger joint to eat at. Some conflict can be avoided through negotiation or finding a common goal, but there will be times when conflict is inevitable. Real allegiance to Christ will create conflicts. There is no middle ground with Jesus. Loyalties must be declared and commitments made. Sometimes relationships with friends and even relatives may have to be severed because of your choice to follow Christ. *"Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:"* --- Luke 12:51

The apostles in the New Testament knew full well about facing conflict. *"Then Peter and the [other] apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."* ---Acts 5:29 While as a Christian, we should try to keep peace with everyone (*"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."* --- Romans 12:18), there are situations that arise in the world and its authorities where we cannot obey both God and man. It is then that we must obey God and trust in His Word. Jesus knew that we would experience conflict by choosing Him over the world. He offered words of comfort to those who find themselves facing conflict against the world. *"Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you [from their company], and shall reproach [you], and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake."* ---Luke 6:22

God can often use conflict for his purposes. Christians will not always agree, but problems can be solved by agreeing to disagree. We choose to allow God to work out His will. In the New Testament, Paul and Barnabas disagreed over Mark. Paul didn't want to take Mark on a missionary journey because he had left them on a different occasion. Because of the disagreement, Paul and Barnabas formed two teams, thereby doubling their efforts. Later, Mark became a vital part of Paul's ministry. There was conflict, but it worked out for the good of all! *"Barnabas agreed and wanted to take along John Mark. But Paul disagreed strongly, since John Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not shared in their work."* --- Acts 15:37-38

Just because God sometimes uses conflict for His purposes doesn't mean that we can pick fights! Remember we are to be at peace with others as far as it is up to us. Be mindful of the source of conflicts you face. Conflicts and disputes among believers can prove to be harmful. James explains these quarrels are a result of the evil desires battling within us. If we allow our desires to be over us, it can lead to aggressively grabbing what we want. Rather than fighting, we should submit ourselves to God, ask Him to get rid of our selfish desires, and trust in Him to give us what we really need. *"From whence [come] wars and fightings among you? [come they] not hence, [even] of your lusts that war in your members?"* ---James 4:1

We can prepare for conflicts in advance by trusting in God and taking courage from Him. This requires that we listen closely to His leading. We never know when He will call upon us to complete something difficult. Sometimes we must get involved in a messy or painful situation in order to help others. We should be willing to act immediately when others need our help.

Memory Verse

"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." --- Proverbs 15:1

Now That I'm A Christian...

Week 35: Why Do I Have Tests And Trials?

So many times, we look at the state of the world: disasters that befall countries, suffering of children, and the results of evil men. Tragedies that occur to those we care about: flood, fire, illness, ruin. The question is asked by all of us at some point,

“Why do bad things happen to good people?”

Perhaps C.S. Lewis said it best, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”¹ Suffering makes the world ponder their connection, or lack thereof, to God. It is one thing that causes all men to consider God. For some, it is the way God gets their attention. As believers, we are not exempt from going through difficult times. Because we live in a fallen world, all of us will have to face seasons of suffering. This is the consequence of sin. God sometimes keeps us from tests and trials, but at other times He allows them. This is because we rapidly grow spiritually during the time of trial or testing. Suffering strengthens and perfects our faith in Him.

God is never happy to leave us as we are. He is always busy transforming us into the image of Jesus. He desires us to have an unshakeable faith in Him. He will allow things to happen in our lives for us to strengthen our faith in Him. Christians throughout history have faced varying degrees of suffering. Those who developed an unshakeable faith then had what was needed to face difficulties with hope and assurance. The amazing stories of believers give us hope and encouragement when we face trials in our life. Because we made it through, we become an encouragement to those around us. We are also a witness to the power of God as He helps us through tests and trials.

David faced many trials in his life. The Book of Psalms explores the full range of human experience and is a book that brings comfort during a time of testing or trial. It is excellent to read when you are hurting. *“I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, [and] established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, [even] praise unto our God: many shall see [it], and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.”* --- Psalm 40:1-3

During times of trial, we should not judge God's faithfulness or intentions toward us based on our feelings. Our feelings will lead us everywhere but where we need to go. We go to God; we believe and trust God, knowing His plan for us is perfect. It is a comfort to know that The Lord does put a limit on adversity. It will come to an end. Today's troubles are only today's, and a season is just a season. Our suffering shall pass. Crises pass, circumstances change, and situations evolve. God works in and through our situations to bring them to an end. While the enemy of our souls will attempt to wear us out, to sift us as wheat.... Satan can't do anything to us that God is not aware of. We will continue to trust God and resist the devil. The books of Job and Daniel show God's faithfulness to us in times of trial and adversity. God will also not allow us to be tempted or persecuted beyond what we can endure.

¹“God's Megaphone” –C.S. Lewis, [*The Problem of Pain*](#) (New York: HarperCollins, 1940/1996), 91.

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God [is] faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear [it].”--- 1 Corinthians 10:13

Memory Verse

“Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;” --- Romans 12:12

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 36: How Do I Become An Encourager?

Encouragement is a God-given function of everyone who belongs to Him. Just like today, in the early days of the church, new believers needed encouragement. Many times, encouragement came in the form of a person, just as it does still today. In the New Testament, we often saw the Apostle Paul sending Timothy to spread encouragement among the believers.

"Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:" --- 1 Thessalonians 3:1-2

We all need encouragement. By seeking to build up those around you, you can further the potential for meaningful, Christ-centered relationships. During the low points of someone's life, it feels good to know you are loved. Sometimes encouragement comes in the form of a positive word, a smile, or a pat on the back. Sometimes it means you are actively taking a stand with that person during a hard time in order to lift them up. Encouragement is a valuable asset that we should eagerly seek to give to those around us. Whom has God used to encourage you, and who is God leading you to encourage?

"Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. ... Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all [men]." ---1 Thessalonians 5:11, 14

Memory Verse

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." --- Romans 15:13

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 37: I've Been Drafted?
Getting Started: Part 1

There's an old Children's Church song that's entitled "I'm In The Lord's Army!" The moment you were saved by grace through faith, you were drafted as a soldier in God's Army. You are now engaged in the spiritual struggle of the ages. So now that you've been drafted, there are some key points that will be helpful to you as you take your place among your fellow soldiers:

- A soldier gives due honor and respect to his superior officers – so we also honor those who lead us in the Lord. *"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. [And] be at peace among yourselves."* ---1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

- A soldier understands that there are some things more important than his own life. *"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any [man] will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. 26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'"* ---Matthew 16:24-26

- A soldier is totally committed to doing the will of his commanding officer – so we must be committed to the will of God. It's a calling on your life to do battle in this spiritual war. *"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of [this] life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."* ---2 Timothy 2:3-4

- A soldier is highly disciplined – so we must be disciplined in prayer, the Word of God and fellowship. *"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."* ---James 5: 16, *"Pray without ceasing."* --- 1 Thessalonians 5:17, and *"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all [men] forsook me: [I pray God] that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and [that] all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."* ---2 Timothy 4:16-17

Memory Verse

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any [man] will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. 26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'" ---

Matthew 16:24-26

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 38: I've Been Drafted?
Being Trained; Part 2

You're saved by grace, but to be an effective soldier, you must go through some training...

- A soldier is trained to immediately obey orders – so we must immediately obey the Holy Spirit.
 - *“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.” --- 1 Samuel 15:22*
 - *“Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” --- Acts 5:29*

- A soldier is trained to endure hardship – so our personal comfort is never the main issue.
 - *“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” --- 2 Timothy 2:3*

- A soldier is trained in the use of weapons and protective clothing – so we must also know how to use the armor of God and the sword of the Spirit.
 - *“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:” --- Ephesians 6:14-17*

- A soldier knows how to be content with his rations, especially in the heat of battle – so we learn to be content with what God provided.
 - *“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, [therewith] to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” --- Philippians 4:11-13*

Memory Verse

*“Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men.”
--- Acts 5:29*

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 39: I've Been Drafted?
Out In The Field: Part 3

A soldier knows that his mission is to go out into the field. A true soldier is never content to spend his time behind in the barracks. He wants to be shoulder to shoulder with his comrades, fighting the good fight.

•A soldier knows the importance of keeping rank with his fellow soldiers – so we look out for each other as Christians.

- *“Let no man seek his own, but every man another's [wealth].” --- I Corinthians 10:24*

•A soldier will not become involved in anything that will compromise his effectiveness – so we refuse to become entangled in worldly affairs.

- *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”---Romans 12:2*
- *“Love not the world, neither the things [that are] in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that [is] in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.” ---1 John 2:15-18*

•A soldier is prepared to lay down his life if necessary – so we present ourselves to God as living sacrifices.

- *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, [which is] your reasonable service.” --- Romans 12:1*

•A soldier understands that there are some things more important than his own life.

- *“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any [man] will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?l?” --- Matthew 16: 24-26*

•A soldier knows how to fight.

- *“Fight the good fight of faith...” 1 Timothy 6:12*
- *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” ---2 Timothy 4:7-*

Memory Verse

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.” ---1 Timothy 6:12

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 40: I'm Drafted, so How Does My Armor Protect Me?

In spiritual warfare, God most certainly did not leave us defenseless in dealing with Satan. God has provided an arsenal of tools. One tool that is necessary is our spiritual armor. Each piece is important and must be put on in order to protect and help us overcome temptations and attacks of the Devil. Let's take a closer look at each piece of our armor and its use. *"Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;" Ephesians 6:14-17 (NKJV)*

- **Having The Belt Of Truth Buckled Around Your Waist:** The abdomen was once believed to be the seat of emotions. When you choose to buckle this area with truth, you are holding fast to believing God's truth regardless of the repercussions.
- **Having Put on The Breastplate Of Righteousness:** The chest was generally thought of as the place of the soul. The heart must be protected and kept pure and righteous. Sin within the heart creates a foothold to Satan, but with confession and forgiveness, Jesus can cleanse our hearts.
- **Having Your Feet Fitted (or shod) With The Readiness That Comes From The Gospel Of Peace:** Proper footwear is necessary to take you from place to place while protecting your feet from injury. The believer is to be about the Father's business by spreading the Good News. With this sense of mission in place, the believer can keep heading in the right direction.
- **Having Taken Up The Shield Of Faith:** Satan is "the accuser of the brethren". He is intent on sending fiery darts to instill doubt, fear, insecurity, and guilt. Faith in God and what He has freely done for us is the invisible shield that will deflect Satan's false accusations.
- **Having Taken Up The Helmet Of Salvation:** A helmet protects the head, and our helmet is to protect our brain and thoughts. Having God's assurances will defend our thoughts from doubts and insecurities and the kind of works created from them.
- **Having Taken Up The Sword Of The Spirit, Which Is The Word Of God:** The Word of God is our only offensive weapon. Jesus used this weapon against Satan. The Word of God is living, powerful, effective, and instructive.

- Praying Always: Prayer keeps the lines of communication open between us and our Heavenly Father. We must have this constant communication open so that we have direction and encouragement from God. Prayer is important and effective.

Memory Verse

“Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;” Ephesians 6:14-17 (NKJV)

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 41: What About The Thrill Of Victory And The Agony Of Defeat?

We will experience the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat in our spiritual life. This is a part of growing in our Christian walk and striving to be conformed into the image of Christ. We still will be tempted and have moments when we make wrong choices. At times, our own flesh will war against us. There is a struggle:

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that [it is] good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but [how] to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." --- Romans 7:14-25

It is a reality that we are going to lose some of the battles we face. When this happens, rather than listen to Satan's lies, turn instead to the Comforter of our souls. Allow the Holy Spirit to heal your wounds, renew your mind, and re-energize you for the next skirmish. Immerse yourself in the Word, then walk back into the battle filled with God's Spirit and His power. Take your position on the battlefield and stand firm with the knowledge that the Spirit will enable you to have victory.

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God [is] faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear [it]." ---1 Corinthians 10:13

Remember to praise God and give Him the glory for your victories. Through the Holy Spirit living in us, we are able to overcome temptation. It is a joint effort and not something that we can accomplish on our own. It is when we think we have won the battle through our own strength that we fall.

Let us then find comfort from the agony of defeat and joy over the thrill of victory in the arms of our Savior, Christ Jesus.

Memory Verse

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." ---1 Corinthians 10:12

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 42: I've Been Set Free, So Who's Authority Am I Under?

People tend to be rebellious when it comes to authority. Authority is submitting to God and His chosen leaders. Go to the Old Testament, and you will find that submitting to authority has been a long-standing issue. The Israelites experienced problem after problem because everyone wanted to be their own authority. Rather than following God or His chosen leaders, the people chose to act on their own opinions of right and wrong. *"In those days [there was] no king in Israel: every man did [that which was] right in his own eyes."* --- Judges 21:25 Today, we find many groups, societies, and individuals who have made themselves final authorities without any concern for God. When people choose to act in this way, everyone pays the price.

God-centered authority requires faith. We place our faith in God's desire for the best for us. We must trust that He is putting the right people in the places of authority within the body of Christ. God's chain of command is based on faith, not on age or position. In finding faithful followers, God may use unexpected channels. Be prepared for the Lord to work at any place, any time, and through anyone He chooses.

Jesus was an ultimate example of authority. Because of the divine nature of Jesus, He is supreme over all creation, including the spirit world. Jesus is not only equal to God, He is God. He not only reflects God, but He reveals God to us. He came from Heaven rather than the dust of the ground. He is Lord of all, completely holy, and has authority to judge the world. While the religious scholars of Jesus' day tried to support their opinions and interpretations with the law, Jesus spoke with a new authority-His own. He didn't need to quote anyone because He was the Word of God. *"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as [one] having authority, and not as the scribes."* ---Matthew 7:28-29

In today's world, we are taught to march to the beat of our own drummer and question everything. God will not put anyone in authority that will blatantly use their position for personal gain or to the detriment of others. You will know if you are under God-given authority by depending on the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Any leader who would teach or preach anything that does not come from the authoritative Word of God, but is self-authoritative, is not acting under the direction of God. A leader with true God-given authority will be concerned with the care of the flock, they will model personal obedience to God, be reflectors of God's truth, and be faithful to family and church.

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." ---Acts 20:28

"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;" ---1 Timothy 3:2-4

Memory Verse

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." --- Romans 13:1

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 43: What Does Accountability Have To Do With Anything?

Have you ever been held accountable? Had an accountability partner? Accountability is a strong biblical teaching with regard to spiritual and vocational pursuits. Scripture advises us that God has made us accountable not only to Him but to others as well. In fact, He has placed people in authority over us to help us be accountable. People, in general, tend to rebel against the notion that they should have to answer to anyone concerning themselves or their conduct.

As a child of God, it is wise to have people hold you accountable. Accountability works like a checks-and-balance system. While it's not always enjoyable having our shortcomings pointed out to us, it is actually a tool that God uses to refine us. God allows people in our lives to not only encourage us; but to also admonish us. An honest discussion reveals areas in our life that could result in painful consequences. We might not like what we are hearing; in fact, more often than not, we don't! But consider this: in the long run, submitting to accountability will sharpen us into someone who acts like Christ. *"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."* ---Proverbs 27:17

Without accountability, freedom often turns into a license to do what you will rather than what God wants. Don't avoid relationships that bring accountability, embrace them! God created accountability so that we would grow spiritually and further develop a sense of responsibility. What we do matters, becoming a Christian does not absolve us of personal responsibility or our behavior choices. After all, we are not our own according to 1 Corinthians 6:19. *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost [which is] in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"* Ultimately, we are accountable to God. Knowing this is a powerful incentive to follow after holiness and obedience.

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." --- Romans 14:12

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things [done] in [his] body, according to that he hath done, whether [it be] good or bad." --- 2 Corinthians 5:10

Memory Verse

"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." ---Proverbs 27:17

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 44: How Do I Know God's Will?

The greatest happiness we can experience as a child of God is found when we are in God's will. To be in this place requires that we are willing to obey God. When we submit to God's control, then He is right there beside us: helping us to obey Him and giving us the power to do what He wants. God desires to help us, but we must submit to His authority first.

It is God's will that we become more like Christ. This is not already in our nature; we must allow Him to train us to think like Christ. We can't change our desires on our own but must depend on the power of the Holy Spirit within us. We also need the good influence of faithful believers, obedience to God's Word, and to be willing to serve. Do what God asks of you and place your trust in Him to help you change your desires.

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of [his] good pleasure." --- Philippians 2:12-13

God will guide us moment by moment, and our prayers must also be in harmony with God's will. We must make sure that our principles are in line with God's principles. God will not grant a request that would hurt us, hurt others, or would violate His own nature or will. The stronger our belief, the more likely our prayers will be in line with God's will. When you are following God's guidance, you know you are where God wants you to be. In prayer, seek to know what God would have you to do right where you are rather than just what to do next. Direction from God is not only about what the next big move will be, but to understand His purpose for you right now. As you seek to understand His Will, God will work out the everyday events. God places you where you are for a reason. We should ask God for His direction and then act according to His will. Esther, in the Old Testament, is an example of acting based on God's will. After finding out about the decree issued by the King to kill the Jews, she and her Uncle Mordecai saw that God had placed them in their positions for a purpose. Rather than running away, they seized the moment and boldly acted.

"For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, [then] shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for [such] a time as this?" --- Esther 4:14

Although the situation was dangerous, God had specifically chosen Esther to rescue her people. Because Esther was in the will of God and obediently followed Him, He protected her and gave her success. Following God's will is not meant to be easy, but in the end, the blessings are so worth it. Obediently following God's will will make us ready for our "such a time as this".

Memory Verse

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." --- Jeremiah 29:11

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 45: How Can I Get Wisdom?

"In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. ... Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee." --- 1 Kings 3:5;9-12

Solomon could have asked for any number of materialistic things when God invited him to ask for whatever he wanted. There were plenty of things that would have made his life easier: for all his enemies to disappear...for the people to be easy to rule...for a room full of gold...for an easy life with no problems...he could have chosen many things for himself.

Yet out of all the things he could have asked for, King Solomon asked God for wisdom. Wow! Solomon realized that only a foolish person would go through all of life's problems without seeking God's help. Like Solomon, we should all seek after wisdom. God doesn't want us ignorant concerning His will. He is not the god of the "what ifs?"

Many people in the world fail to seek the wisdom of God. Like a spoiled child, they do not want to wait but would rather satisfy their wants and desires immediately. They do not think about the future or the consequences that follow the decisions they choose to make. As a believer, we are instructed not to fall into such a trap. When we attempt to live apart from the counsel of God's wisdom, we suffer the consequences of fear, doubt, worry, frustrations, and disillusionment.

We come to multiple crossroads in our lives. We encounter many detours on the road, but God's guidance is beyond sufficient for any situation that we encounter.

Memory Verse

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." --- Proverbs 3:5-6

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 46: How Do I Find Wisdom?

As a Christian, it is vital for us to learn how to seek God's wisdom; we should desire to seek Him in order to know His plan, direction, and insight concerning our lives. When challenges and decisions come our way, there are some important things we can do to seek God's wisdom.

- Seek Him--- Take the time to pray. Ask God to make known to you His heart on an issue or decision you are making. During your prayer time, don't fall into a routine of doing all the talking, take time to actually listen for God's voice. (*Matthew 7:7-8, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."*)
- Meditate On God's Word--- By studying and meditating on the Scriptures, you will gain insight into the heart and mind of God. His truths are apparent to us when we dig into His word. (*Psalms 119:105, "Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path."*)
- Obey the Principles of Scripture--- God will teach you to apply His truth to your life if you have set your heart on obeying Him. (*Proverbs 8:32-36, "Now therefore, listen to me, my children. For blessed are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not disdain it. Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favor from the Lord; but he who sins against me wrongs his own soul."*)
- Observe the Faithfulness of God--- The Lord has never broken a single promise. The Bible is overflowing with proof of His goodness and love. As you read His word, learn to claim His promises. (*Deuteronomy 7:9, "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he [is] God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;"*)
- Heed Godly Counsel--- God can use a pastor or trusted Christian friend to help you see beyond your weaknesses. Share your fears and needs with those who love the Lord and you. (*Proverbs 10:20-21, "The tongue of the just [is as] choice silver: the heart of the wicked [is] little worth. The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom."*)
- Associate With Wise People--- Choose your friends wisely. Include God in your relationships so that you will establish a strong, godly base for decision-making. (*Psalms 1:1-2, "Blessed [is] the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way*

of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2 But his delight [is] in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”)

Oswald Chambers once said, “All our fret and worry is caused by calculating without God.” Remember, God’s ability to provide you with wisdom for the future will bring you peace.

Memory Verse

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

---Matthew 7:7-8

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 47: What About Faithfulness?

Faithfulness should be a characteristic of God's people. Jesus used salt to illustrate three qualities that should be found in his people. One of the qualities we should remember is God's faithfulness, just as salt used with a sacrifice recalled God's covenant with his people. Secondly, we should be faithful in making a difference in the "flavor" of the world we live in, just as salt changes the flavor of the food it's used on. Finally, we should faithfully counteract the moral decay going on in our society, just as salt is used to preserve food from decay.

"Salt [is] good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another." --- Mark 9:50

There are times when we may feel as if we are the only faithful people left in a world gone crazy. You may feel discouraged at times when you feel you are the only one faithfully following God's plan or the only one remaining faithful to a task. Be assured that even if you don't know who they are, others are faithfully obeying God and fulfilling their duties. In the Old Testament, the prophet Elijah thought he was the only faithful follower left in all of Israel. He was hiding from those who were seeking to kill him, and at one low point, he wished that he would just die. But God had other plans, he showed Elijah that He always has a remnant of faithful followers. And it is so in the world today, when it seems as though people have forsaken God.... there is always a remnant of the faithful.

"And it was [so], when Elijah heard [it], that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, [there came] a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, [even] I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael [to be] king over Syria: And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint [to be] king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint [to be] prophet in thy room. And it shall come to pass, [that] him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. Yet I have left [me] seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." --- 1 Kings 19:13-18

God is faithful. His Word still stands strong today. He faithfully keeps His promises to us. Trusting in God's faithfulness daily makes us confident of His great promises for the future. God's steadfast love and mercy are greater than any sin or obstacle in our lives. God is willing to respond when we ask for His help. He is ever ready to forgive when we confess our sins.

Memory Verse

"This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. [It is of] the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. [They are] new every morning: great [is] thy faithfulness. The LORD [is] my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him." --- Lamentations 3:21-24

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 48: I Renew My Mind?

When we talk about the mind, we are dealing with our attitudes, our reasoning, and our thinking. The Bible gives us clear direction to no longer embrace the way we used to think. Our relationship with God needs to influence the way we think.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." --- Romans 12:2

Not only do we have to change our behavior that is off-limits, but we must choose to change our thoughts too. If we don't, we continue to struggle with pride, covetousness, selfishness, stubbornness, and arrogance. It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit living inside of us that we can be transformed. He alone can renew us, re-educate us, and redirect us.

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded [is] death; but to be spiritually minded [is] life and peace. Because the carnal mind [is] enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." --- Romans 8:5-8

As a Christian, we should have the "mind of Christ." It is through the Holy Spirit that we can begin to know God's thoughts, talk with Him, and expect answers to prayer. We can have insights into some of God's plans, thoughts, and actions. To have the "mind of Christ", you must spend time consistently in His presence and in His word.

"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know [them], because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." --- 1 Corinthians 2: 15-16

Finally, we can characterize the Christian mind in three important ways. It is characterized by humility, purity, and truth. Jesus was humble. He was willing to give up his rights in order to obey God and serve people. You can choose to obey and serve too. Are you approaching life expecting to be served or looking for opportunities to serve others?

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:" --- Philippians 2:5 Paul tells us to program our mind with the right kind of thoughts. What you put in your mind comes out in your words and actions. Examine carefully what you are putting in your mind and replace harmful input with wholesome material. Read God's Word daily and pray. Ask God to help you focus your mind on what is good and pure. It takes practice, but it can be done.

Memory Verse

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things [are] honest, whatsoever things [are] just, whatsoever things [are] pure, whatsoever things [are] lovely, whatsoever things [are] of good report; if [there be] any virtue, and if [there be] any praise, think on these things.” --- Philippians 4:8

Now That I'm A Christian...

Week 49: What Is Spiritual Renewal?

Renewal can be viewed as a rebirth, a repair, or revival in our lives. There are different ways that we can experience spiritual renewal, and we can experience this renewal for different reasons. We can be renewed by obeying God. King Hezekiah led the people in spiritual renewal when he strove to do what was pleasing and good in the sight of the Lord.

"And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought [that which was] good and right and truth before the LORD his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did [it] with all his heart, and prospered." --- 2 Chronicles 31:20-21

When you further study what Hezekiah did in 2 Chronicles 30-31, you find a valuable model of renewal. Hezekiah:

- remembered God's compassion
- kept going despite ridicule
- aggressively removed evil influences from his life
- interceded for his people
- was spontaneous in worship
- contributed generously to God's work

Take time to examine your life. If you find any of these lacking, then consider how you might apply them and renew your commitment to God.

We are also renewed when we have a vision for God's work. Nehemiah had a vision and inspired Jerusalem's leaders into action to rebuild the walls around the city.

"Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we [are] in, how Jerusalem [lieth] waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. 18 Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for [this] good [work]." --- Nehemiah 2:17-18

We should never underestimate people's ability to be challenged for God's work. When God impresses upon you something to accomplish, then share it with others and trust the Holy Spirit to move them as well.

We can be renewed through being active in ministry. Peter, James, and John experienced a wonderful moment on the mountain with Jesus. They didn't want to leave.

"And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said." --- Luke 9:33

We all need times of retreat and renewal, so we can return and minister to the world. We find renewal through being filled with the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit in us, we are incapable of seeing our need for new life. It is through the Spirit that truth is revealed to us. By living within us, we are able to respond to the truth. It is through the Spirit that we have life.

"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, [they] are spirit, and [they] are life." --- John 6:63

Memory Verse

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, [which is] your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." --- Romans 12:1-2

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 50: How Can I Enrich My Personal Time With God?

It happens to the best of us. We are full of good intentions to find quiet time with the Lord in our day. Sometimes our devotional time with the Lord is spent aimlessly flipping through our Bible looking for a golden nugget of truth to jump out at us or our mind begins to wander over the business of the day and what is left to be done. The next thing we know, we are saying a quick prayer and rushing off to take care of the business at hand, all the while promising to do better tomorrow. Remember that while you desire to have a close, personal relationship with the Lord, He longs for this relationship even more. Don't become discouraged and give up! There are goals that you can use to help you focus on God's Word daily.

- **Schedule A Time-** Remember, if you wait until you can "fit in" some personal time with God, it will almost never happen. Schedule and guard your personal time with the Lord, and you will begin to experience greater enrichment.
- **Don't put off understanding puzzling words or passages-** There will be times you come across passages that seem difficult to understand. Don't wait until later to examine those issues. There are a variety of study aids that can help you. Many times, your concordance or a Bible Dictionary can help. There may be an endnote in the text that will shed some light on the scripture you are reading. Many times, your pastor or LIFE Discovery teacher can recommend study tools to help you. Just keep in mind while you may not completely resolve your question, seeking His truth will bring about amazing growth.
- **Keep A Spiritual Journal-** Many people find this an enriching practice in their personal time with God. You can write down things you are praying about, recognize answered prayers, and also jot down meaningful verses and truths you have gleaned from your studies.

Just like the relationships you have with your loved ones; a strong, personal relationship with God requires time and attention. The rewards make it well worth the investment.

Memory Verse

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. ---James 4:8

Now That I'm A Christian...

Week 51: What Is The Rapture?

The Rapture is the Second Coming of Christ. While sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples asked Jesus when would be the time that Jesus would come into power and what they could expect. Jesus told them important events that would take place before the end of the age. He also pointed out that it was far more important to be prepared by consistently living God's way rather than being concerned with the exact date of His return. Jesus also warned not to be misled by false messiahs because His return would be unmistakable and obvious to everyone. Don't spend time looking for signs or at other people but focus on Christ and His words.

"And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what [shall be] the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled? And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any [man] deceive you: For many shall come in my name, saying, I am [Christ]; and shall deceive many. And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for [such things] must needs be; but the end [shall] not [be] yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these [are] the beginnings of sorrows." --- Mark 13:3-8

No one knows the exact return of Christ. Jesus, Himself does not know the time of His return. Only God, the Father, knows the time for Christ's Second Coming. *"But of that day and hour knoweth no [man], no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."* ---Matthew 24:36 While we are waiting for the time to arrive, we are to continue sharing the message of salvation. Jesus said that before His return, the Gospel message of salvation would be preached to all the world. Jesus spoke of the end times and final judgment to come, giving the disciples and us a sense of urgency when it comes to reaching others for Him. Therefore, we must be diligently working to reach the lost. We must diligently maintain a close relationship with Christ and seek to do His will for our lives.

"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." ---Matthew 24:44

Jesus' second coming will have a different purpose than his first coming. When Jesus lived on earth, His purpose was to show the lost the way to salvation and eternal life. When He returns, it will be to call home those who have put their trust and faith in Him as their Savior. This will also include the resurrection of believers who have died. Paul assured the Thessalonians of this *"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."* ---1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 This signals a great victory because all believers throughout history will stand reunited in God's presence, safe and secure.

At the second coming, we will fully experience the reality of our salvation and will be with the Lord forever. Because of what Jesus accomplished through his death and resurrection, all those who have trusted in Christ receive a guarantee that they will be saved and considered blameless when he returns. *"Now you have every spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will keep you strong to the end so that you will be free from all blame on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns."* ---1 Corinthians 1:7-8 NLT. Although we don't have all of the details regarding eternity, we don't need to fear. We can look forward to an eternal life spent with Jesus.

Memory Verse

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if [it were] not [so], I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, [there] ye may be also." --- John 14:2-3

Now That I'm A Christian...
Week 52: A Final Word

You've now had 52 weeks of a broad range of topics dealing with being a believer. When talking and learning about God, the topics are inexhaustible. There is so much to know and learn that can guide, comfort, and inspire us. We can certainly be thankful God gave us His Word, the Holy Spirit, and called men and women to help us on the journey. Take the things you glean each day and do all you can to apply them to your life. We have this golden opportunity while we are on earth to make an impact for the cause of Christ. Regardless of whom we are or our station in life, we're all here for a purpose. While the path won't always be smooth, being a part of the family of God will make the travel easier. Seek to support your brothers and sisters in Christ and allow them to support you in return. We are not lone travelers going to an unknown destination. We are runners in a race nearing the finish line of heaven every day. Above all, seek after God and His truth, remember you're His child, and He cares for you.

People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered. Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies. Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and sincere, people may deceive you. Be honest and sincere anyway.

What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight. Create anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. Be happy anyway.

The good you do today will often be forgotten. Do good anyway.

Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway.

In the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.

- Mother Teresa

Memory Verse

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform [it] until the day of Jesus Christ:" --- Philippians 1:6

APPENDIX A

THE 7 PILLARS OF EDEN WESTSIDE CHURCH CULTURE

Proverbs 9:1

❖ **My family will pray. (Prayer)**

Jer. 33:3; 1 Thess. 5:17

❖ **My family will read God's Word daily. (Meditation)**

2 Tim. 3:15-17, Joshua 1:8

❖ **My family will be intentional in soul-winning. (Evangelism)**

Prov. 11:30, Acts 1:8

❖ **My family will be faithful in Worship. (Worship)**

Ex. 20:8; Heb. 10:25

❖ **My family will teach others. (Discipleship)**

Matt. 28:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:1-2

❖ **My family will give Biblically. (Stewardship)**

Mal. 3:10

❖ **My family will give our lives away to serve in God's Kingdom. (Service)**

Luke 9:23

= Biblical Life Application

3 John 4

APPENDIX B

EDEN WESTSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Eden Westside is a place to heal, help and call home.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of our church is summarized in a single sentence
based on two key scriptures:

**“We Believe a Great Commitment To the Great Commandment
And the Great Commission Will Grow a Great Church”**

OUR VALUE STATEMENT

Excellence honors God and inspires people.

APPENDIX C

FILL THE VOID

**This is the daily Bible reading plan that Eden Westside uses each year.
There is a passage of Scripture for 365 days of growing closer to
Jesus. We have been blessed by this plan, and you will be too!**

In The Beginning

- ☐ Jan-1 Genesis 1-3
- ☐ Jan-2 Genesis 4-6
- ☐ Jan-3 Genesis 7-9
- ☐ Jan-4 Genesis 10-12
- ☐ Jan-5 Genesis 13-15
- ☐ Jan-6 Genesis 16-18
- ☐ Jan-7 Genesis 19-21
- ☐ Jan-8 Genesis 22-24
- ☐ Jan-9 Genesis 25-27
- ☐ Jan-10 Genesis 28-30
- ☐ Jan-11 Genesis 31-33
- ☐ Jan-12 Genesis 34-36
- ☐ Jan-13 Genesis 37-39
- ☐ Jan-14 Genesis 40-42
- ☐ Jan-15 Genesis 43-45
- ☐ Jan-16 Genesis 46-48
- ☐ Jan-17 Genesis 49-50

The Story of Moses

- ☐ Jan-18 Exodus 1-4
- ☐ Jan-19 Exodus 5-7
- ☐ Jan-20 Exodus 8-10
- ☐ Jan-21 Exodus 11-13
- ☐ Jan-22 Exodus 14-16
- ☐ Jan-23 Exodus 17-19
- ☐ Jan-24 Exodus 20-22
- ☐ Jan-25 Exodus 23-25
- ☐ Jan-26 Exodus 26-28
- ☐ Jan-27 Exodus 29-31
- ☐ Jan-28 Exodus 32-34
- ☐ Jan-29 Exodus 35-37
- ☐ Jan-30 Exodus 38-39
- ☐ Jan-31 Exodus 40

Sacrifices in the Temple

- ☐ Feb-1 Leviticus 1-3
- ☐ Feb-2 Leviticus 4-6
- ☐ Feb-3 Leviticus 7-8
- ☐ Feb-4 Leviticus 9-10
- ☐ Feb-5 Leviticus 11-13
- ☐ Feb-6 Leviticus 14-15
- ☐ Feb-7 Leviticus 16-18
- ☐ Feb-8 Leviticus 19-21
- ☐ Feb-9 Leviticus 22-23
- ☐ Feb-10 Leviticus 24-25
- ☐ Feb-11 Leviticus 26-27

Desert Wanderings

- ☐ Feb-12 Numbers 1-2
- ☐ Feb-13 Numbers 3-4
- ☐ Feb-14 Numbers 5-6
- ☐ Feb-15 Numbers 7
- ☐ Feb-16 Numbers 8-9
- ☐ Feb-17 Numbers 10-11

Times of Restoration

- ☐ Feb-18 Numbers 12-13
- ☐ Feb-19 Numbers 14-15
- ☐ Feb-20 Numbers 16-18
- ☐ Feb-21 Numbers 19-20
- ☐ Feb-22 Numbers 21-22
- ☐ Feb-23 Numbers 23-25
- ☐ Feb-24 Numbers 26-27
- ☐ Feb-25 Numbers 28-29
- ☐ Feb-26 Numbers 30-31
- ☐ Feb-27 Numbers 32-33
- ☐ Feb-28 Numbers 34-36

Moses' Last Words

- ☐ Mar-1 Deut 1-2
- ☐ Mar-2 Deut 3-4
- ☐ Mar-3 Deut 5-7
- ☐ Mar-4 Deut 8-10
- ☐ Mar-5 Deut 11-13
- ☐ Mar-6 Deut 14-16
- ☐ Mar-7 Deut 17-20
- ☐ Mar-8 Deut 21-23
- ☐ Mar-9 Deut 24-27
- ☐ Mar-10 Deut 28
- ☐ Mar-11 Deut 29-31
- ☐ Mar-12 Deut 32-34

The Promised Land!

- ☐ Mar-13 Joshua 1-3
- ☐ Mar-14 Joshua 4-6
- ☐ Mar-15 Joshua 7-8
- ☐ Mar-16 Joshua 9-10
- ☐ Mar-17 Joshua 11-13
- ☐ Mar-18 Joshua 14-16
- ☐ Mar-19 Joshua 17-19
- ☐ Mar-20 Joshua 20-21
- ☐ Mar-21 Joshua 22-24
- ☐ Mar-22 Judges 1-2
- ☐ Mar-23 Judges 3-5
- ☐ Mar-24 Judges 6-7
- ☐ Mar-25 Judges 8-9
- ☐ Mar-26 Judges 10-11
- ☐ Mar-27 Judges 12-14
- ☐ Mar-28 Judges 15-17
- ☐ Mar-29 Judges 18-19
- ☐ Mar-30 Judges 20-21
- ☐ Mar-31 Ruth 1-4

From Samuel To David

- ☐ Apr-1 I Samuel 1-3
- ☐ Apr-2 I Samuel 4-7
- ☐ Apr-3 I Samuel 8-11
- ☐ Apr-4 I Samuel 12-14:23
- ☐ Apr-5 I Samuel 14:24-16
- ☐ Apr-6 I Samuel 17-18
- ☐ Apr-7 I Samuel 19-21

- ☐ Apr-8 I Samuel 22-24
- ☐ Apr-9 I Samuel 25-27
- ☐ Apr-10 I Samuel 28-31
- ☐ Apr-11 II Samuel 1-2
- ☐ Apr-12 II Samuel 3-5
- ☐ Apr-13 II Samuel 6-9
- ☐ Apr-14 II Samuel 10-12
- ☐ Apr-15 II Samuel 13-14
- ☐ Apr-16 II Samuel 15-16
- ☐ Apr-17 II Samuel 17-18
- ☐ Apr-18 II Samuel 19-20
- ☐ Apr-19 II Samuel 21-22
- ☐ Apr-20 II Samuel 23-24

From David to Exile

- ☐ Apr-21 I Kings 1-2:25
- ☐ Apr-22 I Kings 2:26-4
- ☐ Apr-23 I Kings 5-7
- ☐ Apr-24 I Kings 8
- ☐ Apr-25 I Kings 9-11
- ☐ Apr-26 I Kings 12-13
- ☐ Apr-27 I Kings 14-15
- ☐ Apr-28 I Kings 16-18
- ☐ Apr-29 I Kings 19-20
- ☐ Apr-30 I Kings 21-22
- ☐ May-1 II Kings 1-3
- ☐ May-2 II Kings 4-5
- ☐ May-3 II Kings 6-8
- ☐ May-4 II Kings 9-10
- ☐ May-5 II Kings 11-13
- ☐ May-6 II Kings 14-15
- ☐ May-7 II Kings 16-17
- ☐ May-8 II Kings 18-20
- ☐ May-9 II Kings 21-23
- ☐ May-10 II Kings 24-25
- ☐ May-11 I Chronicles 1-2
- ☐ May-12 I Chronicles 3-5
- ☐ May-13 I Chronicles 6-7
- ☐ May-14 I Chronicles 8-10
- ☐ May-15 I Chronicles 11-13
- ☐ May-16 I Chronicles 14-16
- ☐ May-17 I Chronicles 17-20
- ☐ May-18 I Chronicles 21-23
- ☐ May-19 I Chronicles 24-26
- ☐ May-20 I Chronicles 27-29
- ☐ May-21 II Chronicles 1-3
- ☐ May-22 II Chronicles 4-6
- ☐ May-23 II Chronicles 7-9
- ☐ May-24 II Chronicles 10-13
- ☐ May-25 II Chronicles 14-17
- ☐ May-26 II Chronicles 18-20
- ☐ May-27 II Chronicles 21-24
- ☐ May-28 II Chronicles 25-27
- ☐ May-29 II Chronicles 28-30
- ☐ May-30 II Chronicles 31-33
- ☐ May-31 II Chronicles 34-36

- ☐ June-2 Ezra 3-5

- ☐ June-3 Ezra 6-7
- ☐ June-4 Ezra 8-9
- ☐ June-5 Ezra 10
- ☐ June-6 Nehemiah 1-3
- ☐ June-7 Nehemiah 4-6
- ☐ June-8 Nehemiah 7-8
- ☐ June-9 Nehemiah 9-10
- ☐ June-10 Nehemiah 11-12
- ☐ June-11 Nehemiah 13
- ☐ June-12 Esther 1-3
- ☐ June-13 Esther 4-7
- ☐ June-14 Esther 8-10

God's Faithful Servant

- ☐ June-15 Job 1-4
- ☐ June-16 Job 5-8
- ☐ June-17 Job 9-12
- ☐ June-18 Job 13-16
- ☐ June-19 Job 17-20
- ☐ June-20 Job 21-24
- ☐ June-21 Job 25-29
- ☐ June-22 Job 30-33
- ☐ June-23 Job 34-37
- ☐ June-24 Job 38-40
- ☐ June-25 Job 41-42

Songs of Praise

- ☐ June-26 Psalms 1-9
- ☐ June-27 Psalms 10-17
- ☐ June-28 Psalms 18-22
- ☐ June-29 Psalms 23-30
- ☐ June-30 Psalms 31-35
- ☐ July-1 Psalms 36-39
- ☐ July-2 Psalms 40-45
- ☐ July-3 Psalms 46-51
- ☐ July-4 Psalms 52-59
- ☐ July-5 Psalms 60-66
- ☐ July-6 Psalms 67-71
- ☐ July-7 Psalms 72-77
- ☐ July-8 Psalms 78-80
- ☐ July-9 Psalms 81-87
- ☐ July-10 Psalms 88-91
- ☐ July-11 Psalms 92-100
- ☐ July-12 Psalms 101-105
- ☐ July-13 Psalms 106-107
- ☐ July-14 Psalms 108-118
- ☐ July-15 Psalms 119
- ☐ July-16 Psalms 120-131
- ☐ July-17 Psalms 132-138
- ☐ July-18 Psalms 139-143
- ☐ July-19 Psalms 144-150

Wisdom for life

- ☐ July-20 Proverbs 1-3
- ☐ July-21 Proverbs 4-7
- ☐ July-22 Proverbs 8-11
- ☐ July-23 Proverbs 12-15
- ☐ July-24 Proverbs 16-19
- ☐ July-25 Proverbs 20-22
- ☐ July-26 Proverbs 23-26
- ☐ July-27 Proverbs 27-31
- ☐ July-28 Ecc 1-4
- ☐ July-29 Ecc 5-8
- ☐ July-30 Ecc 9-12
- ☐ July-31 Song of Sol 1-8

Hope for God's People

- ☐ Aug-1 Isaiah 1-4
- ☐ Aug-2 Isaiah 5-9
- ☐ Aug-3 Isaiah 10-14
- ☐ Aug-4 Isaiah 15-21
- ☐ Aug-5 Isaiah 22-26
- ☐ Aug-6 Isaiah 27-31
- ☐ Aug-7 Isaiah 32-37
- ☐ Aug-8 Isaiah 38-42
- ☐ Aug-9 Isaiah 43-46
- ☐ Aug-10 Isaiah 47-51
- ☐ Aug-11 Isaiah 52-57
- ☐ Aug-12 Isaiah 58-63
- ☐ Aug-13 Isaiah 64-66

Tears For God's People

- ☐ Aug-14 Jeremiah 1-3
- ☐ Aug-15 Jeremiah 4-6
- ☐ Aug-16 Jeremiah 7-10
- ☐ Aug-17 Jeremiah 11-14
- ☐ Aug-18 Jeremiah 15-18
- ☐ Aug-19 Jeremiah 19-22
- ☐ Aug-20 Jeremiah 23-25
- ☐ Aug-21 Jeremiah 26-28
- ☐ Aug-22 Jeremiah 29-31
- ☐ Aug-23 Jeremiah 32-33
- ☐ Aug-24 Jeremiah 34-36
- ☐ Aug-25 Jeremiah 37-40
- ☐ Aug-26 Jeremiah 41-44
- ☐ Aug-27 Jeremiah 45-48
- ☐ Aug-28 Jeremiah 49-50
- ☐ Aug-29 Jeremiah 51-52
- ☐ Aug-30 Lament 1-2
- ☐ Aug-31 Lament 3-5

Something New

- ☐ Sep-1 Ezekiel 1-4
- ☐ Sep-2 Ezekiel 5-9
- ☐ Sep-3 Ezekiel 10-13
- ☐ Sep-4 Ezekiel 14-16
- ☐ Sep-5 Ezekiel 17-19
- ☐ Sep-6 Ezekiel 20-21
- ☐ Sep-7 Ezekiel 22-24
- ☐ Sep-8 Ezekiel 25-28
- ☐ Sep-9 Ezekiel 29-32
- ☐ Sep-10 Ezekiel 33-36
- ☐ Sep-11 Ezekiel 37-39
- ☐ Sep-12 Ezekiel 40-42
- ☐ Sep-13 Ezekiel 43-45
- ☐ Sep-14 Ezekiel 46-48

Lions & Visions

- ☐ Sep-15 Daniel 1-3
- ☐ Sep-16 Daniel 4-6
- ☐ Sep-17 Daniel 7-9
- ☐ Sep-18 Daniel 10-12

The Minor Prophets

- ☐ Sep-19 Hosea 1-6
- ☐ Sep-20 Hosea 7-14
- ☐ Sep-21 Joel 1-3
- ☐ Sep-22 Amos 1-5
- ☐ Sep-23 Amos 6- Obadiah 1
- ☐ Sep-24 Jonah 1- 4
- ☐ Sep-25 Micah 1-7
- ☐ Sep-26 Nahum 1- Hab. 3
- ☐ Sep-27 Zephaniah 1-Haggai 2
- ☐ Sep-28 Zechariah 1-7

- ☐ Sep-29 Zechariah 8-14
- ☐ Sep-30 Malachi 1-4

The Good News!

- ☐ Oct-1 Matthew 1-4
- ☐ Oct-2 Matthew 5-6
- ☐ Oct-3 Matthew 7-9
- ☐ Oct-4 Matthew 10-11
- ☐ Oct-5 Matthew 12
- ☐ Oct-6 Matthew 13-14
- ☐ Oct-7 Matthew 15-17
- ☐ Oct-8 Matthew 18-20
- ☐ Oct-9 Matthew 21-22
- ☐ Oct-10 Matthew 23-24
- ☐ Oct-11 Matthew 25-26
- ☐ Oct-12 Matthew 27-28

The Story Of Jesus

- ☐ Oct-13 Mark 1-3
- ☐ Oct-14 Mark 4-5
- ☐ Oct-15 Mark 6-7
- ☐ Oct-16 Mark 8-9
- ☐ Oct-17 Mark 10-11
- ☐ Oct-18 Mark 12-13
- ☐ Oct-19 Mark 14-16

Joy To The World

- ☐ Oct-20 Luke 1
- ☐ Oct-21 Luke 2-3
- ☐ Oct-22 Luke 4-5
- ☐ Oct-23 Luke 6-7
- ☐ Oct-24 Luke 8-9
- ☐ Oct-25 Luke 10-11
- ☐ Oct-26 Luke 12-13
- ☐ Oct-27 Luke 14-16
- ☐ Oct-28 Luke 17-18
- ☐ Oct-29 Luke 19-20
- ☐ Oct-30 Luke 21-22
- ☐ Oct-31 Luke 23-24

Light For the World

- ☐ Nov-1 John 1-3
- ☐ Nov-2 John 4-5
- ☐ Nov-3 John 6-8
- ☐ Nov-4 John 9-10
- ☐ Nov-5 John 11-12
- ☐ Nov-6 John 13-16
- ☐ Nov-7 John 17-18
- ☐ Nov-8 John 19-21

The New Church

- ☐ Nov-9 Acts 1-3
- ☐ Nov-10 Acts 4-6
- ☐ Nov-11 Acts 7-8
- ☐ Nov-12 Acts 9-10
- ☐ Nov-13 Acts 11-13
- ☐ Nov-14 Acts 14-16
- ☐ Nov-15 Acts 17-19
- ☐ Nov-16 Acts 20-22
- ☐ Nov-17 Acts 23-25
- ☐ Nov-18 Acts 26-28

We Live By Faith

- ☐ Nov-19 Romans 1-3
- ☐ Nov-20 Romans 4-7
- ☐ Nov-21 Romans 8-10
- ☐ Nov-22 Romans 11-13
- ☐ Nov-23 Romans 14-16
- ☐ Nov-24 I Cor 1-4

- ☐ Nov-25 I Cor 5-9
- ☐ Nov-26 I Cor 10-13

- ☐ Nov-29 II Cor 5-8
- ☐ Nov-30 II Cor 9-13

How To Live For Jesus

- ☐ Dec-1 Galatians 1-3
- ☐ Dec-2 Galatians 4-6
- ☐ Dec-3 Ephesians 1-3
- ☐ Dec-4 Ephesians 4-6
- ☐ Dec-5 Philippians 1-4
- ☐ Dec-6 Colossians 1-4
- ☐ Dec-7 I Thess 1-5
- ☐ Dec-8 II Thess 1-3
- ☐ Dec-9 I Timothy 1-6
- ☐ Dec-10 II Timothy 1-4

- ☐ Nov-27 I Cor 14-16
- ☐ Nov-28 II Cor 1-4

- ☐ Dec-11 Titus 1- Philemon 1

Jesus Finished God's Plan

- ☐ Dec-12 Hebrews 1-4
- ☐ Dec-13 Hebrews 5-7
- ☐ Dec-14 Hebrews 8-10
- ☐ Dec-15 Hebrews 11-13
- ☐ Dec-16 James 1-5
- ☐ Dec-17 I Peter 1-2
- ☐ Dec-18 I Peter 3-5
- ☐ Dec-19 II Peter 1-3
- ☐ Dec-20 I John 1-3
- ☐ Dec-21 I John 4-5

- ☐ Dec-22 II John 1 - Jude 1

A Vision For The Church

- ☐ Dec-23 Rev 1-2
- ☐ Dec-24 Rev 3-5
- ☐ Dec-25 Rev 6-8
- ☐ Dec-26 Rev 9-11
- ☐ Dec-27 Rev 12-13
- ☐ Dec-28 Rev 14-16
- ☐ Dec-29 Rev 17-18
- ☐ Dec-30 Rev 19-20
- ☐ Dec-31 Rev 21-22

Congratulations!

We are so proud of your accomplishment of reading the Bible cover to cover!

Appendix D

UNWRAPPING YOUR GIFT

(SPIRITUAL GIFT SURVEY)

Directions:

This is not a test, so there are no wrong answers. The Spiritual Gifts Survey consists of 100 statements. Some items reflect concrete actions; other items are descriptive traits; and still others are statements of belief.

- Select the one response you feel best characterizes yourself and place that number in the blank provided. Record your answer in the blank beside each item.
- Do not spend too much time on any one item. Remember, it is not a test. Usually your immediate response is best.
- Please give an answer for each item. Do not skip any items.
- Do not ask others how they are answering or how they think you should answer.
- Work at your own pace.

Your response choices are:

4 – Highly characteristic of me / definitely true for me

3 – Most of the time this would describe me / true for me about 50 percent of the time

2 – Occasionally characteristic of me / true for me about 25 percent of the time

1 – Not at all characteristic of me / definitely untrue for me

QUESTIONS

- _____ 1. I have a desire to speak direct messages from God that edify, exhort or warns others.
- _____ 2. I have enjoyed relating to a certain group of people over a long period of time, sharing personally in their successes and their failures.
- _____ 3. I believe that I have helped people learn biblical truths in meaningful ways.
- _____ 4. I have applied spiritual truth effectively to situations in my own life.
- _____ 5. I feel I can help others distinguish key and important facts of Scripture.
- _____ 6. I have verbally encouraged the wavering, the troubled or the discouraged.
- _____ 7. I have been able to see through phoniness before it was evident to other people.
- _____ 8. When there is a need in the Lord's work, whether financially or materially, I find great satisfaction in helping fill that need
- _____ 9. I enjoy assisting and helping other Christian leaders to be successful in accomplishing their ministry task.
- _____ 10. I have a desire to work with those who have physical or mental problems, to alleviate their suffering.
- _____ 11. I feel comfortable relating to ethnics and minorities, and they seem to accept me.
- _____ 12. I have led others to a decision for salvation through faith in Christ.
- _____ 13. When in a group, I am the one others often look to for vision and direction.

- _____ 14. When I speak, people seem to listen and agree.
- _____ 15. When a group I am in is lacking organization, I tend to step in to fill the gap.
- _____ 16. I know of specific instances where my prayers were answered and resulted in visible miracles.
- _____ 17. I am highly compelled to learn more and assist in the complete healing and total wellness of others lives whether it be physical, mental or spiritual
- _____ 18. I feel I could learn another language well in order to minister to those in a different culture.
- _____ 19. I have the ability to interpret other languages
- _____ 20. I enjoy being called upon to do special jobs around the church.
- _____ 21. I often have the urge to study prophetic literature that is found and supported by the teachings in God's word
- _____ 22. I have enjoyed assuming the responsibility for the spiritual well-being of a particular group of Christians.
- _____ 23. I feel I can explain Scriptures in such a way that others understand it.
- _____ 24. I can discover truths and quickly arrive at solutions to fairly complicated problems.
- _____ 25. I have had insights of spiritual truth that others have said helped bring them closer to God.
- _____ 26. I can effectively motivate people to get involved in a ministry when it is needed.
- _____ 27. I can recognize when a person is acting in accord with God's will.
- _____ 28. My giving records show that I give considerably more than 10 percent of my income to the Lord's work.
- _____ 29. I have a strong desire to assist others when I hear about someone who needs help
- _____ 30. I have cared for others when they have had material or physical needs.
- _____ 31. I would be willing under the direction and leadership of my home church, to be used of God to start new Bible Studies and/or new churches.
- _____ 32. I have shared joyfully how Christ has brought me to Himself in a way that is meaningful to non-believers.
- _____ 33. I have believed God for the impossible and seen it happen in a tangible way.
- _____ 34. Other Christians have followed my leadership because they believed in me.
- _____ 35. I enjoy handling the details of organizing ideas, people, resources and time for more effective ministry.
- _____ 36. God has used me as a vehicle in which He has done amazing things which do not seem logically possible.
- _____ 37. I enjoy praying for sick people because I know that many of them will be healed as a result.

- _____ 38. I have spoken the message of God to people in a language other than my native tongues.
- _____ 39. I have interpreted tongues with the result that the Body of Christ was edified, exhorted or comforted.
- _____ 40. I enjoy helping people who are in need
- _____ 41. I have communicated timely and urgent messages that must have come directly from the Lord.
- _____ 42. I feel unafraid of giving spiritual guidance and direction in a group of Christians.
- _____ 43. I am willing to serve and prepare for the task of teaching.
- _____ 44. When a person has a problem I can frequently guide him or her to the best biblical solution.
- _____ 45. Through study or experience I have discovered major strategies or techniques God seems to use in furthering His kingdom.
- _____ 46. God has used me to encourage others that are going through difficult times
- _____ 47. I am able to recognize whether people are being honest when they tell of their religious experiences.
- _____ 48. When I am moved by an appeal to give to God's work, I usually can find the money I need to do it.
- _____ 49. I have enjoyed doing routine task that have led to more effective ministry by others.
- _____ 50. I enjoy visiting people who are lonely, shut-in, sick, in hospitals and /or retirement homes
- _____ 51. People of a different race or culture have been attracted to me, and we have related well.
- _____ 52. I believe that non Christians feel comfortable when they are around me, and that I have a positive effect on them toward developing a faith in Christ.
- _____ 53. I have faith to accomplish what seems impossible to others.
- _____ 54. When I set goals, others seem to accept them readily.
- _____ 55. I have been able to make effective and efficient plans for accomplishing the goals of a group.
- _____ 56. God regularly seems to take the impossible and make them possible through my life
- _____ 57. Others have told me that God healed them of emotional problems when I ministered to them.
- _____ 58. I feel that God has given me a desire for special prayer ministry.
- _____ 59. I have been asked to interpret while someone shares God's Word to others.
- _____ 60. I enjoy routine tasks and do well at them.
- _____ 61. I sometimes have a strong sense of what God wants to say to people in response to particular situations.
- _____ 62. I have helped fellow believers by guiding them to relevant portions of the Bible and praying

with them.

- _____ 63. I feel I can communicate biblical truths to others and see resulting changes in knowledge, attitudes, values or conduct.
- _____ 64. I have perceived and applied biblical truth to the specific needs of fellow believers.
- _____ 65. I desire to study and read as much as possible in order to learn new biblical truths.
- _____ 66. I have a desire to effectively counsel the perplexed, the guilty or the addicted.
- _____ 67. I can recognize whether a person's teaching is from God, from Satan, or of human origin.
- _____ 68. I am so confident that God will meet my needs that I give to Him sacrificially and consistently.
- _____ 69. When I do things behind the scenes and others are helped, I am joyful.
- _____ 70. People call on me to help those who are less fortunate.
- _____ 71. I would be willing to leave comfortable surroundings if it would enable me to share Christ with more people.
- _____ 72. I get frustrated when others don't seem to share their faith with unbelievers as much as I do.
- _____ 73. There have been times when I have felt sure I knew God's specific will for the future growth of His work, even when others have not been so sure.
- _____ 74. When I join a group, others seem to back off and expect me to take the leadership.
- _____ 75. I am able to give directions to others without using persuasion to get them to accomplish tasks.
- _____ 76. I believe I can be God's instrument in bringing supernatural change in lives or circumstances.
- _____ 77. I have prayed for others and physical healing has actually occurred.
- _____ 78. When I speak in another language other than my native language I expect it to be interpreted.
- _____ 79. I have interpreted tongues in a way that seemed to bless others.
- _____ 80. I prefer being active and doing something for others rather than just sitting around talking, reading or listening to a speaker.
- _____ 81. I have a strong desire to defend my convictions and what I believe about religious truths
- _____ 82. I have recognized the need to help other people become more effective in their ministries.
- _____ 83. Studying the Bible and sharing my insights with others is very satisfying for me.
- _____ 84. I have felt an unusual presence of God and personal confidence when important decisions needed to be made.
- _____ 85. I have the ability to discover new truths for myself through reading or observing situations firsthand.
- _____ 86. I have urged others to seek biblical solutions to their affliction or suffering.

- _____ 87. I am able to recognize the true motivation of persons and movements.
- _____ 88. I receive great pleasure in contributing financially to the Lord's work
- _____ 89. I enjoy helping others complete projects even though I am not in charge
- _____ 90. I have compassion for those that are hurting and feel a need to reach out to them
- _____ 91. More than most, I have had a strong desire to see people of other countries won to the Lord.
- _____ 92. I am attracted to non-believers because of my desire to win them to Christ.
- _____ 93. I am a person of unusual vision.
- _____ 94. When I am in charge, things seem to run smoothly.
- _____ 95. I have enjoyed bearing the responsibility for the success of a particular task within my church.
- _____ 96. There have been times when God has worked through me to restore health and wellness to other people's lives
- _____ 97. When I hear about prayer request for the sick I have a compelling desire to pray for them.
- _____ 98. When I speak in another language other than my native language, I believe it is edifying to the Lord's Body.
- _____ 99. I have interpreted tongues in such a way that the message from God comes alive to the listener
- _____ 100. I respond cheerfully when asked to do a job, even if it seems unimportant.

SCORING YOUR SURVEY

Follow these directions to figure your score for each spiritual gift.

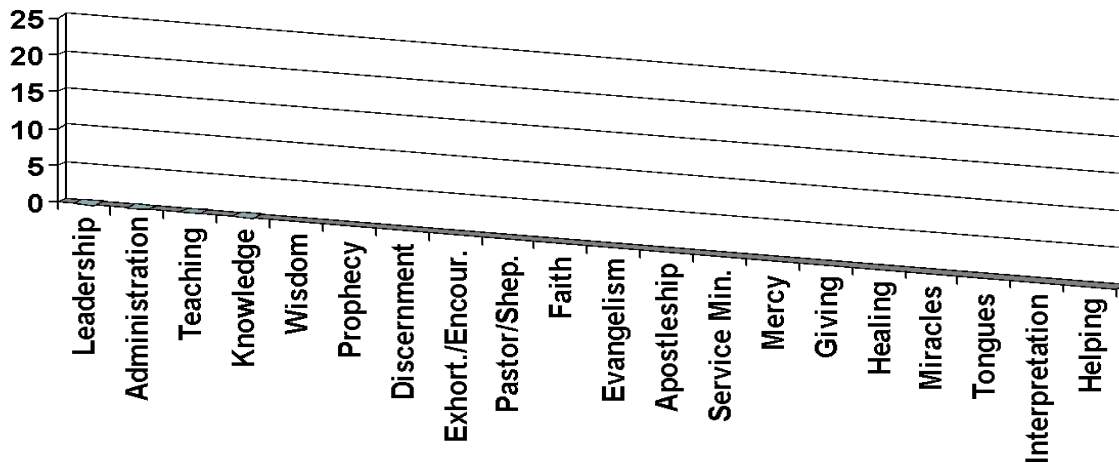
(1) Place in each box your numerical response (1-4) to the item number which is indicated below the box.

(2) For each gift, add the numbers in the boxes and put the total in the TOTAL box.

Leadership	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	=	<u> </u>
	Item 14		Item 34		Item 54		Item 74		Item 94		TOTAL
Administration/Organization	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	=	<u> </u>
	Item 15		Item 35		Item 55		Item 75		Item 95		TOTAL
Teaching	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	=	<u> </u>
	Item 3		Item 23		Item 43		Item 63		Item 83		TOTAL
Knowledge	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	=	<u> </u>
	Item 5		Item 25		Item 45		Item 65		Item 85		TOTAL
Wisdom	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	=	<u> </u>
	Item 4		Item 24		Item 44		Item 64		Item 84		TOTAL
Prophecy	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	+	<u> </u>	=	<u> </u>
	Item 1		Item 21		Item 41		Item 61		Item 81		TOTAL

Discernment	$\frac{\text{Item 7}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 27}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 47}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 67}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 87}}{\quad} = \frac{\text{TOTAL}}{\quad}$					
Exhortation/Encouragement	$\frac{\text{Item 6}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 26}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 46}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 66}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 86}}{\quad} = \frac{\text{TOTAL}}{\quad}$					
Pastor/Shepherding	$\frac{\text{Item 2}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 22}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 42}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 62}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 82}}{\quad} = \frac{\text{TOTAL}}{\quad}$					
Faith	$\frac{\text{Item 13}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 33}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 53}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 73}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 93}}{\quad} = \frac{\text{TOTAL}}{\quad}$					
Evangelism	$\frac{\text{Item 12}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 32}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 52}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 72}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 92}}{\quad} = \frac{\text{TOTAL}}{\quad}$					
Apostleship	$\frac{\text{Item 11}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 31}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 51}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 71}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 91}}{\quad} = \frac{\text{TOTAL}}{\quad}$					
Service/Ministry	$\frac{\text{Item 20}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 40}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 60}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 80}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 100}}{\quad} = \frac{\text{TOTAL}}{\quad}$					
Mercy	$\frac{\text{Item 10}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 30}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 50}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 70}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 90}}{\quad} = \frac{\text{TOTAL}}{\quad}$					
Giving	$\frac{\text{Item 8}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 28}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 48}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 68}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 88}}{\quad} = \frac{\text{TOTAL}}{\quad}$					
Healing	$\frac{\text{Item 17}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 37}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 57}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 77}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 97}}{\quad} = \frac{\text{TOTAL}}{\quad}$					
Miracles	$\frac{\text{Item 16}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 36}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 56}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 76}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 96}}{\quad} = \frac{\text{TOTAL}}{\quad}$					
Tongues	$\frac{\text{Item 18}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 38}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 58}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 78}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 98}}{\quad} = \frac{\text{TOTAL}}{\quad}$					
Interpretation	$\frac{\text{Item 19}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 39}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 59}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 79}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 99}}{\quad} = \frac{\text{TOTAL}}{\quad}$					
Helping	$\frac{\text{Item 9}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 29}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 49}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 69}}{\quad} + \frac{\text{Item 89}}{\quad} = \frac{\text{TOTAL}}{\quad}$					

GRAPHING YOUR PROFILE



- (1) For each gift place a mark across the bar at the point that corresponds to your TOTAL for that gift.
- (2) For each gift shade the bar below the mark that you have drawn
- (3) The resultant graph gives a picture of your gifts. Gifts for which the bars are tall are the one in which you appear to be strongest. Gifts for which the bars are very short are the ones in which you appear not to be strong.

Now that you have completed the survey, thoughtfully answer the following questions.

The gifts I have begun to discover in my life are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

● After prayer and worship, I am beginning to sense that God wants me to use my spiritual gifts to serve Christ's body by _____.

● I am not sure yet how God wants me to use my gifts to serve others. But I am committed to prayer and worship, seeking wisdom and opportunities to use the gifts I have received from God.

Ask God to help you know how He has gifted you for service and how you can begin to use this gift in ministry to others.

This is who I want to see reached for Christ. I commit to invest in them until I earn the right to invite them to a relationship with Jesus. This is my Top Ten List...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Luke 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

1 Timothy 2:4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Notes:

Notes: