Congratulations! Your life will never be the same again. Constantly you will be reminded of God’s overall blessings, and His continual work in your life. When someone is baptized, Jesus’ death was not in vain for at least one more person. He loves you so much; He would have died even if you were the only one who responded back in love.

The format of the following daily lessons is simple and straightforward. All quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New American Standard Bible (updated translation).

It is extremely important that you use this series of studies to develop that habit of Bible study. To do this you must study through each lesson at the same time and same place each day. There will naturally be interruptions to the daily routine, but please do not allow them to interfere with this new habit you are trying to develop. Skipping a day here and there will not help, but shouldn’t hurt much to stop this development if you pick it back up the very next day. Habits are developed in three weeks. Try to use the same place and chair to do all these studies. At times, the devil will do all he can to interfere with this powerful beginning you are attempting. This habit, if continued through life, will be such a strong ally that the devil will have less and less of an affect upon you.

There is no particular order to the lessons. Each one is independent and not based upon any others. Some references are quoted. Please read them carefully. Some verses are listed, but not quoted. Your study will be more profitable if you take the time to look up each text.

At the end of each lesson are questions. Please take the time to write down your answers. These are not fill in the blank, but rather thought questions. Some will be based on information directly from the lesson. Others are for the purpose of recording your reaction to the lessons. These are the kind of questions that can stay with you all day as you meditate on the answers. If you find you cannot think of an answer, that is fine. You can go back later. If you also discover that later, maybe even days later, you want to add to your answer, please do. This is your book. This is your new life. How you respond to all these new challenges will make eternal differences in both your life and many others who observe you day by day.

After the questions, there is an idea to pray about which is based upon the lesson. Again, room is provided for you to write down your prayers. We find having a very specific prayer keeps us focused on what God is doing for us, where we are in our spiritual growth, and even what we hope God will use us for.

Congratulations, God loves you, and so do we!
Sincerely wishing you the greatest of joy as you grow in the Lord and grow fruitful in His service,

Ricky Shanks
rickyshanks@charter.net
Lesson/Day #1 - Onward and Upward

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil.3:14)

The very day you put on Christ, a new journey begins – a walk onward and upward. Did you notice the positive nature of our journey together – it is onward and upward? Be prepared, there will be times we live the ol’ cliché, “two steps forward, one step back”; because there will be both good and bad days. Let’s notice the context of this uplifting description of our new life.

Philippians 3:7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

That which is in the past is gone, including each and every one of our sins. We now have a righteousness that is not derived from our own goodness. Isn’t it wonderful knowing we do not have to be perfect for God to love us? Isn’t that how parents love their children? How much does God mean to us? Paul so valued Christ that even his past accomplishments were now considered rubbish. Consider this word rubbish. It could be translated dung or table scraps. Disgusting, I know, but while it is disgusting it is also vivid. All our glories of the past are worthless in comparison to presently having Jesus in our life.

Paul desires to know three things: (1) Jesus, (2) the power of His resurrection, and (3) the fellowship or sharing of His sufferings. Our new life is personal, powerful and cost Jesus everything. Paul’s point is his willingness to give up everything because Jesus gave up everything. To be successful, we have to let go of the past and hold on to the present as we walk to the future. It is not always going to be easy. There might even be some suffering. But Jesus thought it worthwhile enough for us that He endured the ultimate in suffering.

The very day God cleansed us, we decided to go on a journey – a journey onward and upward. Keep your eyes on the Lord as you travel this road.

Questions:
- What is not as important to you any more?
- What were the goals of Paul in this reading?
- What methods can we use to make Paul’s goals our own?

Prayer: Thank God for the friend we have in Jesus, and that He showed us the way to happiness here and home for an eternity.
In a limited sense, every day is the Lord’s; and yet scripture speaks specifically of one particular day within the week as “the Lord’s Day.” It’s as if the Lord gave this special day a new name, His name. Names are personal, and so the Lord’s Day must be personal to Jesus. The apostle John wrote of his own experience on this distinctive day in Revelation 1:10 - I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day....

What day of the week would you surmise is the Lord’s Day? Is it Monday? Did anything significant happen on Monday within the Scriptures? No. What about Friday? After all, Jesus died on a Friday. No, Friday is not the Lord’s Day either. That is the day Jesus got punished for our sins, hardly a day of celebration for Jesus. (As an aside, the whole concept of “Good Friday” is foreign to the Bible; therefore we do not observe it.) How about Saturday? Many today compare Sunday to Saturday and speak about a “Christian Sabbath,” and yet the scriptures never do. We should only speak as do the Scriptures. Speaking of silence, we could say that on Saturday, Jesus was as silent as a tomb – for that is where His body still laid.

There is only one day worthy of being declared ” the Lord’s Day.” In using this term, the Bible is powerfully echoing a long-standing custom of giving honor to someone in celebration of a victory. Specific days ancient generals and kings celebrated as victory days were named after their victors. In fact, even a Jewish writing (the Misnah 2:1) refers to Sunday as “the day of the Notsree” (i.e., the Nazarene – Jesus was from Nazareth). Which day do you think within the Bible is Jesus’ victory day? Is it the day He was crucified? Could it be the day His body lay in the tomb? No, it is His resurrection day, the first day of the week, our Sunday! On that day our Savior was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness (Romans 1:4). This is the day when He (the Father) had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him (the Son) (Colossians 2:15). The first day of the week is the day the church began (Acts 2 – the Day of Pentecost always fell on the first day of the week). This is the day we see the church gathering to take the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7). Why do you think they did this?!

In fact, this particular possessive (i.e., the Lord’s) grammatical structure is found only one other time within Scripture – the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20). This is the reason, more than any other that we take the Lord’s Supper every first day of the week and only on the first day of the week. The Lord’s Supper belongs on the Lord’s Day.

Questions:
- In what ways can we set apart the Lord’s Day within our own life as special?
- If we were to take the Lord’s Supper not on the Lord’s Day, what significance would be lost?
- Should we allow worldly pleasures and concerns to keep us from coming together on the Lord’s Day to take the Lord’s Supper?

Prayer: Remembering is powerful; pray that God will help you remember Jesus every day, but especially on His day.
#3 – How To Handle Criticism for Becoming a Christian

“You did what?” “Are you crazy?” “How could you turn your back on our family?” “Are you saying I am going to hell?” “You’re no fun anymore!” “You think you are better than me, don’t you?” Did I cover the criticism you heard coming out of the mouths of your friends and family because God washed away your sins and adopted you into His family? Maybe all your friends and family supported you. Maybe you will influence some of them for eternity. But in case you are ridiculed, you need to know how to handle it like a Christian. The more you love and care for them, the more their criticism will sting. How can we handle the criticism? Just like Jesus did!

Would it comfort you knowing even His own family criticized Jesus? Notice Mark 3:21, When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, "He has lost His senses." Did you notice their criticism? They wanted to put Jesus away for being insane!

Also notice John 7:3–5, 3 Therefore His brothers said to Him, “Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. 4 For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.” 5 For not even His brothers were believing in Him. If we keep reading after v.5, we see Jesus answers them. What form did their criticism here take? They ridiculed and mocked Jesus. They even challenged Him to do that which was not appropriate. Don’t let your friends and family dare you to do something wrong.

So how do we handle such criticism when it comes our way? The same way Jesus did. It will not always be easy handling the criticism. Jesus often prayed. We need to pray because our Father cares (1 Peter 5:7). Jesus always loved, even on the cross when His slayers passed by taunting Him. Two thieves, crucified on either side, joined in the verbal stabbing. And yet, something unexpected and marvelous happened. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” One thief, who earlier mocked Jesus, now repents and pleads for mercy (Luke 23:33-43). Could it be the way Jesus handled criticism changed this sinner’s heart? We need to love, even when the very ones we love are hurting us. When we pray for, love, teach, and forgive, even those who criticize us, we will be like Jesus. Forgiving will not make us crazy; it will make us like Jesus.

Questions:
- If you have already been criticized, how did you handle it? Were you at all tempted to lash out or to give up?
- Did the criticism hurt so much because of your love for them, or because you doubted you made the right decision?
- What can you do to prepare yourself for future criticism?
- Do you feel better knowing you are not the first to be criticized and that even Jesus was criticized?

Prayer: Ask God to give you the type of love Jesus had which enabled Him to forgive.
By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8). Everything God asks us to do to receive His grace is an act of belief because we are saved by faith (John 3:16). Obedience is the difference between a living faith and one that is dead (James 2:17). Are we saved by a living or dead faith?

What does it mean to believe? REPENTANCE (Acts 2:38), CONFESSION (Romans10:10) and BAPTISM (Mark 16:16) define belief because each is an expression of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Notice how the Holy Spirit defines the gospel: 1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

In its simplest form, the gospel is the death, burial and resurrection of the Son of God. Could we have been saved if even one of these details were left out? What if Jesus was just a man? What if the Son of God was crucified, yet never buried and left to rot? What if the Son of God was crucified, and buried, but never got resurrected? Would we be saved if God had left anything out? Would it be the same gospel if anything were missing? (Galatians 1:8-9)

As we cannot be saved without the entire gospel, we cannot be saved without all expressions of belief in that gospel. We believe the Son of God descended from Heaven, died on the cross for our sins, was buried for three days, and then God raised Him up. That is the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Believing Jesus died for our sins, we repent of those sins. Believing Jesus is the Son of God, we confess Him as such. Believing He was buried and resurrected, we are buried into our watery tomb, and spiritually resurrected out of that tomb through baptism. When we believe, repent, and are baptized we receive God’s grace because that is when we show our belief in Jesus and His gospel. Repentance, confession, and baptism are not in addition to faith – they are faith!

Another aspect of this faith is trust. We trust God, that when He asks us to repent of our sins, confess Jesus as the Son of God and Lord, and are baptized; God will remove every one of our sins. There is no doubt, because we believe.

Is there one particular verse that lists all these things together? No. Often when people are taught, they are at different places in progression of their belief. They might already have stated they believe in Jesus, so the teacher does not repeat what is already accomplished. A comparison would be giving directions to someone. Before giving them directions, you ask them, “Where are you coming from?” Let us always remember so that we can keep our joy fresh, and so we can teach others.

Questions:
- What were your thoughts when you came up from the waters of baptism?
- How can you use these thoughts when you are tempted?
- Are you prepared to use your Bible to show others how to be saved?

Prayer: Ask God to help you never to forget what it was like without Him, and to always hold on to the joy you now experience. Also pray to be ready to tell others how to have their sins forgiven.
**#5 – Symbols of Christianity**

“Simple” may be the most apt description of true Christianity. No trappings, no rituals, just plain and simple. No icons, no statues, no clerical trappings. If there is anything within this new Way that might be construed as symbols, they are simple. They are required. They are living symbols.

For example, baptism, although wrongly called an outward sign of an inward grace by those denying its place in God’s plan, does symbolize. Just as Jesus died, we die. We die to sin and with Jesus. As they buried Jesus, someone “buries” us in baptism (i.e., baptism means immersion). God resurrected Jesus (Romans 1:4); God resurrects us (Colossians 2:12). Notice the power of the moral, literal, and symbolic comparisons between Jesus and ourselves by opening your Bible now and reading Romans 6:1-11.

Another symbol, which also deals with Jesus’ death and resurrection, is the Lord’s Supper. Simple bread and simple fruit of the vine represent Jesus’ crucified body and shed blood.

Bread is a universal symbol for friendship and fellowship among all cultures. Jesus spiritualizes this fellowship for a spiritual kingdom. The body of Christ that died on the cross is represented in this bread. We use unleavened bread because Jesus did. We share (or fellowship) that body when we eat. We share (or fellowship) the body in thinking and meditating on His death while partaking of the bread. And amazingly, all Christians together are called the body. We share with (or fellowship) each other in this simple symbol. See 1 Corinthians 10:16-17.

The fruit of the vine within this memorial pictures for us the blood that was shed. Jesus shed His blood in having the crown of thorns placed on His head, by the flaying of His back by the scourging, and by the crucifixion nails thrust through His hands and feet, and finally by the piercing of the soldier’s sword to ensure He was dead. All of this is aptly pictured by a juice, which is squeezed out of its “body” just as Jesus’ blood was squeezed out of His body.

Plus the fact that Jesus said He eats the Lord’s Supper with us proves that the resurrection is part of the celebration meal (Matthew 26:29). That is why we eat it on Sunday. That is the day Jesus said He would eat it again in His Kingdom.

There is only one other symbol within Christianity. No, it’s not a cross hanging down from our necks, or on our ears. Neither is it the empty tomb Jesus left behind. It is not modern day temples. It is you and I. We are symbols. What do we symbolize? When we become a child of God, our obedience to his word become a symbol of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Did you read Romans 6:1-11 yet? We are what the world sees. Jesus lives in us because we died in Him. He is to shine through us. Matt. 5:16.

We don’t need any other symbols. We don’t need nonliving trappings so often associated with denominational Christianity. We relive the death burial and resurrection of Jesus by being baptized, by taking communion, and by living for Jesus. These – and we - are living symbols.

**Questions:**
- If you came from a denominational background, how different, and in what ways, are Jesus’ symbols different from the ones men have made?
- Knowing you are a symbol of Jesus will change your behavior in what ways?

**Prayer:** There is power in simplicity; request from God a simple and pure heart.
Now that you are a child of God, you might think that all your problems should go away. While you might wish that, the reality is, you do not want that. Anything worthwhile is difficult. We only learn through experience. If you are a parent, don’t you allow your children to learn through trial and error? You help them, of course, just as God helps us, but you know you can’t do it all for them or they will never learn.

But there is another reason why becoming a Christian does not take away all our problems – a very sinister and serious reason.

Have you ever lost something very precious to you? What did you do? You looked until you found it again, right? Well, you were born pure in God’s eyes. For a while, He lost you. What did God do? He went looking for you. That is a major point in the parable of the lost sheep, lost coin, and even lost son (Luke 15). You have now been found.

And yet, you have also been lost. No, I am not talking about being lost in sin. I am referring to when God found you - and you found God - someone else lost you. That’s right, Satan lost you. God rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son (Colossians 1:20). Do you think Satan wants all of us back? Absolutely. Do you think he is going to giving up trying? Absolutely not! Why? He hates God. He hates us. To Satan we are not precious because of love; we are precious because of hate. Think of a jealous little child that wants all the toys just to keep others from playing with them. Satan is not spoiled - he is thoroughly sinister.

Let me ask you a question – Are any of us better than Jesus? Are we better at withstanding temptation? Wouldn’t you think that Satan would give up trying to make the perfect Son of God sin? Notice very carefully what Luke records immediately following Satan’s tempting Jesus. When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time. (Luke 4:13) Did you notice that last, frightening phrase, until an opportune time? When did Satan give up? When he had Jesus murdered! And yet, to the amazement of all, including Satan himself, God used that great evil to produce the greatest good.

No, all of our problems do not go away when we become a child of God. However, and this is a very important “however,” we now have the tools we need to conquer any problem that will come (Philippians 4:13). And, remember, God can turn any evil into good, because you are now a child of God.

Questions:
- Why do you think Satan wants us back?
- What are some of your hardest temptations to face?
- What specific things can you do not to fall into Satan’s trap?
- What are some things God can do to help you?

Prayer: Use the above questions and devotional to form your own special prayer.
#7 – The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

Whether recently born again, or spiritually mature, no doubt many questions concerning the Holy Spirit abound. Why is this true? Possibly because He never became flesh, unlike Jesus, therefore His existence is less tangible to us. Also, the King James appellation, The Holy Ghost, adds unnecessarily to the mystery. Finally, since the Holy Spirit is responsible for fantastic occurrences within Scriptures (i.e., tongue speaking and other miracles), our imaginations run rampant and wild. The purpose of this lesson is to settle our minds and offer a simple, clear and scriptural answer to the question of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Being born again means we all were born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5). On the Day of Pentecost, Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Later in Acts, we learn the Holy Spirit is given to everyone who obeys (5:32)

This relationship is an indwelling. Does the Holy Spirit literally and personally live within? The scriptures abundantly teach the indwelling of the Holy Spirit while leaving unexplained the details. Let’s describe the relationship we have with the Holy Spirit with another biblical word: fellowship.

The Holy Spirit is not an inanimate object. He is a Divine Person, having location and identity. As a human persona, I have relationship with this Divine Person. It is to be very personal. Ephesians describes the relationship of Christ to His church in a very personal way—as a one flesh marriage (5:22ff). Maybe we could understand the Holy Spirit’s indwelling as a oneness in a similar fashion. As a physical person I have a relationship with a Spiritual Person. It is very personal and beyond the confines of a physical relationship. Remember, even a Spirit has location. Omnipresence is not defined as “God’s presence in everything,” but as “Everything in God’s presence.” Should we understand the Holy Spirit’s Persona as any less definite?

When the Holy Spirit inspired men, He “indwelt” them. How? He gave them power. His power resided within them. Did He personally reside within them? Did the Spirit reside within them the same as their own human spirit? Was the Holy Spirit located within? The answer to each of those questions is, no. The Holy Spirit fellowshipped them, sharing something very personal with them.

Compare these two verses: Referencing our human bodies, Paul said, Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? (1 Cor.6:19). In speaking of the church, Paul similarly said: Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? (1 Cor.3:16). As said before, there is a personal relationship between the church and Christ. 1 Corinthians 3:16 shows there is a personal relationship between the church and the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:19 proves there is a personal relationship between the Holy Spirit and my body. It is called fellowship (Philippians 2:1). Simply put, the Holy Spirit indwells us because we share a relationship. We work together to become like God (Galatians 5:22-23). We are one. There is nothing mystical about that, and it is quite simple.

Questions:

- Does this lesson help you understand the work of the Holy Spirit? If not, write down any questions you have and talk to someone you trust.

- Since we fellowship with the Holy Spirit, what implications does that carry?

Prayer: The Holy Spirit is even involved in our prayer life (Romans 8:23) and thank God for the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.
Weekly review and discussion questions.

Day / Lesson

1. What are some things you will need to consider lost in order to serve Christ?

2. What activities are to be practiced only on the Lord’s day?

3. What has been the hardest criticism to handle so far?
   What scripture will help you handle it?

4. Could you show from the Bible what you did to become a Christian?
   What verses would you use?

5. Are there other religious symbols that you wonder about?
   Jewelry? Statues? ETC?

6. In what ways has Satan been trying to get you back?

7. How does the Holy Spirit empower us and for what purpose?
   Read Rom. 1:16 and 2 Cor. 3:3-6
#8 – Heaven and Hell

Everyone wants to believe in the existence of Heaven. Few want to admit Hell is real. If they do admit its reality, it is only a possibility for others, never themselves.

Do you believe in God? Of course you do. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, Our Father who is in Heaven. If God is real, then His home, Heaven, is real.

Do you believe in Satan? You can see where this is going. Hell, then, must be just as real as heaven because Satan is just as real as we are – unfortunately.

Do you know who can go to Heaven? It is simple: anyone can. Then, who is going to Hell? It is simple again: anyone can. What is the deciding factor? How we react to Jesus (John 3:36).

How would you describe Heaven? In its essence, Heaven is being eternally in the presence of God. Please read Revelation 5-6 for a picture, albeit a symbolic picture, of Heaven. Don’t get caught up in the symbolic language. In fact, I suggest you have someone read it to you. Close your eyes and draw the picture in your mind. Now keep that picture fresh when you are worshipping God – or when tempted.

How would you describe Hell? Most of us are familiar with the biblical descriptions: fire and brimstone, darkness and weeping, bound hand and foot and in burning flames. In its essence, Hell is separation from God. Do you remember your life before finding God? Do you remember the hopelessness, sadness, trouble, and pain? Increase that beyond understanding, beyond comprehension, beyond bearing. Do you really want to go back? Remember this when being tempted – or when worshipping God.

No matter how scriptures define and describe Heaven and Hell, I sincerely doubt our minds can grasp the vastness of the grandeur or the depths of the anguish. Heaven will be far more beautiful than any mortal words can contain. Likewise, Hell’s imagery will pale in comparison to its reality.

Do you know who mentioned Hell more than any other New Testament teacher? If you thought, “Jesus,” you got it right. To deny the existence of Hell is to deny part of the teaching of Jesus. To deny part of the teaching of Jesus is to deny all of His teaching, and in the end, a denial of Jesus Himself. Jesus, Himself, taught so much on Hell because He came down from Heaven to keep us from going to Hell. He is coming back again, this time to take us home to Heaven.

Questions:

- The reward of Heaven and the threat of Hell are both scriptural motivations. Which motivation moves you more? Which motivation do you think will motivate you as you grow?

- What are some of the benefits of both love and fear as motivations?

Prayer: Pray to God that your love for Him will become stronger than your fear.
Do We Have To Be Perfect?

Did you know we have to be perfect? Don’t worry though; we don’t have to be perfect at being perfect! Confused? Like many words, “perfect” has more than one meaning, and more than one application.

The word “perfect” can mean without sin, and we must be without sin. Yet, that is our very real problem, isn’t it? For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). What is the solution? In our service to Christ, when we confess our sin, Jesus’ blood, God’s grace, wipes us clean. Be comforted when you read 1 John 1. Every time we go to God for cleansing, we are as clean, pure, and perfect as the day we came out of the waters of baptism. God makes us perfectly sinless.

The word “perfect” can also mean complete. Again, this is where God’s grace helps. The whole book of Colossians is about being complete. One of the special words in that book is “full.” Grasp the amazing teaching Paul gives us in Colossians 2:9-10 – For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete... The point is, if all the fullness of Deity dwells in Jesus, and we are in Jesus, how can we be anything but complete? God makes us perfectly complete.

Have you ever met a perfectionist? The kind who could not be satisfied? What did you think of that person? How did he make you feel? Well, if anyone deserved the right to require perfection the perfect God who made us would be the one. Because we sin we will never personally measure up. Because of our doubts, fears, and personal inadequacies, we will never be perfect on our own. Amazingly, our Heavenly Father is ready to accept us as His sons and daughters even though we have personal inadequacies, because of His Son and the shedding of His blood.

So how does this play out in everyday life? While we cannot be saved without works, we cannot be saved by our works. We grow, we pray, we study, we forgive, we lend a hand, and we forge on trying everyday to become more like Jesus. And when we fail, sin, transgress, and trespass against God, if we repent and confess our imperfections, that is when God makes us perfect.

It should thrill us to know we do not have to achieve perfection by our efforts. If we have Jesus and we allow His word complete control in our lives, His perfection dwells within us.

Questions:

- When you lay down at night, do you ask, “What sins have I committed today?”
- What should our response be to God’s forgiveness?
- How should this affect the way we feel towards ourselves?
- How should this affect the way we act towards others?

Prayer: Focus on ways you are not perfect, then go to God in prayer asking for forgiveness, and strength and wisdom to change. Ask for a willing heart to allow Him to have more control in your life.
Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons (Philippians 1:1). That, my friend, is the uncomplicated organization of a local congregation. All the synods, headquarters, church offices you see in denominations are foreign to God’s order. While I prefer to look at a single church as an organism of symbiotic relationships, such as a family, it is also proper and scriptural to focus on a more formal aspect – the organization of a local church.

1. Saints – As is obvious within the text, saints are living beings, not dead, canonized icons as taught by the Roman Catholic church. Who is a saint? This verse gives us two clues. First, the word itself means “one who is separated.” We, as saints are separated from the world to God. We belong to Him for His will, not ours. That is what a saint is. Who is a saint? The second clue is found in the words, in Christ Jesus. Every Christian, every believer is equal to each other and equally a saint. Have you heard the saying, “Well, I’m no saint…”? Don’t say that, and don’t believe that. If we are in Christ Jesus, we are saints.

2. Overseers – Who or what is an overseer? The word itself tells us what they do, as is echoed in Hebrews 13:17 - Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. As exemplified in this verse, scriptures always show a plurality of these men within a local congregation. And that is as far as their work extends. These men have no authority to watch over souls not within their care. Other names for these men are: pastors (note, the preacher is not the pastor), elders, bishops, presbyters, and shepherds. To become an overseer, one must mature in the faith until one meets the qualities found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, and then the congregation may accept that one as qualified to watch over their souls.

3. Deacons – A deacon is a servant; that is what the word itself means. While we are all servants, we are not all deacons. A deacon is a servant according to the work he does; the rest of us are servants to our heavenly master. Therefore a deacon is twice a servant. His qualities that make him ready to serve in this role are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, following those of the overseer.

As is implied in our beginning text, a church is made up of saints, which includes elders and deacons, if men have qualified themselves. These men are still equal to all, for all are saints. What they are responsible for is different.

Questions:
- Since an elder and deacon show qualities of maturity, after reading the qualifications, which areas are you strong in or weak in?
- If you are a man, would you like to one day accept this great work? If so, when should you start preparing?
- If you are a woman, would you be willing to help your husband fill this great need? What can you do to help prepare yourself and your husband?

Prayer: Pray to God on the areas of weaknesses and strengths you have.
#11 – Our Memorial Meal

Being a Christian, on every first day of the week we share a special memorial meal. This is a blessing equally shared among all believers. Notice Matthew’s inspired recounting: While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." 27 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; 28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:26).

The bread and the fruit of the vine are called a communion or fellowship (1 Corinthians 10:16). This "fellowship meal" is far different and more spiritual than what is commonly called a “fellowship meal.” Let us speak as does the Bible, and not as the world. Matthew also mentioned the covenant. When we eat and drink these emblems, we are stating Jesus and ourselves have made an agreement. The agreement is one of forgiveness on His part, and submission on ours.

This fellowship meal is also called, “the Lord’s Supper” (1 Corinthians 11:20). Paul condemned the Corinthian church by contrasting what they had done; each one takes his own supper first (v.21), with that which was the Lord’s Supper. This is a time that belongs to Jesus, and also a time that belongs to thinking of one another.

These “names” for the memorial meal give it significance. Something else that gives this special time significance is its history. The Passover looks back in time to the Israelites being freed from the bondage of Egyptian slavery. The Jewish meal celebrated God “passing over” the Israelites, hence the Holy Spirit called this The Lord’s Passover (Exodus 12:1-14). They had the Lord’s Passover; we have the Lord’s Supper. When Jesus instituted His Supper, He did it during the Passover, which is why we use unleavened bread. He also used fruit of the vine. While our memorial meal is not called a Passover, Jesus Himself, the Lamb of God, is our Passover – For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Cor.5:7b-8)

Being a Christian frees us to fellowship and remember one another, and to remember Christ. We can also remember being lost and glorify in being found. Being a Christian frees us from sin and death. Being a Christian makes us the Lord’s.

Questions:
- Based on the above, what thoughts might you focus on when you take the Lord’s Supper?
- Which is a greater blessing, to be freed from physical bondage or to be freed from spiritual bondage?

Prayer: This would be an appropriate time to remember the sins God has freed you from, not for the purpose of reinforcing guilt, but rather for thanksgiving and strength.
#12 – Ask For Help

When you became a Christian, basically you asked God to help you. You admitted your sinfulness and that you couldn’t survive without God. Our God helped us by forgiving us of our past sins.

Our God doesn’t stop there, however. He provides for us a new family. This family is our support system. It is from them that He serves us, and it is through us that He helps them. That is one reason and purpose for assembling with the saints as much as possible: Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; [24] and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, [25] not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near (Hebrews 10:23-25).

Throughout the New Testament there is a recurring but significant phrase – one another. We need one another. We are actually one of God’s gifts to each other. You are a gift to others. We are available to each other to help, and for help. We can talk to each other, pray with and for one another, and help in any way possible.

Just within Romans 12, we have the phrase “one another” four times:

- Romans 12:4 - For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
- Romans 12:10 - Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;
- Romans 12:16 - Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

Read the entire chapter. This is God telling us to help one another.

Of extreme importance is knowing whom to ask. Not everyone is qualified because some are having the same problems themselves, or others even worse. That is why Paul said, Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. [2] Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:1-2) Find out who is spiritually strong in the area of your need. You can always start with those charged with the responsibility to guard your soul – the elders (Hebrews 13:17).

But before someone can help us, we need to ask. Don’t expect others to just know. Their responsibility is to help. Your responsibility is to ask. And when you get stronger, then it will be your turn to help.

Questions:
- In what areas are you in need of help? Who do you know whom can help?
- In what areas can you give help? Who do you know whom you can help?
- What characteristics do you need before you ask for help?
- What characteristics do you need before being asked for help?
- What characteristics do you need to develop so you can help others?

Prayer: In your own words, pray for the humility to ask for help and the love and strength to help others.
You have an advantage over just about everyone else in the congregation. Most assuredly, you feel overwhelmed by all the changes in your life. You also might consider yourself inadequate as compared to others. However, you have a distinct advantage: Most of your friends are not yet Christians. God now gives you the opportunity to teach them what you know (you can use lesson #4), or at least to bring them to someone who can teach them. Notice what Andrew did: One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. [41] He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ). [42] He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter) (John 1:40-42).

However, this opportunity may only present itself for a short time. The longer we are Christians, the more our sphere of influence changes. Because of our new lifestyle, our friends might change, because our friends’ attitudes toward us change. Notice what Peter said, In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you. (1 Peter 4:4). They are going to notice a change in you. Some of them will obviously not like it. Others might be curious and ask questions. A few could be seeing in you what they need—a new life brought about by a relationship with Jesus. When this door of opportunity opens, all you need to do is state, “I have looked into the Bible and found wonderful blessings; would you like to study the Bible with me?”

Because our sphere of influence naturally changes, we should not neglect the opportunity to share this wealth with them. This circle of friends most likely has already begun to expand to include other Christians in the flock. We must make an exerted effort to become like Jesus. He had His close friends among His followers. And yet He never stopped reaching out to others. In fact, certain ones accused Jesus of being a friend of sinners (Matthew 11:19). He wasn’t their friend because He “ran with them.” He was their friend because he loved them.

You also have a privilege. You are already aware of the fact we are to become like Jesus. Well, Jesus said, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10). One of the great privileges is to take the same message that Jesus taught, and try to bring salvation to our friends and family.

Also, you have an opportunity to help defeat Satan: Someone said, "There are many things in life worth winning, but when one is won over to the side of truth, we beat the devil in the battle over the eternal soul of man. This will outshine and outlast all the achievements of the world put together."

You have an advantage, a privilege, and an opportunity, are you ready?

Questions:
- What friends can you begin to share the gospel with?
- Are you prepared to answer questions about your new faith? If not, what questions do you have, and who can help you?

Prayer: Ask that God will give you courage and wisdom to speak to others about Jesus.
#14 – What Can I Do?

Do you want to know an easy way to help you stay secure in your salvation? Get involved. It is harder to fall away when you consider yourself needed. You might ask, “But what can I do shine, I am a new Christian?” Sometimes a babe in Christ can do more than an experienced Christian. A new believer can always be a fruitful and effective addition to a flock.

First of all, everyone has natural, innate abilities. No one comes to the Lord with absolutely no previous experience in anything. Think of your job, family, friends, hobbies, interests, and so on; what talents were engaged in these realms? Maybe you have good organizational skills. Possibly your people skills are outstanding. Some people are wonderful with little children; others relate well to teenagers. You might have sewing skills that can be somehow used or musical abilities. Your skills might be needed in “behind the scenes” kind of work such as assisting with classes or visiting the elderly. The array is vast. You have accomplished things in your previous life for yourself. Now use those abilities to accomplish something for God. Start an inventory of your talents, not to produce pride, but to prepare. Pride takes credit for talents and abilities. Humility says, “God, use me for your glory!”

Besides natural abilities, God will bless you with spiritual talents. Notice what the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write: For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. 4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness (Romans 12:3-7). These gifts are connected with God’s grace.

Maybe the most natural and spiritual task you can accomplish for God is telling your friends about Jesus. It is natural since you have a network of old friends who are lost. Invite them to worship with you. Ask them if they would like to study the Bible with you and a mature Christian. Evangelism, because of your newfound joy, might be both the best and easiest thing you can do for Jesus!

Everyone is different. We have different talents, various personalities, and countless opportunities. Don’t wait for someone to ask you - look around, observe, ask questions, and find out how you fit in. That is one of the most uplifting aspects of Christianity – everybody fits in and each one is needed (Romans 12:4-5). Get involved.

Questions:
- Start looking at yourself to discover talents and abilities. What are they?
- Do you think your abilities will increase or decrease now that you are saved?
- Who can you ask to help you get involved?
- What applications can you make from the parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)

Prayer: Petition God to give you humility and take away any fear of getting involved.
Weekly review and discussion questions.

Day / Lesson

8  Did you meditate on Heaven?  
   Imagine hell and describe it here.  ________________________________

9  Read 1 John 1:6-10 again. What does walking in the light require?

10 Are you a saint?  
   Name five other ways to refer to the elders.  ________________________________

11 In the Lord’s Supper why is unleavened bread used?  
   What should we focus upon when partaking of the Lord’s Supper?

12 Have you decided who you may ask for help in times of spiritual trouble?  
   Who?

13 List 10 lost friends or relatives whom you would like to see in Christ  
   that you are going to start praying for each day. Pray for opportunities to  
   help them find God.  
   ________________________________  ________________________________  ________________________________  ________________________________  
   ________________________________  ________________________________  ________________________________  ________________________________  

14 What are your talents you have? (5 or more)  
   How can these be used in God’s service?
A while back, a friend requested me to sum up the difference between denominational churches, and we who are part of a church that simply belongs to Christ. Coming up with just one basic difference definitely challenged my thinking. Here was my answer: a denominational church asks, “Does the Bible say I cannot do it?” If they cannot find a specific prohibition against their plans, opinions, and wishes, they believe God would approve. Those who are part of a church belonging to Christ ask, “Does the Bible say I can do it?” If we cannot find authority from God, then we do not have authority to act. Speech permits, silence prohibits.

Are there parallels in everyday life? Yes. For example, if you wanted to build a structure, many cities require “permits.” A permit gives permission. It is a written form of authority. Also consider the parent-child relationship. Let’s say a parent gives permission to their 12-year-old child to go to the mall. While there, they meet a friend of theirs who asks them to leave the mall and go to a party. Should they go before asking permission from you, the parent? As their parent, would you be upset if they thought, “Well, Mom and Dad didn’t say I couldn’t go…so yes, I’ll go!” Would you accept such reasoning within your family? Or would you require your child to get permission first?

We are our Heavenly Father’s children. We must likewise get permission before we act. The Bible is our “permit.”

Does the Bible support such a comparison? Absolutely. First of all, there is the very language of a father-son relationship. Children are to obey their parents. Children get permission from what parents say, not from what parents do not say.

More importantly, we have Jesus’ very own example with His – and our - Father. Jesus said, I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. John 5:30 If Jesus, Himself, could not judge something right without His Father’s approval, should we?

Have you noticed that oftentimes people claiming to see visions, or direct inspiration from God today, claim God is giving them permission to do something either not found in the Bible or directly and specifically contradictory to the Bible? That is the inferred admission that silence prohibits.

As you will learn later, this means we cannot do many things the denominational world does. But please do not be frustrated – be comforted. Be comforted in knowing that our Father approves of what we are doing. We have His word on it!

Speaking only when God speaks (1 Peter 4:11) makes us different; it makes us a church of Christ. (a church belonging solely to Christ)

Questions:
- If we only do what the N.T. shows us we can do, does that mean denominational churches will be doing many things the Bible does not authorize?
- What are some of those activities that you have not seen authority for from the N.T.?
- If we try to only do what the N.T. shows us we can do, does this mean we need to know the Bible?
- If the Bible is silent about denominations, should we be part of one?
- As a parent, do you want your children to get permission first?

Prayer: Entreat God for humility and patience to follow Him, believing He knows what is best.
#16 – Modesty

Have you ever seen anyone wear “loud” clothes? By that, we usually refer to colors and patterns. However, what we wear actually does speak volumes about who we are. Adam and Eve wore no clothes – and the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed (Genesis 2:25). Within them existed purity exhibited by little children. Then Adam and Eve sinned. Something awoke within causing them to cover themselves. They sewed fig leaves together (Genesis 3:7). God improved upon their effort: God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them (Genesis 3:21). Wearing clothes is a statement of self-awareness, an acknowledgement of our standing before God. And God approved of this.

Within the New Testament, clothes again make a statement about self-awareness. Women, and by implication men, are to dress in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety (1 Timothy 2:9 - KJV). The NASB reads, with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly. What does this mean? Should females wear bathing suits, cheerleader outfits, etc.? Should men/boys wear bathing suits, or go shirtless? What about shorts and skirts? How short is too short? How tight is too tight? Does God give us a specific dress code? No. But God does tell us to dress modestly and discreetly. Then how are we to decide?

The word modest (NASB) or shamefacedness (KJV) means, “a sense of shame or honor, modesty, bashfulness, reverence, regard for others, respect.” The word translated discreetly (NASB) or sobriety (KJV) means, “1) soundness of mind; 2) self-control, sobriety.” Since these definitions are not specific, but rather principled, how can we use them? Principles are not black and white; they need application by spiritual hearts. So while commands might be easier to follow, principles show the depth of our spirituality. Our dress should have a sense of shame (i.e. Adam and Eve); it should honor God; it should consider others; and it should think about what I am wearing. Are some things so tight and short that people show very little shame? How does what I wear affect others? Does it cause lustful thoughts? Is it considered “sensual” or “sexy?” These have no place outside the bedroom (Galatians 5:19).

Have you ever noticed that some people actually wear less outside their bedroom than in the bedroom? What am I thinking when choosing certain clothes? Are we dressing with the intention of attracting the opposite sex more by our bodies or our spirituality? (1 Peter 3:2-4)

This lesson is not so much about clothes as it is about spirituality. Whenever the New Testament speaks about modest and decent clothing, and its opposite, the emphasis is more on the person than the clothes. God always starts with the heart. So what are the specific guidelines? I can’t tell you. Why? Because I can’t make rules where God has not. He wants for us all to use our spirituality to make application to His rules. God wants our modesty within to control our modesty without. Personal applications should be simple. If we wear as little as the world, what does this say? The world is not trying to display what is inward, but what is outward. If we show more skin than clothes, what are we saying about ourselves? Because again, people will see what is shown. When putting on clothes, we need to ask, “Why am I wearing this?” “What do I want people to think about me?” “Who am I saying I am?” Some clothes are “louder” than others. What are our clothes saying about us?

Questions:
- In what ways do you think our clothes say who we are?
- Do you have any clothes you should not be wearing in public?

Prayer: Petition God to create within you a holiness that will help you decide what you should and should not wear.
Do you remember as a student, walking into class and hearing the teacher say, “Put your books away and get ready for a pop quiz!” Pop quizzes have ruined many a good grade. Why were these small little quizzes so detrimental? Most of us were unprepared.

Now that we have had our consciences cleaned (1 Peter 3:21), life will be filled with spiritual pop quizzes from our friends. Questions might vary from the sincere to the sarcastic. Queries from folks might create in you doubt or certainty.

As always, the Bible helps us out. 1 Peter 3:15 says, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; 16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

If we are to be ready to answer people’s questions, the first thing we must do is sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts. Studying without sanctifying is worthless. The word “sanctify” simply means to “set apart.” The very first thing we must do is set apart Jesus as our Lord. That means we are His. What we might know is meaningless, unless we also know Jesus.

Many questions that will come at the beginning are about why you did what you did. The change in your life will be that evident because all will see your good behavior. Remembering why you made Jesus your Lord will not require study because the reasons are so personal. Other questions might involve basics such as, “Why is baptism an immersion?” Memorize some of the reasons and be able to find the answers in your Bible – you might even want to write down scriptures in the front as a reminder. Unlike those pop quizzes, you do not have to put away your books! Some Christians keep Bibles in their cars and purses.

Still, there will always be questions people ask that you will not immediately know the answers to. This still happens to mature believers. Don’t be afraid or embarrassed, because I have an answer you can give to any of those types of questions: “I don’t know, but I will find out.” You might even be able to set up a Bible study with them. Be prepared for the questioner to say, “Never mind.” They might not have been that interested to begin with. If that happens, still study the question so you will be prepared the next time.

As you go back to 1 Peter 3:15, notice what is equally important to the answer – our attitude. This is where sanctifying Christ in our hearts really helps. We need to answer with gentleness and respect. We need to keep our conscience clean of bad attitudes.

Pop quizzes will come, but knowing your Bible will make every question an “open-book” test.

Questions:
- Why do you think it is important to sanctify Christ in our hearts first?
- What questions do you think your friends and family might ask? How can you prepare for these questions?
- Do you believe that all the answers you will need to find are in the Bible?

Prayer: Request of God that Jesus will be first in your life. Request that you may both study diligently and have the right attitude.
# The Power of Our Example

There is an old adage, “I would rather see a sermon, than hear one preached any day.” This is the power of our example. One old song cautions us, “We are the only Bible the careless world will read, we are the sinner’s gospel, we are the scoffers’ creed; we are the Lord’s last message given in deed and word, what if the type is crooked? What if the print is blurred? (The World’s Bible)

Guaranteed, if Christ lives in you, friends and family will see changes. This might excite them, make them curious or suspicious, and some might amazingly feel threatened. Your world has changed, and so will theirs.

The right example accomplishes much good. If you’re a husband, you might show more consideration for your wife’s needs as you follow Christ’s lead (Ephesians 5:25). If you are a wife, when your husband can see a greater respect for him and his role in marriage a great promise if given. Notice Peter’s hopeful words to wives, In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior (1 Peter 3:1). Even a child can show such a marked difference in attitude so as to lead a parent to Jesus. I have personally witnessed such!

The right example will lead to some bad experiences. Peter wrote, “In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excess of dissipation, and they malign you” (1 Peter 4:4). Remember, when you suffer for righteousness sake, it is actually a compliment. You are powerful because of your example.

The wrong example definitely will hurt God’s cause and us. When Peter acted hypocritically towards his Gentile brethren, the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, resulting in even Barnabas being carried away by their hypocrisy (Galatians 2:13). Be prepared, people will most often remember when we failed, more so than when we succeeded. Some will even show personal glee.

As you make decisions on what to do or not do, study the scriptures to see if God has given specific instructions. If not, look to see principles of living to guide you such as in the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). If you still are having a difficult time deciding what your example will do, remember the Golden Rule: “In everything therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you” (Matthew 7:12).

Most will never stand in the pulpit to preach a lesson, but every day your life is listened to as you preach by your example.

Questions:
- What examples by others in the past influenced you for good?
- What things in the past influenced you for bad?
- If we realize someone is always watching us, how will this affect our example?
- What attributes are necessary to make the right decision?

Prayer: Petition for wisdom to know the right thing to do, and courage to follow through.
#19 – How to Handle Errors of others and Personal Problems

People hurt us and we hurt them. Few things in life trouble us more than confrontations. Some avoid them; others act too hastily, mismanaging them. How can we handle differences?

We must first decide whether our friend sinned. If not, we must judge its importance. Is it simply a difference of opinion? Even if it is not sinful, we might desire to “clear the air.” In this, the right attitude must always prevail. Pride is a most dangerous attitude. Pride causes us to “hold a grudge” waiting for the other to make the first move. What are Jesus’ thoughts about this? 23 Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering (Mt 5:23-24). Whatever this something is does not matter. God’s priority is our relationships with each other.

If sin is the culprit, the Bible likewise gives instruction on confronting the problem. 15 “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 “But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. 17 “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. (Mt.18:15-17)

**Step #1** – 15 If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private from God’s Word. Don’t gossip, maligning your brother. Go directly to him. If you talk to others beforehand, make sure it is for advice, not to talk ill – and make sure it is someone spiritually mature who will keep your confidence. When approaching your friend, be able to prove his fault. The purpose in all this is simple; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. Going to those who sin against us is not for winning an argument. The one and only goal is winning them back to faithful service to God.

**Step #2** - 16 "But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. May I suggest anyone you received counsel from concerning this matter be chosen as a witness? Already being aware of the situation would limit the number of people involved. Why take witnesses? Facts, not fiction are the goal. These witnesses will confirm the sin, or else they might help you discover that you were mistaken. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to discover no one had actually sinned?

**Step #3** - “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.” More witnesses, and more peer pressure might be all that saves our brother or sister from their own self. Again notice the purpose – to get your friend to listen to the truth.

**Step #4** - “and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.” Jews considered Gentiles ceremonially unclean in Jesus’ day. A tax collector, people considered socially unacceptable. Sometimes withdrawing ourselves from someone’s life will shame him or her into repentance. Also possible is them missing our camaraderie and therefore changing. Love is powerful. Lastly, the reason we might have to separate ourselves from a friend is spiritual self-preservation (1 Corinthians 5).

When people hurt us, these biblical steps are meant to heal.

**Questions:**
- Why do you think Jesus gave us steps to follow?
- What should our feelings be towards someone who has sinned against us?

**Prayer:** It takes much love and self-control to approach people correctly, pray for such.
“You are what you eat,” is an old saying. Let’s amend it, “You are what you speak.” The King James Bible translated a word meaning behavior, as conversation - quite fitting, don’t you think?

Let’s look at James 3:2-12 for the most expansive teaching in the N.T. on language.

2 For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. Controlling the tongue is a life-long battle, but don’t feel too badly – it afflicts us all. There are many ways to stumble with the tongue. Be prepared, as you overcome one misuse, another might become a bad habit.

3 Now if we put the bits into the horses’ mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. 4 Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. Do you want to learn how to control every aspect of your life? Learn to control your tongue! Our tongues simply manifest what is in our minds.

5 So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. How much damage can a dropped lit match do in a forest? How many houses have been burned down and lives lost due to falling asleep while smoking?

7 For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. 8 But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. What is easier to tame, a wild lion and tiger, or our small little tongues? Isn’t this truth amazing? But don’t give up; don’t think all is hopeless, because the danger of giving up is too severe!

9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; 10 from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. We cannot turn around after praising God and then talk badly about Him. Please notice an implied lesson here – we are to praise God with our tongues. A bad habit too many have is to use their tongues to disrespect God by taking His name in vain. Don’t say, “Oh my God!” unless you are praying!

11 Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh. Just as a fruit tree produces after its kind, our words are our fruit. Like we said at the beginning, we are what we speak.

Questions:

- What are some ways to stumble with the tongue?
- How do you think “cussing” fits in with the use of the tongue? Is it proper for a Christian?
- Why do you think our tongues are so hard to control?
- What can we do to control our tongues?

Prayer: Thank God for the good uses of our tongues and for patience as you learn what not to say.
In choosing a Bible, ask the advice of brothers and sisters to discover what translations they trust and why. Basically there are three types:

- **Formal Equivalent** translations strive for a word for word literal translation, while remaining readable. Common examples of such are the King James Version; New King James Version; American Standard; and New American Standard. Since it is a word for word translation it is the most accurate type, but can require a higher reading level (i.e., 10th-12th grade). For serious study, this is the only kind of translation I recommend because it gets us closer to the words God actually used.

- **Dynamic Equivalent** translations aim towards producing a thought for thought translation, which involves more interpretation by the translators. Examples of such are the New International Version and New Century Version. There are many like this. Being less concerned with word for word accuracy allows a better flow into English while creating a less literal reading. My opinion is these are only for devotional reading, and one must be careful. Most of these show bias and lean toward being opinionated.

- **Paraphrases** are not technically translations. They are interpretations and opinions of what God meant. Stay away from these as they reflect more of what man thinks, than what God inspired. Only use these for comparison, or as a commentary.

After choosing a version, the next need is to choose an edition – this can be mind boggling as there are editions for almost every need (i.e., teen bibles, recovery bibles, study bibles, etc.) Again, talk to people you trust. I prefer a Bible with wide margins – I use my Bible as a notebook. Others prefer smaller versions for carrying around. Check out the cross references, study notes, and anything else that might be of interest. Always remember, though, that study aids within Bibles are man-made. Study Bibles can be helpful or dangerous, depending on who produced it. Do not make a hasty decision; this Bible may last you for decades and thus you are investing in your long-term spiritual growth.

Years ago, people had to buy lots of books, but nowadays, with the advent of computers, most everything you need for studying is found electronically. If you are computer literate, a “must have” program is “Power Bible” You can purchase it online at: www.powerbible.com. Here are some suggestions of what to look for in programs:

- **Concordances** are good for finding specific words. For example, if you wanted to find the word “baptism,” you look it up alphabetically. It will list all or some of the occurrences, depending on whether it is abridged or not. A practical choice is Strong’s Concordance.

- **Lexicons** define words. The most practical is Vine’s Expository of New Testament Words. Vine’s lists the English word as found in the King James Version, then it gives the Greek followed by a definition. Again, if you looked up “baptism,” the definition would include the fact it is an immersion.

- **Bible Dictionaries** are broader in scope than lexicons. Their use is topical. If you were to look up the word “baptism,” it might list types of baptism such as John’s Baptism or Holy Spirit baptism. Depending on the depth of the book, it might give a history, etc.

Commentaries are simply someone’s interpretation. They can be helpful and useful, or dangerous, because they are man-made. Personally, I do not recommend new Christians to study with commentaries.

All of these are important tools, but the most important tools are prayer, and a willingness to learn (John 7:17).

**Questions:**

- Why is it important to have study tools?
- What are some personal habits to develop?

**Prayer:** Give yourself in prayer to desire never to stop learning and growing from God’s words.
Weekly review and discussion questions.

Day / Lesson

15 What are some areas that you have questions?
Give an example of specific authority in command in the Bible.
Give an example of authority being established in the Bible by principle.
How can influence make something wrong?

16 Do you have questions about the modesty of a specific style or kind of clothing?
If so what kind?

17 What questions have come up about your obedience to Christ so far?
What questions do you think will come up soon?

18 Please read these other foundational passages:
1 Cor. 4-8. Are we to love our enemies this way?
Eph. 4b (last half of chapter) and 5 a first half of chapter. List your weakest points from this list of sins we should be putting off.

19 What does “admonish mean? What does reproof mean?
2 Tim. 3:16 How should we approach someone about their sin?

20 Read Col. 4:6. Try to memorise the first phrase from it. Now from memory write it down here: ___

21 Do you have a good study Bible yet?
Places to find inexpensive Bibles: Scripturetruth.com
Christianbook.com
It’s alright to be angry, if we have a right to and if we do not allow our anger to make us sin. The Holy Spirit guided Paul to write, **BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an (Lit., a place) opportunity**" (Ephesians 4:26-27).

The Greek word for anger itself is derived from *thuein*, meaning to boil. Our English word, anger, also etymologically reaches back to the Greek, and has the same history as another English word, angina. The common meaning is *squeeze*. Angina is any inflammatory disease of the throat, especially one characterized by spasmodic suffocation. When people get angry, their blood “boils” and they are “inflamed” with anger. They feel like they are going to suffocate unless they express their anger by exploding verbally or physically.

Since we have permission to be angry, we must make sure it is for the right reason. This is where we look at the example of Jesus (John 2:13-22). Although the word anger is not used, most would agree that this is definitely an expression of anger. In this text we learn one of the keys to understanding where righteous anger comes from. This key is found in v.17, **ZEAL FOR THY HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME.** Zeal for God kindles anger. It also tempers it. This is the key to understanding if our anger is one of righteous indignation, or rather, selfish feelings.

Remember, this is just one of the keys. In this lesson, I am not attempting to explain all the reasons, both good and bad, for people getting angry. Some food for thought, though, is that anger is different from frustration.

Even when anger is for the right reason, there is still the danger of it leading to sin. How do we keep from having anger lead to sin? The text gives us at least one answer. **Do not let the sun go down on your anger.** Why? Prolonged anger gives the devil an opportunity because we have not controlled our problem, but the problem is controlling us. This is exactly the opposite of the thinking of many. They believe if they can just hold in their anger and not let it escape, they have conquered it. Instead, their insides are “boiling,” and often the proverbial straw will break the emotional camel’s back, leading one to be angry at that which one has no right to be.

Here is a simple three-step process for being angry, but not sinning:
1) **What** - Ask ourselves, “Am I truly angry?” Many emotionally impaired people confuse their emotions. Many confuse anger with frustration, exasperation or confusion. Many don’t even know there is a difference. Think, if we have no control over the situation, such as a red light, should we be angry? No. Can we be frustrated? Yes.
2) **Why** - Ask ourselves, “Is my anger born of love and righteousness?”
3) **How** - After discovering whether or not we are truly angry, and then discovering if we have the right to be angry, we then must ask how to handle the anger without sinning.

**Questions:**
- What are some things that make you angry?
- How do you usually handle your anger?

**Prayer:** Learning to be Godlike, even in anger, is a goal to ask God to help you accomplish.
#23 - Two Most Important Decisions

What are the two most important decisions we ever make? Arguably and specifically, they are becoming a Christian and whom to marry. While true, let us broaden and generalize our perspective and intent of this question. What are the two most important decisions we will ever make? 1) The decision we make before we make a decision and 2) The decision we make after we make a decision. Let's elaborate by citing two examples.

Nebuchadnezzar decreed all were to fall down and worship the golden image that (he) had made (Daniel 3:5). Inspiration holds up three men as examples – Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Risking their lives, they refused to worship this false god. Punishment for this disobedience was extreme and final: whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire (Daniel 3:6). Upon discovery, they were charged with a crime against the king.

Nebuchadnezzar actually showed two good traits in this along side his bad ones: 1) He wanted to get all the facts (3:14) and 2) He gave his three administrators (2:49) a second chance. These good traits might have actually been used by Satan to weaken these three men. Do you see how easy it could have been for Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to succumb this second time? This king employed them, maybe even was a friend of theirs. Plus, they could have lied they didn’t know about the command or hear the music that directed all to fall down (3:4-5). When given a second chance, can you imagine the intense pressure by being in the very presence of the king? Easily this could have been too much. Many excuses could be given for and by these three stalwarts of faith. Yet they responded, O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter (3:16). Why? The king knew, and they knew; they had already made the decision before they were asked to make a decision. How often would we stay out of trouble, not miss worship services, be faithful to friends and God, choose good local churches, not begin nasty habits, if beforehand we made the decision what we would do if ever confronted with that temptation?

Equally important is the decision we make after we make a bad decision. If we failed to prepare ourselves by making a decision prior to the temptation, thereby being weak and falling, we now have an equally important decision. Will we make the decision to repent? Let’s face it, we are all going to fail at some point (Romans 3:23), some more than others, sometimes more often than other times. What decision do we make after we sin? Will we allow our consciences to become seared (1 Timothy 4:2)? One of the most famous examples of someone making the right decision after making the wrong one is David. Few Christians have ever compounded sin upon sin like David: adultery, deceit, murders – and there were more. Yet when confronted by Nathan (2 Samuel 12), David responded with the right decision: I have sinned against the LORD (2 Samuel 12:13).

Both decisions are important, but for different reasons. The first keeps us out of sin and trouble; the second rescues us from sin and trouble. Each is equally important.

Questions:
- What situations can you foresee that you can make decisions for now? Some might include dating, jobs, friends, habits, marriage, church attendance, etc.
- Which decision do you personally find easier, the decision that keeps you out of trouble, or the decision that gets you out of trouble?
- What resources, tools and people can we use in making both types of decisions?

Prayer: Thank God for the strength and wisdom from Him that helps us make the right decisions, and for His grace when we make the wrong ones.
Reading is important, but there is a difference between reading and understanding (Acts 8: 26-31). We all should read our Bible as often as possible, but real studying cannot be done when we only have a free moment, as reading can be. Real studying takes time, and we must set aside time to do it.

**How to Understand** - There is a simple study method everyone can use to help them understand God’s word. There is nothing special about this method. In fact, it is not even particularly religious. It is the same method reporters use when writing a story. It is the same method you use when reading the newspaper. This method is called the Inductive Study Method. It will make you very familiar with God’s word. As you read, look for Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How. Using this method makes even difficult passages more manageable. Not every passage will have every question answered, but usually the greater context will supply the answers. For example, let’s look at John 3:16 - “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” Look for every “who” in this verse, and you’ll find God, the world (that’s you and me) Jesus, and those who believe. Look for “what” and we discover we must believe so that we can have “what” – eternal life. Believing is not only a “what” but it is also a “why” and a “how.” Believing is why we do not perish, plus it explains how we receive eternal life. Another “why” is God’s love. That is why He sent His Son. Remember to use this method when studying. It takes diligence, as real study does, but it is simple.

**How to Apply** - We have all heard of the 3 “R’s,” Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. In order to apply the scripture, and actually make studying more enjoyable and profitable, I would like for you to remember another set of 3 “R’s”:

- **Remember** – God’s Word is Real. Biblical accounts are not fairy tales (2 Peter 1:16). They are real history filled with real people. Find the humanity within the story. Make it real within your own mind. Picture these as real people. They are as real as those in the news and living next door. Imagine the pressure Peter felt when asked if he knew Jesus after His arrest (Luke 22:54ff). What thoughts must have been going through Peter’s mind? What emotions?

- **Relive** the Story. Put yourself in the story. Relive it as if you were there personally. What would you have done and felt if you were this character? How would you have felt, for example, if you were Peter? You had just denied Jesus three times, and the scriptures say, The Lord turned and looked at Peter (Luke 22:61). Imagine being Peter and having the Lord turn and look at you.

- **Recast** the story into today. What would this story look like if it happened today? Recast the situation into something you have experienced. What would these sins look like in real life today? What would these heroic actions look like on the six o’clock news? Again, we’ll take the example of Peter’s denial. How do people deny the Lord today? What situations might cause you to weaken?

Making the Bible come alive by understanding it and applying it is the best and only way to keep you interested in it.

**Questions:**
- Choose a passage you recently read or heard about in a class or sermon and study it using the inductive study method.
- What are some of your favorite biblical characters and why?

**Prayer:** Request of God that you will always remember He is real, and with you every day.
#25 Works of the Flesh; Fruit of the Spirit

Being born again, many changes to your life will come. Some have harder changes than others because of their previous life-styles. There will be some new Christians that lived basically moral lives, while others, to use a colloquial term, were “wild.” Jesus died because sin is sin.

In beginning your new life, some changes will be subtle. Others might involve huge alterations. Listen to this list, which is called, the works of the flesh. Some are what we might consider, “wild,” while other are prevalent within daily life. All these sins are considered obviously wrong – evident (5:19) - although many habitually practice them: Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality [sexual relations with someone you are not married to], impurity [impure sexual thoughts], sensuality [sexual acts short of fornication], [20] idolatry [false gods including putting anything before God, which includes money], sorcery [witchcraft, astrology, horoscopes], enmities [hate], strife [causing trouble], jealousy [wanting what others have to the degree that you become unhappy], outbursts of anger [includes our words, tone, and attitudes], disputes [unnecessary and wrongful arguing], dissensions [making people angry with each other], factions [causing division among people], [21] envying [wanting what other people have to the point of wishing they did not have it], drunkenness [including any kind of intoxication including drugs], carousing [wild partying], and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21)

Do you see the outcome for those who live according to the flesh? Jesus died because He did not want us to live such a life. Jesus died because He knew some of us lived this way, but wanted to change. Let us never go back to such a lifestyle. These are called the works of the flesh, because they are the opposite of God and because they are what people who are not spiritually minded want to do. These kinds of sins are obviously wrong, and we should know better. These sins are seen everyday on T.V., in the movies, and in real life. We once lived in that world, but decided we wanted something better. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions (Galatians 5:24).

After this dangerous list of sins, Paul then gives another list – the fruit of the Spirit: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23).

These are called the fruit of the Spirit, because they are the result of becoming spiritually minded. This is the Holy Spirit living within us. This is our new life. No, our new life will not always be easy, but it will be better. You will be happier with yourself and God will be happier with you. Because of that, you will be happy in this life and for eternity in God’s kingdom.

Questions:
- Which of the works of the flesh have you committed?
- Which ones are more difficult for you to control?
- What might these sins look like in real life? That is, what might impurity and sensuality look like? Might this be seen in the way we dress, or talk, or what movies we watch?
- Can you think of what “things like these” might include?
- What are some ways to become more abundant in the fruit of the Spirit?

Prayer: Making a change is difficult; pray that you will always have the desire to change whatever is necessary in order to become more spiritually minded.
Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come. And when I arrive, whomever you may approve, I shall send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:1ff).

What do we learn from these three verses about the collection?

1) It is for the saints - One purpose of the contribution is to help needy saints. There is no verse in the Bible that teaches the church is to take up a collection for those who are not saints. That is a duty that each individual is responsible to comply with, instead of it coming from the contribution. (Galatians 6:10). From other scriptures, we learn other uses for the contribution. The work of the church consists of evangelism, including anything related to such activity (Philippians 4:15). Also involved within this sphere is edification, which is building up the saints spiritually to help them to grow. Again, materials needed for such activities are included, such as song books and even a building to meet in since we are commanded to meet together (Hebrews 10:25). The last work that can be scripturally supported out of the church treasury is helping needy saints (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). It is important to use the money given only for scripturally approved works. As stewards, it is necessary to make sure the money is used. God never intended churches to gather money, but rather to gather souls.

2) as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also - There are certain practices that you should find in every church that is of Christ. It is not because churches have an earthly headquarters, but because we have an earthly revelation from the heavenly headquarters.

3) On the first day of every week - Not only is this a weekly part of our service to God, it is on the first day of the week. This is why we do this on Sunday, only on Sunday, and every Sunday.

4) as he may prosper - Common in the language of denominationalism is the word tithe meaning “a tenth.” The new covenant does not teach us to tithe, but rather our giving is based upon our prospering. How do we calculate our prospering? Read also 2 Cor. 9:6-7 and it will help you figure this one out.

5) that no collections be made when I come - Some interpret the phrase, put aside and save (i.e. lay by and store) to not refer to a collection by the church, but a private savings. A problem I have with that interpretation is, then wouldn’t Paul then had to have made a collection when he came?

6) whomever you may approve - While the word autonomous is not used in scripture, nevertheless the concept is there. One church cannot tell another church what to do; in Corinth, even Paul didn’t assume to choose their messenger. This also shows congregational involvement in decisions. While overseers have the final say, they want and need your involvement.

7) carry your gift - Many Christians keep talking about the contribution as a responsibility or obligation. If we study the background of this contribution (2 Corinthians 8-9 gives more information), we learn Paul never commands them to give. What is commanded in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 is the day the collection is made. Our giving is a gift that we beg to give.

Questions:

- What do you think was the secret to giving in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5?
- What does 2 Corinthians 9:7 say about how we are to give?
- What does 1 Corinthians 16:2 say about how much we are to give?
- What day is mentioned as the acceptable day to give to the church treasury?

Prayer: Ask God to help you see how blessed you are, which will help you to give.
#27 – A Study of How Understanding Authority Makes Us Different

Walking into the church building is shocking for some; not so much by what is here - pews, classrooms, songbooks - but by what is not here. Notice I didn’t say, “what is missing.” That would imply they belonged. So what is not here? Statues, Pianos, Kitchens & Gymnasiums.

Nowadays, many “churches” have gone into the entertainment business. Some only have kitchens thinking gymnasiums unscriptural. Although paying for the kitchen from the church treasury, some don’t pay for the meals from the treasury. Those having both amenities argue they both stand or fall together.

Why is there no kitchen? There are four things to consider in establishing authority (i.e. the right to act).

1) Precept/Command/Statement - As a church, we are commanded to meet together (Hebrews 10:25), not to eat together.

2) Examples commended by God - In the N.T. hospitality (i.e. eating together) was practiced as part of the home (i.e. today in parks, homes, etc.), not as part of the church’s work. In Acts 2:46 they worshiped in the temple but went from house to house to eat their meals.

3) Necessary Implication - Being told “not to forsake the assembling together” (Hebrews 10:25), plus numerous examples, implies a place to meet, hence a “meeting house.” Being authorized, we can use the treasury to pay for it. If eating is not part of our assembling, we don’t need a kitchen.

4) Silence – We must respect God’s silence. God is silent on assembling to eat a lunch, eating together as part of our “church work,” and about a need for a kitchen. We already have plenty in our homes.

Two congregations let their desire to eat overcome their command to meet. One group, during the assembly, announced that during the Lord’s Supper, a group who had previously taken it, would cook the meal - cooking during communion?

The other was even worse. So blatant in their dishonor of Christ’s Supper, they turned it into a regular meal. Someone chastised their actions. He told them to eat in their houses (1 Cor.11:22). I know the Corinthians didn’t have a kitchen, but the point is to separate how the individual works within the church and how the individual functions at home.

We don’t have a piano. Are we too poor? Are we not musically inclined? The reason we do not have an instrument is that, the N.T. doesn’t authorize it [Point #4 above]; God doesn’t give permission. Objectors point to the O.T. Are we a N.T. people, or an O.T. people? Are we Christians or Israelites? Did Jesus come to build His church (Matthew 16:18)?

Unlike many churches, we don’t have a gymnasium. People euphemistically coin these “Enrichment Centers” or “Family Life Centers.” That sounds more scriptural than calling it a gymnasium but is it? We don’t have a gym for the same reason we don’t have a piano. God is silent on the subject; therefore, we have no N.T. authority. Search for a command, necessary implication, or example for a congregation to use its contribution for such? Exercise our bodies at home. Church exercises our souls (1 Timothy 4:8).

Why no kitchen? The reasoning is the same for not having a piano or gym. Where do we find permission (i.e., authority) for a kitchen? God is not silent on the treasury being used for evangelism (Philippians 4:15); edification (1 Corinthians 9:11); and needy saints (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). We are commanded to meet together (Hebrews 10:25) as a church, which is the authority to build a building. While N.T. Christians often ate together, I assume played together also, where is the authority for this to be paid for from the treasury? Is there even one example where the church came together as a church to eat a common meal? Some will build a kitchen with church funds but not buy the food with the same money. If you can do one, why can’t you do both? Notice an example in the very beginning: And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together. (Acts 2:46) They separated worship from common meals. A preacher told me that eating together was such an intricate part of church life that it would be scriptural to have a spaghetti dinner in between the contribution and the Lord’s Supper. If common meals are not part of our worship (1 Cor.11:17ff) and if the church’s treasury is part of our worship, shouldn’t it be separated from our common meals also?

Instrumental music is wonderful in the proper place and purpose; bodily exercise is profitable; and I love eating with my brethren. Let’s not confuse our personal freedoms with how the treasury should be used. Why? We do not have God’s permission!

Questions: Name some other ways we are to show respect to God’s authority.

Prayer: Pray asking the Lord to help you to know who and how to show the necessary respect for the various authorities in your life.
I wish there was a clear and simple verse directly condemning gambling, which includes the Lotto. The only difference between the Lotto and poker is that one is approved by the state. I wonder how many play the lotto but condemn other forms of gambling? Lotto is called the “Poor Man’s Tax.” If a Christian does play, and wins the Lotto, they win the money of many who cannot afford to lose. Spiritually, that is troubling.

Why isn’t there a clear and simple verse condemning gambling? Maybe God wants to see if we can learn spiritual lessons from principles without being given an explicit and direct command for everything. Before buying a lotto ticket, think about a few things.

**Stewardship** - Everything we have is God’s - *no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions (Luke 14:33)*. This precondition is for all who decide to follow Jesus. Everything we have is Gods and on loan to us. Are we being a good steward of God’s money? Remember, we are spending money borrowed from God when we gamble by purchasing a lotto ticket. Scriptures teach I work for God (Colossians 3:23), that all my possessions are ultimately His. If I gamble, ultimately, whose money am I gambling with?

**Greed** - What are our plans for our...er, God’s winnings...if we perchance win? Are we gambling away God’s dollar to give back to Him five more? Is this our take on the parable of the talents (Matthew 25)? Are we chancing losing God’s dollar to return to God millions? Are we already planning on what preachers to support overseas, whose doctor bills to pay, what orphans and widows to support? We won’t be able to use the excuse that we personally need the money to live on. After all, we were willing to take a chance on losing the money to begin with! Someone observed, *People who can afford to gamble don’t need money, and those who need money can’t afford to gamble.*

Listen to the following admonition from God’s Word: **But those who want to get rich** [Why did you buy that lotto ticket? Did you want to get rich?] **fall into temptation** [Are you tempting yourself?] **and a snare** [Are you purposely walking into a trap?] **and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction**. [Are you willing to take a chance on taking a chance?] **For the love of money** [Are you planning on giving away all the winnings?] **is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it** [Ask yourself again why you are buying that lotto ticket?] **have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang.** (1 Timothy 6:9-10)

I wish there was a clear and simple verse condemning gambling. Personally, God has given me enough guidance to make a clear and simple decision. How about you?

**Questions:**
- If we have enough money to gamble with, do we need to pray, *Give us this day our daily bread* (Matthew 6:11)?
- Why do you think many Christians will play the lotto but condemn other forms of gambling?
- Can you think of other areas where God has not given a specific prohibition, but expects us to apply His principles?

**Prayer:** Ask God for wisdom to know how to apply His principles for living righteously?
Weekly review and discussion questions.

Day / Lesson

22 List the top three things that make you angry?

   A. Is it truly anger on each
   B. Why angry?
   C. How do I handle each?
   D. How should I handle each?

23 Did you read the story of David? If not, please do so now. Then read Psa. 51 where he repents. Our goal is to have that kind of penentant heart when we sin. List some key phrases from Psa. 51 that shows his heart.

24 A. What were the two tools brought out in this days lesson?

   When studying we are to look for…

   W________ W________ W________ W________ W________ H________

B. What were the three “R”s of Bible Study?

C. Have you practiced these since the lesson?

25 Which of these works of the flesh do you struggle with the most?

26 When we give each 1st day of the week, should we consider it a thithe?

   … an obligation? … a grateful gift?

27 A. What 4 guidelines should we consider when seeking to establish authority from God’s Word?

   B. What are somethings that God is silent on, that clearly would be wrong?

28 Have you ever bought a lotto ticket?

What did you see from this days lesson how that could be wrong?
Although oversimplifying, there are three types of churches common today: Denominational; Interdenominational; Non-Denominational (or Un-Denominational). Many are unaware of the differences and are spiritually endangering their souls.

**What is a denomination?** While there are many nuances, the two foundational factors are name and organization. The organization is a collection of local churches making up the whole denomination. As a quarter is a denomination of money, a local Baptist Church is part of the Baptist Denomination. Also, to denominate is to name. For example, the Catholic Church is the largest and oldest denomination. It is a collection of local churches organized ultimately under a Pope in Rome. Also, they have made their denomination and called themselves as the "Roman Catholic Church." Denominations are conspicuously missing in the Bible. Some have used Jesus' discussion of many branches and one vine as authority. However, the branches are individuals, not churches (Jn.15). Two simple questions I like to ask people are, "Are there any denominations in the New Testament recorded in the Bible?" Most answer, "No." "Then why be part of one?"

**What is an interdenomination?** This is a hybrid between denominations and nondenominations. Correctly, they sometimes do not have universally accepted names, nor have most organized into collections of churches. Therefore according to name and organization, they are non-denominational; but their attitude towards denominations is one of acceptance. Their members sometimes still retain denominational ties. They are filled with Presbyterians, Catholics, Baptists, etc. Also, very little doctrine is emphasized. Any baptism is usually accepted as long as one "believes" in Jesus. While we must believe in Jesus, we must also believe in what Jesus taught (Mt.28:20).

**What is a non-denomination?** This is the biblical approach. The Bible never denominates a name for churches ("church of Christ" is a description, not a name, similarly we are part of the church of God, in that we belong to God); and the only organization is local (i.e. overseers and deacons). If denominations are foreign to the Bible, then we should not be one, nor accept them as scriptural. Our claim is that we are non-denominational. Some outsiders misunderstand that to mean we accept all beliefs. While we are patient with one another, we are working toward unity speaking only what God speaks (1 Cor.1:10).

In conclusion, being denominational is unscriptural; likewise being interdenominational is wrong. However, being non-denominational is only part of what makes church biblical. We must study so we can live the life of Christ and know the teachings of Christ. In that way, we will truly be a church of Christ.

[Here are fifteen questions all with the same answer]

1. What denominational church did Jesus establish when He said, "I will build My church?" (Matt. 16:18)
2. What denominational church does the Bible say Christ gave some to be "apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers...?" (Eph. 4:11)
3. What denominational church were the letters of Romans, 1st & 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1st & 2nd Thessalonians written to?
4. What denominational church organization is found in the Bible?
5. The letters of Titus and 1st & 2nd Timothy were written to preachers of what denomination?
6. Which denominational church did Jesus promise to return for and save in heaven?
7. The Book of Acts is the early church history of what denominational church?
8. What passage in the Bible teaches the popular modern idea, "Join the church of your choice."
9. When God inspired Paul to write, "there is one body" and "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body," which denomination was God describing? (Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 12:13)
10. If you are a member of a denomination, which denomination did the Bible tell you to join?
11. Of which denominational church is Jesus the "head"? (Eph. 4:15; Col.1:18)
12. Of which denomination were each of the seven churches of Asia mentioned in Revelation chapters 1-3?
13. What denominational church did the apostles join?
14. What denominational church did the Lord add saved people to in Acts 2:37-46?
15. Which denominational church should you join? Answer: NONE!

**Prayer:**
That God can use you to help those you know to come to the Lord and escape that which is not of God and will condemn them for an eternity.
#30 – When Is Jesus Coming Back?

“When is Jesus coming back?” If there is an event more speculated about than the Second Coming, I do not know what it is. When He comes mankind on earth will end. (2 Peter 3:10-14)

William Miller, founder of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, specified the year, month and day of the Lord’s appearance - March 21, 1843. After his failure, the embarrassed Miller refigured and set Oct. 22, 1844. We’re still here!

Joseph Smith Jr., who founded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, in 1835 announced the Lord was nigh and that 56 years should wind up the scene. Smith, did not live to see that his guess of 1891 was wrong - he was shot to death in disgrace in a Carthage, MO jail in 1844. We’re still here!

In 1891 Charles Taze Russell, founder of the Jehovah’s Witnesses denomination, did not announce a future date for the Second Coming, but declared Jesus already had come invisibly in October 1874 – that makes it harder to prove him wrong, doesn’t it! Russell later changed the date of Jesus’ coming from 1874 to another invisible coming in 1914. We’re still here!

Russell’s successor, Joseph F. Rutherford, published in 1920 a tract titled Millions Now Living Will Never Die announcing Jesus’ coming would be in 1925 and that the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would be seen on the earth. His disciples bought a dream mansion, Beth Sarim, House of Princes, in San Diego to honor the patriarchs. Rutherford lived in the home until his death in 1942, and then the house was sold. We’re still here!

Nathan Knorr, Rutherford’s successor, set the date for Jesus’ return on Sept.5, 1975. Oct.31. We’re still here!

After the failure of five dates by the leaders of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, it is no wonder that in November 1995, the current spokesman for the group, Robert Jackson, gives no new guess, but simply says, “We are living in the time of the end.” We’re still here!

Hal Lindsey wrote that Christ would return within 40 years of 1948 (The Late Great Planet Earth, pp.53-54). Moreover, Lindsey foretold what he himself would experience when Christ would appear: “I was driving down the freeway and all of a sudden the place went crazy...cars going in all directions...and not one of them had a driver. I mean it was wild.” (p.125).

Another self-made prophet, Harold Whisenant, following Lindsey’s lead on the 1988 date, published, 88 Reasons Why Christ Will Come Back in 1988. We’re still here!

No doubt, someone will predict each and every year as the end, until there is finally an end. Read 2 Peter 3:8-18, and ask yourself, “Can anyone predict when a thief is coming?” Sometimes I think God keeps delaying simply because foolish men keep guessing. Until that time, we’re still here!

Questions:
- Why do you think God has not told us when the end of the world is?
- Since we do not know when, how does 2 Peter 3:8-18 help us?

Prayer: When you pray, ask for the kind of heart that looks forward to seeing Jesus.
“Psst….Do you want to know a secret?” Everyone loves secrets. The secrets I am about to tell you are directly from the Holy Spirit. In inspiring the book of Hebrews, the Holy Spirit gives us one secret to staying faithful. Just to give you a little history: By faith Abraham, when he was called by God to move, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. [9] By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise (Hebrews 11:8-9). Now notice what He says about Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob: And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return (Hebrews 11:15).

What was the secret that kept them believing in the promise of God, even though times got difficult? They did not allow themselves the option to even think about the former country as their home! They didn’t look backwards. When you do not allow yourself options, decisions are easy. Don’t give yourself the option to stop praying, stop reading, and stop attending. Don’t give yourself the option to stop.

While the first secret to staying saved is, “Don’t think about the past,” the second secret to staying saved is, “Do think about the past.” No, I am not talking about our past life prior to becoming a Christian, but rather the past when we became a Christian. Let’s look at 2 Timothy 1:6-14 - For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. [7] For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. [8] Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, [9] who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, [10] but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, [11] for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. [12] For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. [13] Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. [14] Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

As Paul is encouraging Timothy to rekindle his faith, he is asking him to remember the grace that he received from Jesus.

- Do you remember what it cost Jesus to save us?
- Do you remember how you felt before you were baptized into Jesus Christ?
- Do you remember the joy, as you were reborn?

So what are the two secrets?
1. Don’t look back at your old life with longing.
2. Do look back at your new life with love.

Questions:
- What other “secrets” can you think of that will help you stay saved?
- What other lessons can you learn from 2 Timothy 1:6-14?

Prayer: Thank God for not only saving you, but also showing you how to stay saved.
I hated English in High School and College, but that was before I discovered how much fun it can be. Now that you are new in Christ, most likely you will be hearing new definitions to old words. This can be fun.

For example, what is a geek? Most define geek synonymously with nerd: someone unsophisticated or uncool. Although both geek and nerd are "Americanisms," they are not synonyms according to Webster's Dictionary. "Geek" is one of the most improperly used words in the English language. According to an authority, geek means "a performer of grotesque or depraved acts in a carnival, etc., such as biting off the head of a live chicken." (Webster's). The dictionary does not define it as a nerd.

What is the point? If a word is continuously and incorrectly used and heard, it often loses the original meaning - and a new, sometimes completely unrelated, definition appears. Be honest, did you know the correct definition of geek? I didn't!

Now let's make the application. In religion, there are plenty of words that have changed meaning because of misuse and ignorance. These are old words, whose definition might be new, but in reality, they are old definitions because they are the original ones! Having fun yet?!

**Church** - Never in scripture, is the word church used to describe a building. It always refers to people. In a N.T. dictionary the definition is "an assembly." A church is people. Jesus died for people (Ephesians 5:25), not for buildings.

**Faith** - So many in today's religious world acquaint faith with mental acquiescence. In Bible times, saving faith was an obedient faith (Romans 1:5). For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead (James 2:26).

**Elder** - Have you ever met a Mormon "elder" ...was he younger than most college graduates?! Some words should need no extensive challenge to correct erring definitions. This word should be that plain. In the Bible, an elder is the same as the Pastor, Bishop, Overseer, Presbyter, and Shepherd (1 Peter 5:1-4). As an aside, the only "Arch Bishop" is Jesus because He is the "Chief Shepherd" (1 Peter 5:4).

**Pastor** - Most often, people today equate the Pastor with the preacher. The word "Pastor" occurs only once in standard translations (Ephesians 4:11), where it is distinguished from the work of an evangelist. An evangelist is a minister or preacher, not the Pastor. Most people consider Timothy a Pastor, but Paul said, But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry (2 Timothy 4:5). And as we saw in Ephesians 4:11, a pastor is not necessarily an evangelist.

**Saint** - According to the Catholic Church, a saint only becomes a saint after their canonization which is long after the candidate's death. Funny, Paul must have written the book of Romans to a group of dead, canonized Christians, to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Baptism** - Every Greek (not geek) dictionary defines baptism as an immersion. Even used metaphorically, baptism is a burial (Col.2:12).

In summary, if you have to choose between the world's definition's and God's - always choose God's.

1Pe 4:11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. (NKJV)

Questions
1. What terms have you heard or read that you would like to know more about?
2. Which of the terms above would you wish to discuss in fuller detail?

Prayer:
With all the new terms and instructions on how to talk, it might be good to begin praying about how to use your tongue according to God's will. Col. 4:6; 1 Peter 3:15.
In Acts 3, Peter and John, by the power of God, heal a beggar, lame for forty years. No doubt, an awesome sight to behold. Connecting this healing power to Jesus’ resurrection angered some embittered rivals of Jesus - the Sadducees - who were “sad, you see,” for the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angels, nor a spirit (Acts 23:8).

These doctrinally wrong, but politically correct, Jewish leaders arrested Jesus' apostles. “Why?” After relating the history of these people, someone made the astute observation via the form of a question - “Why didn’t they just go to the tomb?” Great question! Anyone doubting the resurrection could have gone to the empty tomb. The tomb represented the truth, a truth coming directly from God. Why didn’t they just go to the source of truth? Because they didn’t want truth. Even if they had gone, if they wished to disbelieve, then disbelieve they would. Opened eyes never see if the heart is closed and blind.

Life hasn’t changed much, has it? Today, anyone can go to our source of truth - the Bible. Just as the empty tomb was from God, so is the Bible. Today’s Bible is yesterday’s tomb. How often have people believed error, when all they need to do is go to the source, the Bible? And if they do go, why do people not believe what they read? Why do we not believe? Do I really need to tell you?

Remember, our God-given source for truth is not our feelings, sincerity, traditions, or anything else related to ourselves. Why? Each of those are wrong sources because they all originate with people? Have you ever been sincerely wrong? Yes. Has God? NO.

Jacob sincerely believed the lie that his son Joseph was dead. He felt all the anguish as if the lie were true (Genesis 37:35-36). Just because Jacob sincerely believed the lie, and even experienced the emotions based upon that lie that did not make it correct or true.

Pharisees taught many traditions, yet Jesus quoted Isaiah saying, Matthew 15:9, 'But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.' Traditions of men are not of God. Why is there so much disagreement among denominations? Isn’t part of it, all the traditions that each denomination holds to be true?

Remember, when people disagree, either one is right and the other is wrong, or both are wrong. It is impossible for both to be right. Why? Because God is truth, and truth comes from God. What makes truth true? Is it not God Himself?

Remember, go to the source!

Questions:

- What is required in order for us to learn the truth?
- What feelings and traditions that you once held to be true are false?

Prayer: Humbly submit your will to God’s as He is the source for ultimate truth.
#34 What To Do When Depressed

Yes, even Christians sometimes get depressed. “Depression should be considered an opportunity to develop your relationship with God.” The Bible is an instruction booklet. Please read 1 Kings 18-19.

Most every reason for depression, whether it be loss of job, or loved one; feeling unappreciated or useless; long-term illness; financial setback; dismantling of a goal or project, all come under: *A major disappointment (or change in life).* This major disappointment can come in all aspects of life, whether in jobs, families, friends, or church. While that is not a revelation, it is important to realize the reason in order to reconstruct our life. Elijah had high expectations after his showdown with the 450 Baal prophets. He suffered a major disappointment at the hands of Jezebel (19:2-3). God helped him and He can help us.

When Elijah got depressed, he sought false solutions (19:4-5). 1) Elijah wanted to die. Elijah never went so far as to take his own life (i.e., suicide), but he did believe life was not worth it. He did ask, "Why should I live?" 2) He tried to run away from the problem (19:4). His flight was motivated mainly by fear. Fear and depression often go hand-in-hand. 3) He slept (19:5). Depression often makes us weak physically and spiritually. Sleeping can be way to ignore and run-away from the cause of the depression.

Elijah also felt alone (19:10). No Christian is alone – God is there. When depressed, we feel the world is against us. We always need to, no matter the situation, let others know we are there.

Elijah even forgot God’s blessings (19:2,10) For three years and six months, God provided life for Elijah during the famine. God even used Elijah as an instrument to bring a boy back to life. And let’s not forget about the victorious contest on Mt. Carmel!

So what are the remedies?

1) **Refresh Yourself (vv.5-8).** Rest and nourishment are important if they help us face the problem.

2) **Go to Mountain of God (v.8).** Our mountain of God consists of the church - the people of God. Our mountain of God consists of prayer, reading, studying, anything to get closer to God. Seek our brethren who you respect who can also help much.

3) **Observe Nature (19:11-12).** Where did Elijah find God? He found Him in the "sound of a gentle blowing" (KJV - "a still small voice"). When you take a walk in nature: You are impressed with the power of God; You perceive the love of God; You realize God cares more about you than all of His wonderful creation around you.

4) **Pray (19:14)** Why is prayer so profitable when we are depressed: Tell our problems to One who can Solve them - like Elijah; Tell our problems to One who Cares (1 Peter 5:7); Tell our problems to One who Understands (Hebrews 4:15-16).

5) **Read Word of God (vv.15-18).** Elijah discovered that God will take vengeance on those who harm the righteous, and that he was not alone. God did not want Elijah to just sit there and wait for death. God wanted Him to work. What better way is there for a Christian to forget our troubles than to let God help us through prayer and Christian work?

God knows what we need for our journeys through life. I wanted you to study this lesson so that you can be prepared. Yes, there will be bad days, but the Bible is God’s answer for all our problems. Since God is our Creator through Jesus, and since He knows what we need, it is only sensible to give ourselves over to God's protection.

**Questions:**
- Do you notice a pattern to your “bad days?”

**Prayer:** Thank God for showing us the solutions to our problems in His Word.
A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Jesus excelled at telling simple stories with eternal messages. The parable of the Sower is actually more about the soil than the sower and seed. The Sower is Jesus (or any evangelist). The seed is constant; it is the Word of God. You and I are represented by the soils. Which soil are you?

Here is the parable: And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow; [4] and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. [5] "Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. [6] "But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. [7] "Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. [8] "And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. [9] "He who has ears, let him hear." (Matthew 13:3-9)

Here is the explanation: "Hear then the parable of the sower. [19] "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. [20] "The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; [21] yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. [22] "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. [23] "And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty." (Matthew 13:18-23)

You are not the soil beside the road, because you “sprouted.” You therefore are one of the remaining three. Are you the rocky place? Did you receive the truth with joy? Of course you did, we all did. But troubling times, affliction or persecution (possibly adverse reactions from your own family or friends) will come. Do you have a firm root? If not, you will be weakened or even fall away from God’s grace. Are you the soil among the thorns? Do you worry excessively about life? Are you enamored with wealth? If so, you will become unfruitful and things of this life will choke your spiritual service to death. Trust Jesus, He knows exactly what we need to have joyful and fulfilling lives.

As you are reading this, you are shaking your head that you will not fall away and become unfruitful. That means you must make the decision now. You know what the downfalls are. The last soil represents the man who hears, understands and brings forth much fruit. We must continuously reaffirm our decision that this is who we are going to be. In this we have control. How much fruit you bear will be a combination of your diligence and God’s blessings. Which soil are you?

Questions:
• What other problems might keep you from having a firm root?
• What other problems might choke you?
• What can you do to bear fruit and increase?

Prayer: First, thank God that someone sowed His seed. Now ask God to be aware of the dangers that might make you unfruitful. Finally, pray that your life will be fruitful before God.
Weekly review and discussion questions.

Day / Lesson

29 What names could the local congregation be called?

30 After reading the 2 Peter 3 passage, what all will be destroyed when Christ comes again?

31 Secret: Control the options we think about.
   Name some options you have thought about that would be wrong to choose.
   Pray for help that you might eliminate them from your mind.

32 What are some words you have wondered about?

33 What were the main sources of your belief system before you obeyed the gospel?
   Which were wrong and why?

34 What situations in life tend to depress you the most?
   List ways to deal with such.

35 In what ways are you making sure you are good soil?
#36 – The Company We Keep

Being new in Christ, you walk a delicate line. Scriptures abound, in commands, proverbs and examples, with warnings against evil friends, and conversely, blessings with godly ones. Yet, whether a new believer or one mature in the faith, we want to influence those who don’t yet believe. You will receive strength to influence your old friends by building new spiritual relationships within Christ’s body.

A good biblical example that contrast this can be found in that of Joash. 2 Chronicles 24 preserves the history of Joash becoming king at the tender and impressionable age of seven. He obviously had need for mature guidance. Through God’s providence, Jehoiada, the high priest, filled this role. And Joash did what was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest.” (v.2). Foreshadowing is sadly strong in these words.

In the days of Jehoiada, Joash’s zeal for God exceeded even his teacher’s! Upon deciding to restore the temple (v.4), he ordered collections for this grand work: But the Levites did not act quickly (v.5). Jehoiada as High Priest deserves partial blame for such tardiness - at least that is how Joash assessed the situation. He rightfully chastises his spiritual mentor by asking, “Why have you not required the Levites to bring in...the levy fixed by Moses?” (v.6)

Through the combined work and spiritual strength provided by God through the friendship, companionship, and fellowship of Jehoiada and Joash, they offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada (v.14).

But then King Joash lost his friend, his mentor, his spiritual strength when Jehoiada died. Would Joash continue in his strength? But after the death of Jehoiada the officials of Judah came and bowed down to the king, and the king listened to them. And they abandoned the house of the LORD...and served the Asherim and the idols. (v.17-18)

How far down the path of degradation did this once faithful and strong man fall? God sent a prophet by the name of Zechariah. The Lord didn’t choose just any man. He was the son of Jehoiada, Joash’s friend and mentor. Would Joash listen to his friend’s son (and his own cousin)? Surely, Joash would remember his former ways!

Not only did Joash not repent, he increased his sins against God by murdering God’s prophet, his friend’s son. Upon Joash’s death, Judah did not bury him among the kings.

This is a warning to us all, whether young in the faith or mature. Let us meditate on Paul’s admonition: Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good moral.” (1 Corinthians 15:33)

Questions:
- What are specific ways you can spend time with believers to receive strength to influence others?
- What are specific ways you can influence friends in the world without compromising your beliefs?

Prayer:
Study John 17 for prayer ideas, since Jesus prayed for His disciples who, like us, have to live in the world.
From beginning of Jewish dispensation, God has commanded His people to assemble together to worship and learn of Him. (1) The tabernacle (tent of meeting) and the temple became the center of the Jews’ religion. (2) One of the first resolutions made by the Jews when they returned to their land after captivity related to such assemblies. (3) If even Jesus, the Son of God, saw the need of regular public worship, surely those who have committed themselves to “walk even as He walked” should recognize that same need. (Luke 4:16) So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. (NKJV) (4) While there is value and benefit to be derived from private worship, God in the New Covenant has ordained regular public worship for our spiritual well being. (5) Faithfulness to God and His Word has always been in direct ratio to faithfulness to His appointed assemblies.

WHY SHOULD I ATTEND EVERY SERVICE OF THE CHURCH?

Because I need the spiritual food offered.

1. I should have a compelling desire for such food. (1 Peter 2:2-3) as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. (Matthew 4:4) But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 5:6) Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

2. The exceeding value of God’s Word
   Take time to read these: Ps. 119:14, 16, 24, 72, 97-105, 128, 130, 131, 165

3. This word can save my soul. (James 1:21) Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

4. This word can enrich my life. (Colossians 1:9-11) For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; (NKJV)

5. This word can keep me from falling. (2 Peter 1:5) But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge…
   (2 Peter 1:11) for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
   (2 Peter 2:20-22) For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

6. This word is my weapon against temptation.
   (Psalms 119:11) Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You! (NKJV)

7. This word can give me victory over the world.
   (1 John 5:4) For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

8. This word will help me to GROW. (Hebrews 6:1) Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, (NKJV)

Questions:
- What are some good benefits you have already received from attending services?
- What are some ways to increase your devotion to God in fellowship with others?

Prayer: God knew we needed to meet together for strength; thank God for His wisdom.
The only three passages in the New Testament that give instructions on what music is to be expressed to God follow…

- Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, (Ephesians 5:19 NKJV)
- 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 NKJV)
- Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. (Hebrews 13:15 NKJV)

What are these passages instructing us to do?
- Speak to one another
- Teach one another
- Admonish one another
- Praise God with the fruit of our lips

Can a mechanical instrument of music do any of these? No

Do the passages mention what kind of music is to be expressed to God? Yes

Is it to be singing or playing?

Does the use of an instrument of music in worship accomplish anything that God has instructed us to do? No. **Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterance of God (1 Peter 4:11).** We cannot say God approves of instrumental music since God is silent on it. That is one reason we do not have instruments of music when we sing in worship to God.

Historians clearly record that the first Christians did not use instruments in worship to God. Instruments were introduced much later in history. Matter of fact, all of the first splits from the Catholic church all began without instruments of music in worship. They taught against it fervently.

Even our own language proves the first Christians did not use instruments when praising God. Do you know what *a cappella* means? It means, “without instrumental accompaniment.” *A cappella* etymologically means "*in the manner of the church!*” or "*as in the chapel!*** To my mind, this usage is pretty strong evidence that historically, the way congregations worshiped God in song was without instrumental accompaniment. When adding this to the silence in the New Testament regarding the use of instruments, the positive commands to sing with out lips, plus knowing what is to be accomplished with that singing worship, these should convince the honest seeker of the kind of music that should be given to God.

Questions:
- Why do you think so many people want to add instrumental music?
- Why do you think God did not choose for us to praise Him with instruments?

Prayer: Request of God that your heart will be pure in your worship to Him.
James 5:16b-18—The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

When God answered “yes”, what was so special about Elijah? Does the text suggest God said yes because Elijah was a prophet? Does James imply Elijah was super spiritual? Or does the text place Elijah on the same level as us? James said Elijah, was a man with a nature like ours. That encourages us to pray in faith. While Elijah was a man like us, are our prayers like his? He prayed earnestly.

Let’s study the original episode (1 Kings 18:.41ff.)

v. 41a—Now Elijah said to Ahab, “Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of the roar of a heavy shower.” Elijah did not hear a literal sound, but rather the sound of faith, for the rain had not come. Do we have Elijah’s faith?

v.42—So Ahab went up to eat and drink. More striking than Elijah’s faith is this Baal-worshiping, murderous, King Ahab’s faith. His response reminds me of Jesus’ advice on prayer: Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you. (Mark 11:24). Do we have Ahab’s faith?

v.42b—But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth and put his face between his knees. Considering the various prayer positions illustrated by God’s servants, have you ever wondered if we are too often too comfortable when we pray?

v.43—He said to his servant, “Go up now, look toward the sea.” So he went up and looked and said, “There is nothing.” And he said, “Go back” seven times. Faith is patient. Have you ever considered why God takes so long to answer “yes” to some prayers? Maybe He is waiting to see if we will wait.

v.44a—It came about at the seventh time, that he said, “Behold, a cloud as small as a man’s hand is coming up from the sea.” Faith is rewarded. Notice by what means God did not answer Elijah’s prayer. Did the heavy shower immediately appear? No. Did rain fall from a clear sky? No. God did not use a miracle; God used nature. Since God is not using miracles today (1 Corinthians 13:8-13) as in former days, this example gives me hope. Elijah was an everyday man, but his prayer was not. And God answered “yes” in an everyday way.

Questions:

• What adjectives would you use to describe your prayer life?
• What should you do when God says no?
• Does not receiving an immediate answer of “yes”, mean God is saying “no”?
• What prayer positions does the Bible mention?

Prayer: Ask God to grant to you both faith and patience in your prayer life.
Many of the lessons within this booklet focus on ourselves and what we need to do, think, practice and learn. The following is simply a lesson that praises God. The compiling source is unknown, but obviously the writer gleaned from the original source, which is the Bible. Read this and be in awe of the God who loves you.

“God is Lord Almighty, Omnipotent King, Lion of Judah, Rock of Ages, Prince of Peace, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Provider, Protector, Paternal, Leader, Ruling Lord, and Reigning King of all the universe. He is Father, He is Helper, He is Guardian, and He is God. He is the First and Last, the Beginning and the End. He is the Keeper of Creation and the Creator of all. The Architect of the universe & the Manager of all times. He always was, He always is, and He always will be. Unmoved, Unchanged, Undefeated, and never undone. He was bruised and brought healing. He was pierced and eased pain. He was persecuted and bought freedom. He was dead and bought life. He is risen and brings power. He reigns and brings peace. The world can’t understand him, the armies can’t defeat Him, the schools can’t explain Him, and the leaders can’t ignore Him. Herod couldn’t kill Him, the Pharisees couldn’t confuse Him, the people couldn’t hold Him! Nero couldn’t crush Him, Hitler couldn’t silence Him, the New Age can’t replace Him, and Donahue can’t explain Him away! He is Light, Love, Longevity, and Lord. He is Goodness, Kindness, Gentleness, and God. He is Holy, Righteous, Mighty, Powerful, and Pure. His ways are Right, His Word is Eternal, His will is unchanging, and His mind is on me! He is my Redeemer, He is my Savior, He is my Guide, He is my Peace. He is my Joy, He is my Comfort, He is my Lord and He rules my life.

I serve Him because His bond is love, His burden is light, and His goal for me is abundant life. I follow Him because He is the Wisdom of the wise, the Power of the powerful, the Ancient of days, the Ruler of rulers, the Leader of leaders, the Overseer of the overcomers, and the sovereign Lord of all that was and is and is to come. And if that seems impressive to you, try this for size. His goal is a relationship with ME! He will never leave me, never forsake me, never mislead me, never forget me, never overlook me. When I fall, He lifts me up. When I fail, He forgives. When I am weak, He is strong. When I am lost, He shows the way. When I am afraid, He is my courage. When I stumble, He steadies me. When I am hurt, He heals me. When I am broken, He mends me. When I am blind, He leads me. When I face problems, He provides for me. When I face Death, He carries me Home! He is everything for everybody, everywhere, every time, and every way. He is God, He is faithful, I am His, and He is mine. My Father in heaven can whip the ruler of this world, and so, if you’re wondering why I feel so secure, understand this: He said it, I believe it, and that settles it. God is in control, I am on His side, and that means all is well with my soul. Everyday is a blessing - for GOD Is!

Questions:
- What did you learn about God by reading the above?
- What did you learn about yourself?

Prayer: Simply praise God in your prayer.
#41 – Reflections During the Lord’s Supper

Every Sunday, we remember Jesus as we partake of His Supper. During this time, what should you think about? Here’s how a father answered his son:

“Dad, what do you think about during communion service?” “Well, son, when the brethren assemble at the table to serve communion, I think of the disciples of Jesus at the ‘Last Supper’ before our Lord’s crucifixion. I ‘hear’ Jesus blessing the bread and the cup, and I ‘see’ him distributing the bread and the fruit of the vine to the apostles, saying, ‘This do in remembrance of me.’ As the bread is passed among the members, I think of Jesus as he was betrayed by Judas, taken by the mob, and tried by the officials. I marvel at what God’s Son was willing to undergo for our benefit. As I eat the bread, a picture forms in my mind -- a picture of the soldiers driving nails through his hands and feet to attach him to the cross. I am filled with wonder at the meaning of the divine suffering in human flesh, for our benefit. In drinking the fruit of the vine, my mind is filled with views of the blood dripping from the nail wounds and flowing from the wound in his side. I meditate about the saving power of this blood, how it serves as a ‘cleansing agent’ in God’s plan to save us from our sins. Son, the Lord’s Supper is an occasion when Christians think about Christ while Christ thinks about Christians. It is a time when Christians are thinking about the same things at the same time. This is communion. The inward experience of the communion service makes me spiritually stronger. As the service closes, I feel relieved and satisfied in the knowledge that our Savior who suffered for us was raised from the dead, ascended to heaven where he now is, and the Lord's Supper keeps us reminded of what Christ did for us, until he comes again.” (William E. Wallace)

The above is thoughtful and rightfully targeted backward in time. Peering inwardly, I often focus on a more expanded scale than the actual crucifixion of Jesus and God’s love for me. My thoughts expand outward and upward to count my myriad blessings springing forth from the ultimate blessing of salvation. Beside me is my wife and children sharing a common love for God. So in communion, I think of them and thank God.

Hearing a baby crying, or seeing a restless child should not disturb my reflectiveness. In fact, their purity of soul is my goal. That is why Jesus died. I had forfeited what they still possess. So in communion, I thank God for restored, childlike purity. I remember my covenant with Him as I partake of His blood.

Glancing around, I see the faces of people I love or need to love more. There is nothing wrong in noticing who is part of the communion. Scriptures teach, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. (1 Cor.10:17). I’ll be spiritually lifted by posture: face down, back bent, and hands folded. That child of God is in deep communion with their Father. I thank God people love Him so. They also love me.

What do you think about during communion service?

**Questions:**
- What thoughts often run through your mind?
- What are some specific mental activities to keep yourself focused properly?

**Prayer:** None of us will ever deserve the fellowship received in Christ; thank God for His grace.
Have you noticed one of the last things we say to someone before they leave is also one of the first important things we said to them? For example, when a family member goes on a trip, what do we say as they are pulling out of the driveway? “I love you.” Why is this? For emphasis, we do not want them to forget.

As we edge closer to the end of these lessons, let’s be reminded by the Holy Spirit something He reminded the Corinthians through Paul – that Jesus died for you, was buried, and then was resurrected. Notice the following admonition in the next to last chapter of 1 Corinthians: Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, [2] by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. [3] For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, [4] and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.... (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)

These gospel truths represent the bare bones of the gospel. Paul designated these as of first importance. What truths are emphasized as a result of these facts? The gospel (death, burial, resurrection of Jesus) must be preached. This hearing (Romans 10:17) causes us to receive the gospel meaning we believe and act upon that belief by repenting, confessing, and being baptized. This is our stand, our confidence, which shows that our hope for salvation is in the grace of the gospel. Therefore we are saved. Our salvation is conditional, not only upon receiving and standing in that which we heard, but holding fast. We must continue standing in the grace of God. If we do not, then our salvation will prove to be in vain.

Why is this of first importance? Read again the beginning of 1 Corinthians 1:18-31. The emphasis on Christ produces a humility, which places all of life in perspective. That is why Paul said For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God (15:9). Let’s never forget what we have been saved from!

Why is this of first importance? The death, burial, and resurrection changed and altered our entire existence in the past, when we obeyed the gospel. We are what and who we are today; by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain... (15:10).

Why is this of first importance? The gospel continues to affect us today. We must live a resurrected life (Romans 6:1-11). What benefit would we receive to claim affinity with the resurrection of Jesus in baptism when we are still living the life that led to His death?

Why is this of first importance? One day, I will experience another type of burial, one of my physical body. Then when Jesus returns, that body will be resurrected immortal (15:53-58). Why? Because Jesus Himself had His body resurrected.

Why is this of first importance? Because God is saying to us through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah, “I love you.”

Questions:
- While not becoming guilty once again of the same sins you once committed, what are some of them that you need to be reminded of that God saved you from?
- What are some sorrows and joys associated with the bare bones of the gospel?

Prayer: Make it a priority in your life and prayer to always make God’s priorities your priorities.
Weekly review and discussion questions.

Day / Lesson

36 How many of your friends are now former friends because of your new faith and character change? Have you been amazed at the unwise path that many of the people you know are traveling on? Why not offer or invite them to study the Bible with you to find a better way?

37 Why should you try to assemble with the saints every time they meet for worship and study of God’s word? How does Heb. 10:24 add more motivation to why we should be at every service?

38 Are you convinced that song worship should be without mechanical instruments added to the singing? Read Lev. 10:1-2. When they added or changed the worship, how did God react? Should we feel free to change the worship and make it different than what God has specified it should be? John 4:24 say worship should be in spirit and __________.

39 What are some of your biggest needs that you are praying to God about right now? Have you written these down and made a log of when you started praying for them? Make that log and also record when and how God answered.

40 Which of these descriptions of God means the most to you?

41 Are you becoming more effective in concentrating on proper thoughts in the Lord's supper? What does “this is the new covenant in my blood” mean to you?

42 What significance is Jesus resurrection ot us? Name 3.
A riddle: You can say it in school, but can’t pray it: “Oh, my God!” Once, after enjoying an ice cream “dinner” with my friends, we paid the cashier. “Oh, my God!” kept coming out of his mouth. A spiritually strong young lady politely asked him Please quit taking the Lord’s name in vain.” Chuckling, he surprised us, saying, “I don’t even believe in God!” How strange, talking about and to someone you don’t even believe in. That would be like me saying, “Oh my Boogie-Man!”

How is it that “God” or “Lord” and even “Jesus” have become simple unpious expressions of undirected emotions? Today, “Oh, my God!” is as common in the English language as McDonald’s!

Once upon a time - and this isn’t a fairy tale - God’s name was revered. Zephaniah 3:9 reads, For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD. Do you think God had in mind, in His Divine mind, these peoples saying, “Oh, my God!” whenever they were shocked, scared, surprised or sad?

Orthodox Jews today have gone too far in their reverence. In following the traditions of their ancestors who refused to pronounce the personal name of God, spelled YHWH, and most likely pronounced Yahweh, Orthodox Jews refuse to even write or type the word G-O-D. Instead, they write G-d. That is silly. I do not disdain God, nor His name, if I accidentally mistype God. But sadly, as a pendulum swings back and forth, one extreme follows another. I’m not saying people purposely disdain God when they say, “Oh, my God!” However, in the Bible, when something holy was “profaned,” it was made common. Today, “God” isn’t spoken from purified lips, but profanely.

Too often, Christians speak as the world without thinking. I’ve even heard gospel preachers exclaim, “Lord, have mercy,” which would have been fine if they were on their knees! Somehow I doubt someone saying that while laughing out loud is praying! When people turn forty, what is said? “Lordy, lordy, looks who’s forty!” While it may be considered cute, is it right? While funny, is it respectful? Is that holy, or is it common and thus profane?

What would you think if people started to say, “Oh my George Washington!” That would be silly, wouldn’t it? Then why is it that so many exclamations use names or descriptions of God?

I’m not sure what the etymological history is, but I once discussed this topic with an elderly Christian lady who commonly said, “Oh, my Lord!” When I confronted her with taking the Lord’s name in vain, she defended herself as innocent, saying, “I did not say, ‘Oh, my God.’” When Thomas confessed the deity of Jesus, what did he say? My Lord, and my God (Jn.20:28) Just think how much better this world would be if every time someone said, “Oh, my God,” they were praying.

Questions:
- If you commonly make the name of God common, what can you do to stop?
- Why do you think people so often take the Lord’s name in vain?

Prayer: Supplicate God that your lips will only praise and not profane His holy name.
This lesson is about “institutionalism”; that is, whether God wants churches supporting human organizations through their treasury such as schools and charitable organizations. Although a very mature subject, one that Christians disagree on, I hope to approach the topic simply by asking four questions: 1) Did God provide the work? 2) Did God provide the way? 3) How did God provide the way? 4) Who did God provide?

DID GOD PROVIDE THE WORK? God only provided local congregations three responsibilities:
1) Spiritually build up Christians (Ephesians 4:11-16; 2 Corinthians 11:8);
2) Spiritually save non-Christs by supporting preachers (Philippians 4:10-20; 1 Corinthians 9:14);
3) Physically support needy Christians (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Acts 6:1-6). There are no other works God ordains local congregations to perform, including social works such as building gyms and kitchens. It’s that simple.

1. DID GOD PROVIDE THE WAY? Evangelists, Pastors, Deacons, and Saints work together teaching (Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 1:1) and financially giving of their material blessings (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Philippians 4:10-20). These workers are God’s people to build up each other spiritually. Our free will offering collected on the first day of the week is God’s way of providing for these works to be done (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

2. HOW DID GOD PROVIDE THE WAY? Our assembling allows us to stimulate one another to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24-25). That is why we have a church building, and why we should attend all the services possible. Our giving from our hearts is how God provides for preachers to be supported and saints to be helped (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

3. WHO DID GOD PROVIDE? For a spiritual organization such as a congregation, the spiritual works are to be done by the spiritual (Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 1:1). This includes our overseers, deacons, saints, and the preacher. Looking through the scriptures, we see physical responsibilities, such as helping the needy saints, are performed by those selected upon qualifications (1 Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-6).

Simplifying and summarizing the above, God provided everything. Amazing, isn’t it?! Not really, if we trust God to do all the providing. Some churches are borrowing more from man’s wisdom than God’s. God provided us the plan and organization for everything we need.

For example, some churches, out of the treasury, support human institutions such as colleges, charity homes, and other entities that do good work, but are foreign to the scriptures as being funded by and connected to a church. I ask a simple question: if all these human institutions are the work of the church, shouldn’t they be overseen by elders, and worked in by deacons? Shouldn’t they be mentioned in the Bible? In Acts 6, a problem needed addressing, a problem concerning the physical necessities of some widows. When God provided the answer to solving the problem, notice He provided the way. The church took care of it by appointing men from among itself to fill the need. This was God’s way. No “Widows Institution” was set up by God. Let’s be careful to always let God provide the work and the way! He has thought of everything.

Questions:
- If the above is true, are there many things that the church cannot do?
- What positive lessons can we learn about the work of the church?

Prayer: Letting God provide is important for both churches and individuals; pray that you will always trust God’s way.
#45 – Women and Teaching

No doubt by now, you have noticed that within the church, men take the leadership roles. You might be wondering why. The Holy Spirit instructed Paul to write, *Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.* *(1 Timothy 2:11-12)*

God does not hate women, it’s just that, like in marriage, God has assigned the leadership roles to men. Men are not superior to women. Also, leadership is not a blessing but a curse. Let’s make this simple.

In *v.9*, Paul gives negative instruction concerning female “adornment.” In *v.10*, Paul’s commends positive adornment. He follows this same parallel logic in *vv.11-12*. In *v.11*, Paul shows what is permitted (positive). All women are to **quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness**. In other words, they are not to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet *(v.12)*.

**Quietly receive instruction** is the opposite of **teach**. Likewise **entire submissiveness** is the opposite of **exercise authority over a man**. Thayer, a respected lexicographer, defines **exercise authority over**, as “*to govern, exercise dominion over.*” Paul’s exact opposite to **exercising authority over**, is **submissiveness** which is defined as “*obedience.*”

That should help us understand the type of forbidden teaching. Thayer defines **teaching** with the following applications: “*to hold discourse with others in order to instruct them, deliver didactic discourse; to be a teacher; to discharge the office of teacher, conduct one’s self as a teacher.*” Does holding a mutual discourse with someone constitute a contradiction of **receiving instruction with entire submissiveness**? The word **quietly** doesn't demand total silence *(1 Tim.2:2)*. Since Paul is stating the same principle, both negatively and positively, doesn’t it make sense that “to teach” would have application to **discharging the role of a teacher** which would be closely related to **exercising authority**.

Therefore, Paul doesn’t forbid women teaching per se. Paul isn’t even restricting women from teaching men, but rather restricting them from teaching in a manner of **exercising authority over men**, for singing is teaching *(Colossians 3:16)*. What Paul ordered Timothy to do in *1 Timothy 4:11*, he forbade women to do in *1 Timothy 2:11-12*. That is why men are the elders.

Being restricted in one area, does not mean restriction in all areas. There is plenty of God-approved work for all, whether men or women, young or old. Happiness is not usually found in fuming over what we cannot do or are not allowed to do. Happiness is found allowing God to work through us and thus being as fruitful as possible to God’s glory.

**Questions:**
- Does the above sound strange to you? If so, write down questions so you can study with someone.
- What are some works you are already qualified and allowed to perform?

**Prayer:** Even Jesus submitted to His Father by dying on the cross. Ask God to help you to become more like Jesus in all of our relationships.
The gospel of Christ is really quite simple - and obedience to God (whether to obey or not to obey) is so uncomplicated that the illiterate heathen of the first century had little difficulty in knowing what to do. Within this gospel is the doctrine popularly called The Trinity. The Bible, in several places, teaches it. There is a difference between understanding and accepting.

There are many things we accept, but don’t completely understand. How can we satisfactorily understand an unlimited God? How can one comprehend a purely spiritual existence? It is impossible for us.

I don’t understand women, never will. And although I am to live with (my wife) in an understanding way (1 Pet.3:7), that doesn’t mean she makes sense to me any more than I make sense to her. My understanding is based upon acceptance. I accept In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing, but I don’t understand how. I accept God has existed forever without a beginning, but I don’t understand how. I accept the physical blood of Jesus Christ cleans me of my sin in baptism, but I don’t understand how. And I even accept the plurality of God while accepting God is one, but that doesn’t mean I understand it. Notice each, Father, Holy Spirit & Jesus are Deity (God). Yet each is distinct from the other. Look up the passages and read how all are individuals yet all three are deity or God. If there were only three people alive, would those three make up humanity? Yes. See the parallel? So when the Bible says there is one God, it is speaking of one Deity which is made up of three personalities. From the beginning, we see their plurality. Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” (Genesis 1:26)

Many secular parallels have been used such as the root, trunk, and branches, are all one tree. Water’s “Triple Point” is a scientific fact that within a vacuum, water can exist as a liquid, gas, and solid all at the same time. Humans consist of: Body, Soul, and Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Eggs have three parts, but all three are the egg. Triangles have three points, but there is one triangle. All these might help some, but may fall short for others. Remember, there is a difference between understanding completely and accepting.

An important question is, why study it? Why is it important to know, have a basic understanding of, and believe it? Although I find such topics as this intellectually challenging and fascinating, we must ask the relevance. It is not coincidental that much of God, which is concealed, and only hinted at in the Old Testament, is revealed in the New. Within this oneness and threeness, there is love which works together for our good. And maybe that is the best explanation of all. If God is love, then He could not be love unless there was someone to love.

**Questions:**
- Do any of the above “parallels” help? If so, which ones, and why?
- Do you have other questions? If so, write them down and ask someone you respect.

**Prayer:** Thank God that He is love, and that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all love each other and you too.
A cartoon strip, Stringbean, choreographed the following bit of wisdom: Two earthworms, deep underground, are talking to each other. One of them says, “Hey, Mortimer, have you ever raised your head to look around out there?” The other one says, “Nope, I was taught that ‘He who takes a look, gets the hook.’” “Yeah,” Mortimer echoes, “me, too. I learned that ‘he who takes a peek gets the beak.’” After a pause, Mortimer mumbles through his wall of dirt, “Lovely day, isn’t it?”

The point is that the earthworms had no idea what kind of day it was because they chose to stay entombed and keep a low profile.

You, my dear friend, have embarked upon a life-changing, life-altering, journey. Never hide beneath self-imposed barriers, thinking therein is safety. Being “safe,” is often very dangerous. And if not dangerous - just very boring! Jesus did not call us to play it safe, but to live by faith.

Faith is not meant to keep us hiding beneath layers of self-inflicted protections. Faith allows, no, faith dares us, encourages us to climb out of our little holes beneath the earth, look to the sky and fly. Yes, little worms, we can fly! Now, wouldn’t that be a freak of nature? A flying worm!

But isn’t that an accurate description of faith? Faith is a freak of nature. It supercedes nature, sending us soaring into the supernatural. Faith has the awesome ability to see the unseen, to look into the past in order to see to the future (Hebrews 11:1).

Faith allows us to crawl out of our safe little realm and experience life by looking directly into the face of the sun, unharmed and fearless, knowing that what burns inside of us is brighter because it comes from the eternal SON!

Paul wishes that God would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in (our) hearts through faith. This celestial prayer climaxes by mightily glorying Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us. (Ephesians 3:16,17,20).

This is the life of the righteous man (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17). This is living, thriving, God-driven, Spirit-breathing faith. We worms have a choice: quiver below or soar. God, if we choose, can make us little worms fly! Dare you join me?

Questions:

- Now that you know you can do anything God wants you to do, what changes are you going to make in your life?
- Who are some people you can look to for advice on making these changes?
- Knowing all things are to glorify God, how does this change your outlook on life?

Prayer: Praise God in your prayer for all the glorifying ways He can now use you.
Weekly review and discussion questions.

Day / Lesson

43 What are some expressions you have heard that you might wonder about?

44 You may wonder about some examples of abuse in this area. What are some you would like to discuss? Read 1 Tim. 5:8-16. Does God make a difference between an individual’s responsibilities versus a local churches responsibilities?

45 How are men and women roles different in the church? Is leadership a blessing to be proud of or a curse that must be tolerated because the work would suffer without leadership?

45 What dominate roles do each the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit fill in your life right now?

47 What fears do you have that might keep you from your home in heaven one day?