

MEMBERSHIP CLASS
Spiritual Leadership for the 21st Century

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HILLTOP CHAPEL COVENANT Associate Member

Now that I have accepted Christ as my Savior, I desire to identify with the people of Hilltop Chapel Bible Methodist Church by committing to the following biblical principles.

1. I WILL SAFEGUARD THE HARMONY AND UNITY OF THE CHURCH

- ❖ *By living out a life of divine love toward others*
- ❖ *By refusing to gossip or slander another person's reputation*
- ❖ *By reconciling conflict as soon as it arises.*
- ❖ *By following delegated leadership and the chain of command*

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

Ephesians 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen..

Ephesians 4:25-27 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

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.

2. I WILL SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

- ❖ *By praying daily for its spiritual and numerical growth*
- ❖ *By inviting the unchurched to attend*
- ❖ *By welcoming guests and those who need my hospitality*

Colossians 4:3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ,

Luke 14:23 Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.

Romans 15:7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

3. I WILL SERVE THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

- ❖ *By discovering my spiritual gifts and talents*
- ❖ *By having a servant's heart*
- ❖ *By developing a daily devotional time for Bible reading and prayer*

1 Peter 4:10-11 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever.

Philippians 2:4-5 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. . . who took on the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

Joshua 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

4. I WILL SUPPORT THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

- ❖ *By attending scheduled services unless providentially hindered*
- ❖ *By living a godly life away from church*
- ❖ *By giving back to God in gratefulness in tithes and offerings*

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

John 13:15-16 For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor *is* one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.

Malachi 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, "How do we rob you?" In tithes and offerings.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 Now this *I say*, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;

Signed

Date

Pastor's signature

SIX EVIDENCES OF SALVATION

Many Christians have doubts about salvation because they do not understand what actually takes place at the time of salvation. **Salvation results in a growing relationship in which we become more and more conscious of God's words and ways by obedience to the prompting of His Holy Spirit.** The following evidences are God's ways of reassuring us that a new relationship exists between God and us.

EVIDENCES OF SALVATION

PROJECTS TO STRENGTHEN COMMITMENT

1. A NEW LOVE FOR SCRIPTURE

(See I Peter 2:2.)

BEGIN READING Matt. 5-7, Mark, Romans, I John. **Memorize** Rom. 6, 8, I Cor. 10:13; I Jn. 1:9; Gal. 2:20; Luke 9:23

2. A NEW AWARENESS OF RIGHT AND WRONG.

(See Hebrews 5:13-14.)

VISUALIZE the words, actions, thoughts or attitudes which you know are displeasing to God and which grieve His Spirit when you do them. **MEMORIZE** Scripture which refers to each offense, and whenever you are tempted, quote the Scripture which would be violated if you yielded to the temptation.

3. A NEW DESIRE TO BE LIKE CHRIST.

MEMORIZE, VISUALIZE, AND PERSONALIZE the character of Christ in Matt. 5:1-12, Gal. 5:22-24, and II Pet. 1:3-7

4. A NEW SOCIAL PRESSURE FROM THOSE CONVICTED BY YOUR CHANGED LIFE

(See I Peter 4:3-5.)

EXPECT TO SUFFER. It is the **KEY** to spiritual growth. Prepare for it by memorizing Phil. 1:29. Rom. 5:3, and I Pet. 1:6; 2:19-24; 3:14

5. A NEW DESIRE TO PROCLAIM CHRIST TO OTHERS

(See Colossians 1:28-29.)

WRITE OUT in three parts how you became a Christian:
A. What my life was like before becoming a Christian.
B. How I committed my life to Christ
C. Evidences of God's work in my life since salvation.

6. A NEW LOVE FOR OTHER CHRISTIANS

(See I John 3:14.)

FIND OTHER CHRISTIANS with whom you can meet regularly to build up each other spiritually. Memorize together the above Scriptures and relate them to daily decisions. Meet weekly to share your answers to prayer.

HOW TO BEGIN YOUR CHRISTIAN LIFE

Lesson I

I. **REALIZE WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOU**

A. **You have been reborn** -- Titus 3:5

The rebirth has been defined as "the communication of life by the Spirit to a soul dead in trespasses and sin." Ephesians 2:1 And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins;"

1. **The realities of the new birth** --

a) The new birth gives life to our spiritual capacity

(1) **Taste** -- "O taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). We have now experienced the reality of God's love and goodness.

(2) **Sight** -- "having the eyes of your heart enlightened." (Ephesians 1: 18).

(3) **Touch** -- "we have looked upon and touched... the word of life" (I John 1: 1).

b) The new birth gives us characteristics like our Father

(1) Righteousness -- Phil. 3:9

(2) Love -- I John 4:7-8

(3) Holiness -- I Peter 1:16

2. **The results of the new birth** --

a) new understanding of spiritual matters -- Colossians 1: 9

b) new life in Christ -- 2 Corinthians 5:17

c) new purpose for living -- Ephesians 2:10

d) release from the old way of life -- Ephesians 2:1-5

e) peace with God -- Romans 5:1

B. **You have been forgiven** -- Colossians 1:14

1. God has removed your transgressions -- Psalms 103:12

2. God made your sins as white as snow -- Isaiah 1: 18

3. God placed your sins behind His back -- Isaiah 53

4. God remembers your sin no more -- Hebrews 8:12

C. **You have been justified** -- Romans 5:9

Justification means that God accepts me just as I am. Christ paid your penalty and you are justified. You are justified or pardoned because the demands of justice have been fully satisfied by Christ's death.

1. You have been justified by faith -- Romans 5: 1

2. You have been justified by God's free gift -- Romans 3:24

3. You have been justified through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ -- Romans 5:9; 4:25

D. You have been adopted into God's family -- Ephesians 5:3-6

1. God planned your adoption from the beginning -- Eph 1:4-5
2. Christ died to make your redemption possible -- Galatians 4:4-7
3. You can now call God "Father" -- Romans 8:15

E. You can now have the assurance of eternal life -- I John 5:11-13

1. You have the assurance of salvation -- John 10:27-29; Romans 1:16; Hebrews 5:9
2. You have the assurance of victory over sin -- I John 5:3-5
3. You have the assurance of answered prayer -- John 16:24
4. You have the assurance of the Spirit that you are a child of God -- Romans 8:16

II. RECOGNIZE THE RESOURCES GOD HAS FOR YOU

- A. Christ has been victorious over the world -- John 16:33
- B. Christ in you is a winning combination -- 1 John 4:4, Phil 4:13
- C. Christ's resources are adequate for your every need -- 2 Peter 1:3-4
- D. Through Christ you can survive all opposition -- Romans 8:35-39

III. REMEMBER TO MAINTAIN THIS SAVING RELATIONSHIP

- A. Your responsibilities are clear --
 1. You must continue in the faith -- Acts 14:22; Colossians 1: 23
2 Timothy 3:14-15
 2. You must build yourself up in the faith -- Jude 20-21
 3. You must work out your salvation with God's help -- Philippians 2:12
- B. Acknowledge the important part your will plays --
 1. There are some who say, "once a son, always a son." However, there are two essential differences between physical birth and spiritual birth:
 - a) A person does not have prior knowledge or give consent to physical birth. But in spiritual birth, there must be prior knowledge and consent of the will -- Romans 10:8-17; John 5:40
 - b) In physical life the person has life independent of his parents -- not so in spiritual life. Therefore, spiritual life can be forfeited -- John 15:5; Hebrews 2:1; 3:12-1
- C. Avail yourself of the means of spiritual growth which God provides --
 1. *Witnessing* -- Matthew 10:32-33
 2. *Baptism* -- as an outward confession to the world of an internal work of grace in your heart -- Acts 2:38
 3. *Prayer* -- James 5:16; I Thessalonians 5:17
 4. *The Bible* -- I Peter 2:2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17
 5. *Sharing in the life of the church* -- Hebrews 10:25; Acts 2:43-47

6. *The Lord's Supper* -- I Corinthians 11:23-26

CONCLUSION:

You are a babe in Christ. God loves you as a mother would love her newborn child -- and more! Remember, He has plans for you! He dreams of your future just as other parents have dreams and plans for their children.

YOUR MOVE!!

Make two columns. Entitle one "***Before Christ***" and the other "***After Christ.***" List five purposes for your life in each column. Put the most important purpose first, the second most important next, etc. Then compare the columns.

BEFORE CHRIST

AFTER CHRIST

HOW TO PRAY

Lesson 2

Communication is essential in all good relationships. In our relationship with Christ, He speaks to us through the Bible, the Holy Spirit, preaching, creation, our conscience, and the testimonies of others. We speak to Christ through prayer. Since prayer has such a high priority with God and it is one of the most important ways that we communicate with Christ to build a more meaningful relationship, let us study how to pray as the Bible teaches.

I. REMEMBER CHRIST'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRAYER

A. Christ's instructions on how to pray -- Luke 11:1-4; Matthew 6:5-13

In this passage, the disciples came to Christ and asked Him to teach them how to pray. Jesus gave the following guidelines for praying:

1. Address God with respect and honor
2. Pray for His kingly reign over all the earth
3. Pray for his will to be done in our lives
4. Trust him for daily needs
5. Seek forgiveness for our sins, being willing to forgive others
6. Ask for his help in times of temptation

II. RECOGNIZE THE CONDITIONS FOR ANSWERED PRAYER

A. **Privacy** " But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and Pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you" -- Matthew 6:6

God is not interested in who sees you pray or where they see you pray. Prayers should not be a show for others but should be the burden of your heart addressed to God. God is interested in the private times you spend with him in prayer.

B. **Forgiveness for others**

"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you" -- Matthew 6:14

"And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive your trespasses" -- Mark 11: 26

C. **Believe God will answer your prayers**

"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours" -- Mark 11:24

D. Others praying with you

"Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven" -- Matthew 18:19

E. Persistence in prayer

"Ask, and it will be given you ; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" -- Matthew 7:7

F. Abiding in Christ

"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you" -- John 15:7

G. Continuing in prayer

"Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication" -- Ephesians 6:18

H. Righteous Living

"Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed" -- James 5:16

I. Obedience

"And we receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him" -- I John 3:22

"Never stop praying" -- I Thessalonians 5:17

III. REMOVE ANY HINDRANCES TO PRAYER**A. Sin**

"If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened" Psalms 66:18.

If we are willingly committing known sin, this verse tells us God will not hear our prayers.

B. Failure to obey

"Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord, would have none of my counsel, and despised all my reproof" Proverbs 1: 28-30

C. Doubt

"But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, will receive anything from the Lord" -- James 1:6-8

D. Selfishness

"You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions" -- James 4:3

Apparently the Christians James wrote to were praying selfishly, praying for only what would please and satisfy them. For this reason, James said, their prayers were not answered.

YOUR MOVE:

A suggested four or five-step format for prayer includes:

1. Praise (to God)
2. Confession (of sins)
3. Intercession (for others' needs)
4. Petition (for our needs).
5. Thanksgiving (to God)

Prepare to communicate with God by listing what you will pray in each step of such a prayer. Pray and REMEMBER --

As we follow this format of the Lord's prayer, remember two things.

First, praying is NOT a formal language that we go to school for or that we learn in church. Prayer IS the honest desires of your heart reaching out to God. Tell God what you feel but be honest about those feelings.

Second, get rid of your selfishness. God will answer only as soon as He knows that we are free of selfishness. Start your petitions with a "Lord I want what you want " phrase and mean it. God loves honesty and unselfishness.

"Never stop praying" -- I Thessalonians 5:17

HOW TO RESIST TEMPTATION

Lesson 3

Now that you are a Christian, you must realize you are in a spiritual battle (Ephesians 6: 12). The devil has schemes devised to defeat you. But you can be more than an overcomer through Christ! (Romans 8:37) Our victory is made possible through faith (I John 5:4). People fail spiritually when, not aware of the enemy's tactics, they are caught off guard or when they do not draw upon available spiritual resources by faith. In this lesson we will look at the techniques of our enemy the devil as well as our resources of our God for victory.

I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE DEVIL

In order to get a better perspective of the nature of your enemy, look at how the Bible describes him.

A. The Accuser -- Revelation 12:10

1. In the garden he accused God of being unfair -- Genesis 3:4-5
2. In the conflict seen in Job, he accused Job before God saying, "He (Job) will curse thee to thy face" -- Job 1: 11
3. The devil is continually trying to give you a false sense of guilt by his accusations, but God is even greater than your heart and knows your heart -- even when you don't -- I John 3: 19-20

B. Adversary -- Roaring Lion -- I Peter 5:8

The devil's purpose is to destroy. John 10:10 speaks of him as a thief who "comes only to steal, kill, and destroy." Luke 22:31 reveals that "Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat." I Peter 5:8 says the devil wants to devour you, like a lion devours its prey. He shows no mercy! His real nature is lion-like and serpent-like.

C. The ruler of this world -- John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11

The word "ruler" emphasizes Satan's control over the minds of men and the affairs of this world. Similarly, the devil is called the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2: 1-2), the inspiration for those who disobey God.

D. The god of this world -- 2 Corinthians 4:4

As the "god of this world," Satan is blinding the spiritual eyes of those who do not wish to know the truth. However, he cannot blind you if you sincerely want to believe. "You will seek me and find me: when you seek me with all your heart" Jeremiah 29:13.

E. A murderer and a liar -- John 8:44

Satan lied to Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:4 – “you will surely not die”), and he has been lying ever since.

F. An angel of light -- 2 Corinthians 11:14

One of Satan's favorite tricks is to get people to believe in a mythical character with a long tail, two horns, and a pitchfork. He is too smart to come to you in such a way. Instead, he makes sin attractive. He baits the hook until you cannot see the end result of what appears beautiful and safe. In fact, the devil's most clever tool is to make people believe he does not exist, and you must realize he is constantly busy. Job 2:2 pictures the devil "going to and fro on the earth."

G. The tempter -- 1 Thessalonians 3:5; Matthew 4:1, 3, 7

H. Other names for the devil:

1. The wicked one, the evil one -- Matthew 13:19, 38; 1 John 5:18
2. The angel of the bottomless pit -- Revelation 9:11
3. The dragon -- Revelation 12:7
4. The beast -- Revelation 19:19

II. THE DEFEAT OF THE DEVIL - We can defeat the devil by:

- A. Using the Word of God – Matt. 4:4, 7, 10
- B. Putting on the whole armor of God. Eph. 6:11-18
- C. Resisting the devil -- James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9
- D. Testifying and relying on the power of Christ's death – Rev. 12:11

III. HOW TO BE VICTORIOUS IN TEMPTATION

- A. Identify its source -- not God, but Satan -- James 1:13
- B. Realize your temptation is not unique -- 1 Cor. 10:13; Matt. 4:3
- C. Acknowledge there is a way of escape -- 1 Cor. 10:13
- D. Remember the Bible is your best weapon – Matt. 4:4-10; Heb. 4:12
- E. Remember Satan is a defeated enemy – Col. 2:15
- F. Realize that blessing comes after testing – Matt. 4:11; Luke 4:14
- G. Be assured that help is available if you fail -- 1 John 2:1

YOUR MOVE:

Assume a letter has been written to "Dear Abby"" inquiring why the writer is tempted and so frequently gives in. Write an answer a non-Christian can understand.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Lesson 4

I. READ AND STUDY THE BIBLE AS TWO YOUNG LOVERS READ AND STUDY EACH OTHER'S LETTERS

Samuel L. Brengle gives the following illustration: "As soon as the mail brings a letter from his sweetheart, the young man grabs it and without waiting to see if there is another letter for him, runs off to a corner and reads and laughs and rejoices over it and almost devours it. If he is a particularly desperate and demonstrative lover -- (the Lord makes us desperate and demonstrative lovers of our Lord Jesus Christ!) -- he will probably kiss it and carry it next to his heart until the next letter arrives.

"He meditates on it day and night, and reads it over again and again. He carries it downtown with him, and on the streetcar appears very quiet and thoughtful, till all at once a twinkle comes into his eye, out comes the letter, and choice portions are read over again. He delights in that letter. If any part is hard to understand, a letter is sent off immediately for an explanation and the explanation and letter will be most carefully compared, and possibly previous letters will also be studiously compared with this one." Now this is the way to read the Bible! Note some keys in this illustration:

- A. Realize that your lover (Jesus) has sent you letters of instruction, encouragement, and consolation.
- B. Read them over and over again
- C. Read them in your spare time (carry a pocket New Testament)
- D. Mediate on them (seasons of serious thoughtfulness)
- E. Compare Scripture with Scripture
- F. Pray and study when you do not understand a part of it

II. READ AND STUDY THE BIBLE FOR WHAT IT REALLY IS -- GOD'S WORD.

We believe the Bible is inspired because:

- A. ***It says it is inspired*** 2 Timothy 3:16-17. In a court of law a defendant can take the witness stand for himself. Why should we not let the Bible witness for itself? -- 2 Peter 1:19-21
Jesus believed the Bible was inspired. Matt. 5:17-18

B. *The Bible has power to transform nations, cities, and people.*

Romans 1:16

D. *The Bible has marvelous unity.* Though written by nearly 40 authors of different occupations over a period of 1,500 years, it still has one unifying theme: the salvation of man through Jesus Christ –

I Peter 1: 20-21

E. *Prophecies have been fulfilled down to the last detail* -- the birth of Christ, his suffering, death and resurrection, are examples.

F. *The moral superiority of the Bible* far exceeds the sacred writings of other religions.

G. *No book has inspired people like the Bible.*

H. *The Bible is indestructible.* Powers have tried to destroy God's Word unsuccessfully -- 1 Peter 1:23

For example, Voltaire, the skeptic, predicted that God's Word would be swept into obscurity. But 50 years after his death, the Geneva Bible Society used his press and house to produce stacks of Bibles.

III. READ IT EXPECTING IT TO DO SOMETHING IN YOUR LIFE

A. *It discovers and convicts of sin*

1. 2 Timothy 3:16
2. Hebrews 4:12
3. I John 1: 9

B. *It cleanses from the pollution of sin*

1. Psalms 119:9
2. John 15:3
3. John 17:17
4. Ephesians 5:26-27

C. *It imparts strength*

1. Matthew 4:4
2. I Peter 2:2

D. *It instructs us in what we are to do*

1. Matthew 7:24-27
2. James 2:14-16

E. It provides us a spiritual weapon

1. Ephesians 6:17
2. Hebrews 4:12

F. It makes our lives fruitful

1. Joshua 1: 8
2. Psalms 1:2-3
3. John 15:1-8

G. It helps us in winning our families to Christ.

1. 2 Timothy 3:14-17

III. READ IT CAREFULLY, KEEPING THE LINE OF THOUGHT IN MIND FROM VERSE TO VERSE

Often the first part of one chapter belongs to the last section of the preceding chapter. In the original manuscripts of the Bible, there were no chapter divisions or punctuation. Chapter and verse divisions were made later in order to locate particular references. For example, in the book of Hebrews, chapters 2, 3, 4, 6, and 12 all begin with the transitional word "therefore" -- indicating these chapters each build upon the conclusion of the previous chapters. As you read the Scriptures, try to keep the whole thought of a paragraph in mind.

CONCLUSION:

Remember, don't get discouraged! You will not understand everything in the Bible immediately. But don't forget you have the promise of Jesus that the Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth (John 16:13).

As a new convert, **begin reading** in the New Testament, preferably the Gospel of John. Read in a translation that is easy to understand, such as the New American Standard Version or the New International Version. Read the New Testament through two or three times before going to the Old Testament. **Underline** and write in your Bible when you get help or have questions. **Read** with your wife, husband, or a Christian friend. Get everything you can and you will grow in grace and in the knowledge of God.

God bless you as you start on your adventure in God's Word!

YOUR MOVE:

Select a portion of the Bible, a paragraph or chapter, for inductive study. Then:

- I. Select an appropriate title for it

II. Paraphrase it (rewrite it in your own words)

III. Apply it by identifying from it one or more of the following:

- A. a sin to confess
- B. a promise to claim
- C. a principle to follow
- D. a command to obey
- E. an example to model
- F. a stumbling block to avoid

HOW TO HAVE A CHRISTIAN HOME

Lesson 5

INTRODUCTION

Does marriage have a future? With divorce on the rampage and a growing number of unhappy marriages and homeless children, Christians must answer this question. As many as one of two marriages ends in divorce. Sociologists tell us the percentage would be two out of three were it not for children involved. For solutions to marriage problems, we must go to God's Word. It teaches us how to build happy homes and Christian relationships. This lesson deals with the question, "How can I have a Christian home?"

I. REALIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

A. *Marriage originated with God* -- Genesis 1:27-28: 2:18-25

God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit it for him."

1. In Genesis 2:22 we find what appears to be the first marriage ceremony officiated over by God Himself. We read, "And... God brought her to the man." In fact, the Bible begins with a wedding in Eden and ends with a wedding in heaven, that of Christ and his bride, the church.
2. God designed the home to be the place where personality and character are formed. Of all institutions in our culture, the home is by far the greatest influence on an individual. That is why God has laid down such careful guidelines regarding the sanctity of marriage and the family.

B. *Parents' responsibilities in the home are crucial.*

Parents are told to:

- 1) ***teach*** their children God's Word -- Deuteronomy 4:9
- 2) ***train*** their children how to live -- Proverbs 22:6
- 3) ***live as an example to the children*** -- I Kings 9:4

God wants more of parents than just sending their children to church. He wants parents who will live the Christian life as an example to their children as King David lived for God before Solomon. If children are not taught these things at home, where else can we expect them to learn?

II. ACCEPT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY IN THE MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

A. *Mutual responsibilities of husband and wife*

Paul's treatment of marriage in Ephesians 5 is introduced with these words: "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ" -- Ephesians 5:21

The foundation of a Christian marriage is the mutual submission of both husband and wife to the lordship of Christ -- and therefore submission to one another.

B. *Responsibilities of the husband*

1. *He must love his wife* -- Ephesians 5:25, 33; Colossians 3:19

In the Greek New Testament three different words are translated "love"

- a) *storge*, a love between mother and child and child and mother; also relates to animals and their instinct to protect and care for each other.
- b) *phileo*, from which we get "philanthropy," means love in the sense of human compassion and affection; friendship
- c) *agape*, which means love as measured by sacrifice (see I Corinthians 13 - agape is used in this chapter).
 1. Husbands are to love sacrificially as Christ loved the church.
 2. Husbands are to love patiently without being domineering or harsh (Colossians 3:19).
- d) *eros*, (not in the Bible) from which we get "erotic," speaks of passion, desire and sensuality

2. *He must be faithful to his wife* -- Matthew 19: 1- 9; I Corinthians 6:9

3. *He must honor his wife* -- Proverbs 31:28; I Peter 3:7

4. *He must provide for his family* -- I Timothy 5:8

5. *He must be sure that his wife and their children are placed first* -- even before his own father and mother – Ephesians 5: 1

According to the Bible, there is nothing more drastic that can happen than this "leaving and cleaving" of a man and wife. Such shows that a new relationship has begun. Relationships in the new family take precedence.

6. *He must lead in the religious instruction in the home.*

Here are some Old Testament examples of religious education in the home:

- a) Noah -- Genesis 8:20
- b) Abraham -- Genesis 12:7; 13:4
- c) Jacob -- Genesis 35:7
- d) Joshua -- Joshua 24:15
- e) See also Deuteronomy 6:6-8

C. Responsibilities of the wife

1. Submission

- a) The husband and wife are equal before God in the home -- Galatians 3:28. The Bible teaches that the man is to be the head of the home, but subordination does not mean inferiority (see the example of Jesus in Philippians 2:5-9).
- b) The woman is to be in submission to the husband -- Ephesians 5:22; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5; I Peter 3: 1.
The woman's submission is always balanced by her husband's deference to her will and well-being. Again, mutual submission (Ephesians 5:21) is the controlling principle. The emphasis is upon the husband's leadership role in the home.
- c) Submission to the husband is especially challenging when he is an unbeliever (I Peter 3:1-6). Faithfulness to Christ always prevails when submission to the unbelieving mate means to violate the commands of God (Matthew 10:34-39).

2. Family and home

Particularly in a home with children, the need for security and stability must be recognized.

- a) The "at home" duties of a woman and her household responsibilities must take precedence over other interests Titus 2:4-5; I Timothy 5:14.
- b) The inestimable value of a godly wife is acknowledged by the wise man in Proverbs 31:10-31. Her abilities in the world of commerce are obvious, but it is her concern for her "household" (Proverbs 31:15, 21, 27) which heads the list.

D. Responsibilities of parents to children

- 1. Parents should love their children -- Titus 2:4

2. Parents should instruct their children in godly living
Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21
3. Parents should refrain from provoking their children to anger
Ephesians 6:4
4. Parents should exercise godly discipline and control over their children.
Ephesians 6:4; I Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:6

E. Responsibilities of children to parents

1. The children's responsibility to obey parents, like the responsibility of spouses to submit to one another, is rooted in the lordship of Christ. Eph. 6:1 exhorts children to obey their parents "in the Lord."
2. God is pleased by children who obey their parents (Colossians 3:20), and reserves a special blessing for those who do what is right by honoring their parents (Ephesians 6:2-3).
3. Children should give attention to the instruction of their parents, learning insight and wisdom for godly living -- Proverbs 4: 1- 4.

Let's do more than build houses. Let's build homes. Let us learn that our homes, as well as the church, can be a place of worship, blessing, and spiritual growth.

The churches of the New Testament era were chiefly "household churches" (Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2, etc.). John Wesley, the pioneer evangelist and founder of Methodism, saw the Christian family as the basic expression of the church.

YOUR MOVE:

The Christian home is a laboratory for Christianity, where Christ is invited to participate in the ongoing concerns of living. List the current, real, ongoing concerns of each member of your family. Pray for Christ's help in each of these concerns. At the first opportunity share your list with other family members and ask them to join you in prayer.

HOW TO CHOOSE A CHURCH

Lesson 6

I. A HEALTHY CHURCH IS SPIRITUAL

“Above everything else, a church should be known for its spirituality,”

Local churches, like people, soon develop a reputation. In his first letter to the Thessalonian believers, Paul noted their reputation for being a church characterized by loving labor, steadfastness, faith, and service (I Thessalonians 1:2-10).

Other churches in the New Testament were not characterized by their spirituality, but by their spiritual immaturity (I Corinthians 3:1-4).

The church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22) could only be described as "lukewarm" spiritually. Content in their abundance of material things, they were chided by Christ as being spiritually poor.

The spirituality of a church can often be seen in its attention to the basic spiritual disciplines of the faith.

The church at Jerusalem immediately after Pentecost focused on doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer (Acts 2:42). The church at Antioch was another model of spiritual power. Out of their experience of worship, prayer, and fasting the Lord called Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13: 1- 5) to plant the Gospel throughout the Roman world.

Joyful worship, attention to the Scriptures and prayer, and fellowship in the Spirit characterize the spiritual church both in the New Testament and in our own world today.

II. A HEALTHY CHURCH HAS A WORLD VISION

A. God's purpose for his people in the Old Testament, the nation of Israel, was for them to be a missionary people.

B. God addressed the people of Israel through Isaiah saying, "I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations... " (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6). God has the same purpose today for the new covenant community, the church, "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" -- who are called to "declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness" (I Peter 2:9),

C. God's salvation is not reserved for any particular group or people. The church has been commissioned by the risen Lord to make disciples among "all nations" or ethnic groups (Matthew 28: 19). This same vision and compassion for the whole world was expressed in

Jesus' promise to the disciples that they would be his witnesses from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (Acts 1: 8).

A truly New Testament church has a vision, compassion, and burden that extends from its immediate community to the entire world. It was God's love for the entire world that prompted his sacrifice of the supreme gift, his only Son (John 3:16).

III. A HEALTHY CHURCH IS A SERVANT CHURCH

- A.** By maintaining a servant's posture, the church reflects the model of Jesus Himself, who came "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:58).
- B.** Jesus declared that such servanthood should be the mark of the Christian community. "Whoever should be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave" (Matthew 20:26-27).
- C.** The Apostle Paul reminds us that both the message and the service for "ministry" of reconciliation has been committed to the church. "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18).

The church must resist the temptation to serve itself and always focus its ministry upon the world for which Christ died. The church must always have the mind of Christ, forever emptying itself of selfishness and assuming the role of a servant (Philippians 2:5-6).

IV. A HEALTHY CHURCH IS A FRIENDLY CHURCH

- A.** The exercise of Christian hospitality is a practical expression of the love which characterizes the community of believers.
- B.** One of the greatest avenues of ministry open to the church today is that of hospitality, which literally means, "love of strangers."
- C.** The ministry of hospitality is rooted in the Old Testament concern for the stranger within the gates of Israel (Exodus 22:2; 23:9).
- D.** The Jewish law insisted that strangers be treated on a level par with widows and priests (Deuteronomy 14:29).
- E.** The opening of one's home and sharing of resources in showing hospitality is the responsibility of every believer.

Romans 12:13 simply exhorts us to "practice hospitality." It should be practiced ungrudgingly (1 Peter 4:9), with the awareness that even angels may be sent by God in disguise to sample our "love of strangers" (Hebrews 13:2).

The exercise of hospitality is an indispensable ingredient in the life of the church. Through the ministry of hospitality, the church family is strengthened, the stranger welcomed, and the church grows.

YOUR MOVE:

These lessons are being provided by our local church. We pray that our church reflects each of the seven qualities of a healthy church. How does our church meet each guideline? Give specific examples.

HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKS

Lesson 7

The Holy Spirit is the third member of the Trinity. He is a person, just as interested in us as God the Father or Jesus (John 14:16). The Holy Spirit has been working since creation in our world to affect our lives (Genesis 1: 1- 2). The Bible shows the Spirit was active in the birth of Christ (Luke 1: 35) and in the earthly ministry of our Lord (Acts 10:38). He was involved in the inspiration of Scripture and is presently a part of the work of redemption (John 3:5). He calls men to preach the Gospel (Acts 13:2) and directs them where to work (Acts 16:6-10). The Holy Spirit has played a positive role in your becoming a Christian. We will deal in this lesson with how the Holy Spirit has worked in your life in the past and what he will do in the future for you as you walk in obedience to God's guidance and his Word.

I. BEFORE YOU WERE SAVED, THE HOLY SPIRIT DID THE FOLLOWING:

A. *He convicted you of your sins - 1 John 5:5-7*

It is the Holy Spirit who showed your sins to you and helped you realize you needed Christ. He continually speaks to you when other people don't know your needs. His constant convicting plays a vital part in your salvation.

B. *He pointed you to Christ - John 16:13-15*

Christ promised in these verses that when the Spirit would come, he would not be revealing himself, but he would be revealing Christ. The Spirit would also show you about Christ.

II. WHEN YOU WERE BORN AGAIN, THE HOLY SPIRIT DID THE FOLLOWING:

A. *You were renewed and regenerated - Titus 3:5-7:*

"He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit"

B. *He brought life to you - Romans 8:11*

"If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,

he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you."

C. *He witnessed to your salvation - Roman 8:16*

"It is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God."

III. NOW THAT YOU ARE BORN AGAIN, THE HOLY SPIRIT WANTS TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

A. *He wants to totally fill your heart and life - Ephesians 5:18*

"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit"

B. *He wants to sanctify you entirely - 1 Thessalonians 5:23*

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

C. *He wants to empower you to be a witness - Acts 1:8*

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth."

D. *He wants to constantly dwell in you - John 14:17*

"even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you."

E. *He wants to give you a gift so you can work for God - 1 Corinthians 12:11*

"All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills."

F. *He wants you to show the fruit of the Spirit in your life - Galatians 5:22*

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,

goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

- G. *He wants you to be free of the nature of sin - Romans 6:11-13***
 "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."

IV. HOW CAN YOU RECEIVE THE FULNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN YOUR LIFE?

- A. *GIVE YOUR TOTAL SELF TO GOD -- Romans 12***

As a "living sacrifice" - Romans 12:1-2

The burnt offerings recorded in the Old Testament book of Leviticus were symbolic of the complete sacrifice a Christian should make. Every part of the sacrifice was to be completely burned. It was a detailed sacrifice. The "living sacrifice" of the Christian should be the same way. Nothing should be withheld.

As an act of worship - Romans 12:1-2

True spirituality is a continuation of our dedication to God. We are to present ourselves once and for all to God, but true spirituality is a continual, daily surrender.

We must be willing to be changed - Romans 12:2

Don't be conformed. We cannot let the world put us into its mold if we are to be effective Christians. We must be the salt of the earth. We cannot have the world's value system. We must not desire the world's approval above God's.

Be transformed. The Greek term for transformed is one from which we get our word metamorphosis. It speaks of the amazing change from a worm into a butterfly. We are to be changed from the inside until there is a change in every part of our lives.

To discover and prove God's will - Romans 12:2

When we make a total surrender to God, then, and only then, do we find the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.

B. LET THE HOLY SPIRIT FILL YOU - EPHESIANS 5:18-21

There are five practical reasons why you will be a useful servant when you are filled with the Holy Spirit:

1. You can speak freely - Acts 4:20

The early Christians "could not help but speak" of what they had seen and heard. They were filled and they began to speak. We can tell how much a person loves Jesus by his inability to keep quiet about it.

2. You can sing joyfully - Ephesians 5:19

Singing is a sign of joy. Every Spirit-filled believer is happy. He has a song in his heart if not on his lips. Joy is a characteristic note in the book of Acts.

3. You can submit willingly - Ephesians 5:21

Pride does not want to submit to anyone or anything. However, in the heart where Jesus, the meek and lowly, resides, all pride is dispelled. Note that verse 21 does not refer to women only, but also to men.

4. You can share generously - Acts 4:34-35

The early church as recorded in the book of Acts was a sharing church. Its members had all things in common. They sold their lands to distribute to the poor. A Spirit-filled person will not be a selfish person.

5. You can see beyond immediate problems - Acts 7:59-60;11:24

Stephen is described as a man "full of faith and the Holy Spirit." When he was being martyred his face shone like an angel until Saul was convicted and later saved.

If we are going to be used by Christ, we must "... stay... until we are clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49) This was the key to the disciples' usefulness. Let it be a key for ours also.

C. MAKE LOVE YOUR AIM -- I CORINTHIANS 13:4-7

If Christ is to be seen and if we are to be useful, love will be our aim. All of us can mature more and more in this area. "And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment" (Philippians 1:9). The ultimate goal of our love should be characterized by the 15 qualities mentioned in I Corinthians 13:4-7:

Love is patient
 Love is kind
 Love is not jealous
 Love does not boast
 Love is not arrogant
 Does not act unbecomingly
 Love does not seek its own way
 Love is not provoked
 Love holds no grudges
 Love does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices with the truth
 Love bears all things
 Love believes all things
 Love hopes all things
 Love endures all things
 Love never fails!

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IV. BE RUGGEDLY HONEST -- Psalm 139:23-24

"Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, and know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"

Let God search your heart and then be honest with yourself when you find problems. When you are honest with God and yourself you can be truly honest with others.

V. BE YOURSELF -- I CORINTHIANS 12:12-20

As a member of the body of Christ you are unique. Don't try to pattern your life exactly by other Christians, but by what Christ says to you through his Word. You can be a vital part of the body of Christ without being identical to the other members.

There are many keys to usefulness. We studied only five. Ask God to show you how you can be more useful in your home, in your neighborhood, and in your church. It will be surprising what he shows you!

YOUR MOVE:

Jesus realized He would be leaving his disciples and would no longer be able to comfort them with his presence. But Jesus promised when He left He would send another to comfort them, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has taken the place of Christ on this earth to show you your sin and God's cure for your sin.

First become a Christian and repent of every known sin in your life.

Second, surrender yourself to God completely, as a living sacrifice. Yield every area of your life to God if you want the Holy Spirit to fill your heart and life.

"I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual act of worship. " Rom. 12:1-2

Third, ask the Holy Spirit to come and fill you. This verse shows that God the Father is anxious to give you the Holy Spirit.

"If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him." Luke 11:13

And then, put faith into the promises of God that when you ask, you will receive the Holy Spirit in His fullness. As you received forgiveness for sins by faith, so receive the Spirit's fullness by faith. As with your salvation, the evidence of answered prayer may come later; for now you are to believe.

"And this is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him" (1 John 5:14-15)

2 Timothy 1:14 Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

HOW TO BENEFIT FROM SUFFERING

Lesson 8

Suffering has been the universal experience of mankind since the fall. We know that God's original will was perfection -- perfect fellowship with him, perfect union in purpose, perfect mental abilities, perfect physical bodies, perfect nervous systems, etc. However, God created man with a will of his own. He did not want love and worship from his creatures because they had to love and worship him. He did not create man as a robot.

Man chose evil. The result? Sin, suffering, shame! Many skeptics look at this condition in the world and blame God by asking, "Why, God?" No doubt a grieved God looks at man who caused his own downfall and shame and asks, "Why, man?"

God's original will was that there should be no suffering. Yet man chose to disobey and caused his own suffering. C. S. Lewis likens this picture of man with a mother and her children. Says Lewis,

"But anyone who has been in authority knows how a thing can be in accordance with your will in one way and not in another. It may be quite sensible for a mother to say to the children, 'I'm not going to make you tidy the bedroom every night. You have to learn to keep it tidy on your own.' Then she goes up one night and finds the Teddy bear and the ink and the French Grammar all lying in the grate. That is against her will. She would prefer the children to be tidy, but on the other hand, it is her will which has left the children free to be untidy.

In the same way it is not God's original will that suffering should take place, but since He gave us the responsibility to obey Him and we did not, His will had made it possible. How do we, as God's people, understand and cope with suffering?

I. REALIZE THAT AS CHRISTIANS WE ARE NOT EXEMPT FROM SUFFERING

- A. **Philippians 1:29** "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to **suffer** for His sake."
- B. **II Timothy 3:12** "And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."
- C. **Matthew 5:10-12** "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when *men* cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

II. REALIZE THAT SOME OF GOD'S GIANTS HAVE BEEN MEN WHO HAVE SUFFERED.

A. Job

"Behold, we call those happy who were steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful." (James 5:11) Job is the all-time example for those who suffer. He suffered ridicule from his wife, scolding from his friends, loss of his property, the death of his children, the loss of his influence, and the loss of his health. Yet, God called Job a perfect man and one who hated evil (Job 1:1). We do not understand why, in all its aspects, God allowed this to happen to Job. Yet, we do know God was in control and would not allow Satan to go further than Job could bear. "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" (I Corinthians 10:13). We will be ever in debt to Job for his example to us. In him we see one who cried in faith, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him."

B. Joseph

One of the greatest verses in Scripture is Joseph's insight into God's dealing with him, even in trying circumstances and suffering, found in Genesis 50:20: "As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today."

1. Joseph was hated by his brethren -- Genesis 37:4
2. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brethren -- Genesis 37:28
3. Joseph was put into prison because of a lie "but the Lord was with Joseph... " - Genesis 39:21.
4. Joseph was forgotten by those he helped -- Genesis 40:14, 23
Nothing seemed to go right for Joseph. In the world's eyes all that he did went astray. He suffered terribly! Yet, God meant it for good (Genesis 50:20). By his faith in God and submission to suffering the Israelite race was saved.

C. St. Paul

No one suffered more than the Apostle Paul (I Corinthians 4: 9-13; 2 Corinthians 11:23-33). Yet he could say, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" -- I Corinthians 11: 1. There is a type of Christianity

which preaches the “gospel” of health, wealth, and prosperity. They feel only the “*unspiritual*” suffer. “IF” this is true, Paul, the disciples, and Jesus were “unspiritual.”

D. Jesus

"Why hast thou forsaken me?" That was the agonizing question of Jesus as he died on the cross. He suffered physically. He suffered the rejection of his own countrymen (John 1:11, 12). Yet all for a glorious purpose: "Looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" --Hebrews 12:2

E. The disciples

All suffered a martyr's death, according to church tradition, except John the Beloved.

III. REALIZE THAT GOD USES SUFFERING FOR HIS OWN HIGHER PURPOSES

- A. **2 Cor. 1:3-5** “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.”
- B. God allowed an impediment (a thorn in the flesh) to keep Paul from "exalting myself". "Though Satan was its messenger" (2 Cor. 12:7),
- C. "I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel" -- Philippians 1:12

Paul at the time of this writing was in prison -- suffering. Yet, God allowed him to see a higher purpose -- the Gospel would progress. In fact, Philippians 1: 13 shows us the Gospel was penetrating to Caesar's guard and “everywhere else” and (verse 14) others were preaching more boldly due to Paul's suffering.

- D. **Hebrews 12:11** “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

IV. REALIZE "THE SUFFERINGS OF THIS PRESENT TIME ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE COMPARED WITH THE GLORY THAT IS TO BE REVEALED TO US. (Rom. 8:18)

One can bear the pain of sickness if the doctor tells him he will soon be cured. In the same way we can bear misunderstanding and suffering if we know Jesus is coming back to right all wrongs and to give us a new life and a new glorified body - 2 Corinthians 5: 1; I John 3: 1- 3.

V. REALIZE GOD HAS PROMISED TO DESTROY ALL SUFFERING, PAIN, AND DEATH

"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." Revelation 21: 4

When the Rev. David Seamonds was in India as a missionary, his son, Steve, was born with a club foot. In order to correct this condition, the Rev. Seamonds was instructed to twist Steve's foot in the opposite direction for a certain length of time each day. The pain was excruciating for little Steve. His father said he felt like his son hated him at times. He knew that Steve did not understand why his father made him go through such pain. Yet, today Steve is a healthy man without any impediment. He now appreciates what his father did, even though he did not understand his sufferings then.

Can we not see as Christians that God is as loving and as wise? Let us trust God in our sufferings. Let us realize he has a purpose -- even though we may not see it. Let us sing with the songwriter, "For I know whatever befall me, Jesus doeth all things well!"

YOUR MOVE:

This lesson deals with five realizations related to suffering. Rank them in terms of their value in comforting you, with the most valuable first, second most valuable next, etc. Explain your ranking.

HOW TO LIVE A PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Lesson 9

The book of James, deals with many of the practicalities of the Christian life:

1. practical evaluation of trials (James 1: 2- 12)
2. practical insight into temptation (1: 12-18)
3. practical obedience to the Word (1: 19-27)
4. practical evaluation of others (2: 1- 13)
5. practical faith (2:14-26)
6. practical use of the tongue (3:1-12)
7. practical wisdom (3:13-18)
8. practical advice against worldliness (4:1- 12)
9. practical plans (4:13-17)
10. practical patience (5: 1- 12)
11. practical prayer (5:13-18)
12. practical love (5:19, 20)

Every Christian wants to be practical. He wants his religion to work seven days a week -- not just on Sunday. James tells us how to succeed in this worthy goal.

Since it would be impossible to deal with all the above stated themes in this lesson, we will deal with only one -- the practical use of the tongue. Nothing could be more practical than to study something most of us do daily -- talk.

From the book of James we will look at three themes regarding the tongue: its description, its danger, and its control.

I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE TONGUE (3:1-5)

Before James describes the tongue, he gives a warning and a description of perfection. In verse 1 James warns against everyone desiring to teach. James says the teacher will be judged with a stricter judgment; no doubt because greater knowledge brings greater responsibility. The teacher is responsible that those he teaches know the truth. If the teacher were to teach improper doctrine he would corrupt not just one, but many.

In verse 2, James says the mark of perfection is the control of the tongue.

A. *The tongue is compared to a bit (3:3)*

Bits are small, but they have a great effect. So it is with the tongue. It is but a small member of the body when compared with arms, legs, etc., but none have a greater impact on our lives and the lives of others than the tongue.

B. *The tongue is compared to a rudder (3:4)*

The ship is great, but it can be directed by a small rudder. Again we see a large impact due to a small force.

C. *The tongue is compared to a fire 3:5)*

All of us have seen the charred remains of a forest set ablaze by a spark from a careless cigarette smoker. In the same way a small word or a little slander can get a whole church or neighborhood aflame with devastating rumor.

II. THE DANGER OF THE TONGUE (3:6-8)

A. *The tongue is a destructive instrument.*

"The tongue is a fire" (3:6). fire can be useful, but nothing is more destructive. Unless quickly put out, fire can gut a building or a whole town in a brief time.

B. *The tongue is a deceitful instrument.*

The tongue has so many evils stemming from it that it is an "unrighteous world." It can curse, criticize, condemn (judge), contaminate! All this adds up to an "unrighteous world."

C. *The tongue is a disturbing instrument.*

The tongue disturbs our lives. There is not a part of life the tongue does not touch. It "stains the whole body." Our minds are corrupted until eventually our bodies are corrupted; then all who listen to us are defiled. No wonder the writer of Proverbs said, the one who keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble.

(Proverbs 21:23)

D. *The tongue is e deadly instrument.*

1. It is full of deadly poison
2. A person can be murdered by gossip as well as by a gun.

III. THE CONTROL OF THE TONGUE (3:13-18)

This passage is primarily a description of practical wisdom. It is also an answer to one who cannot control his tongue. The answer is a heavenly wisdom which will control our speech and help us speak in the wisdom God gives. Two types of wisdom are described:

A. Earthly wisdom

1. Its source (3:15)

- a) earthly -- its horizon does not extend beyond this world. It is inspired with only earth's values in mind. It disregards God's point of view.
- b) unspiritual -- it does not come from the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 2:14). Therefore, it is not spiritual.
- c) devilish -- it is demon-like because it is full of pride and selfish ambition. The source of many people's speech is what these adjectives describe: earthly, unspiritual, devilish.

2. Its fruit (3:14, 16)

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| a) bitterness | d) boasting |
| b) jealousy | e) disorder |
| c) selfish ambition | f) every vile practice |

B. Heavenly wisdom

- 1. pure -- God's wisdom, which should govern our speech, is, above all, free from filth and contamination. In the context (3:13-18), it is said our speech should be free from bitterness, jealousy, selfishness, ambition, arrogance, etc.
- 2. peaceable -- God's wisdom will not allow our speech to cause controversy all the time. Purity must precede peacemaking, however. (See also Matthew 5:8-9).
- 3. gentle -- if our wisdom is marked by gentleness, our speech will be also. We will be sweetly reasonable.
- 4. open to reason -- easy to be entreated
- 5. full of mercy -- forgiving

6. full of good fruits -- instead of speech that brings death, our speech will bring life. (Ephesians 4:29-32; Colossians 4:6)
7. without uncertainty -- we will not be deceitful in speech. We will say what we mean.
8. sincere -- we will not pretend to have done what we have not or be what we are not.

Our speech will be governed by these rules.

YOUR MOVE:

Think of three occasions in your life when your tongue was used wrongly. Now write yourself a note of commitment indicating how you purpose to rightly use your tongue. Be specific.

HOW TO BE A GOOD STEWARD

Lesson 10

John 3:16 is perhaps the greatest verse in the Bible. In it we find God's plan of salvation for the world. We find the means of salvation -- the vicarious death of Christ. We find the motive of salvation -- love. We also find the proof of God's love -- "God so loved... that he gave." Someone has said you can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving. We discover the same truth in spiritual things. As we love God we will give to him.

In this lesson we will study what the Bible says about stewardship and learn how to be good stewards.

To be a good steward, remember the following points:

I. EVERYTHING BELONGS TO GOD

A. "... for all the earth is mine" Exodus 19:5

A. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and those who dwell therein." Psalm 24:1; I Cor. 10:26

God says the world and all it contains are his. This includes US! According to Deuteronomy 32:6, there are two reasons why everything belongs to God:

1. By right of creation -- He made everything, so everything is His.
2. By right of redemption -- He bought us with the blood of Christ. I Corinthians 6:19-20 tells us "... you are not your own; you were bought with a price..." When we recognize that EVERYTHING we have belongs to God, it will help us to be the stewards we should be.

II. GOD HAS MADE US THE MANAGERS OF HIS POSSESSIONS

A. Matthew 21:33-46 gives the account of a vineyard owner going on a trip and leaving the vineyard to be cared for by his servants. During his trip, the owner sent back to get fruit from his vineyard.

B. Matthew 25:14-30 -- the parable of the talents

C. Luke 19:11-27 -- the parable of the pounds.

In both of these accounts the Master leaves different sums of money with his servants and departs on a journey. When the Master returns, he blesses those servants who had multiplied their capital and punishes those who did nothing.

III. WE WILL GIVE AN ACCOUNT TO GOD FOR OUR STEWARDSHIP

- A. "So each of us shall give account of himself to God."
Romans 14:12.

All of us will stand before God to answer for the way we have managed what he gave us. The Bible shows we will account for:

1. How we used our time -- "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of the time because the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:15-16)
2. How we worked -- "rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that whatever good any one does, he will receive the same again from the Lord..." (Ephesians 6:7-8)
3. What we talked about -- "I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter." (Matthew 12:36)
4. How we spent our money.
 - a) God commands that we tithe (Malachi 3:10b)
God is pleased with our freewill offerings above our tithes (2 Corinthians 8:1-5)
 - v. 2 -- "... the wealth of their liberality..." These Christians were not wealthy in possessions, but rich in their generosity.
 - v. 3 -- "... gave beyond their means..." These Christians gave beyond what they could afford and trusted God to take care of them.
 - v. 4 -- "... begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints..." The Macedonian Christians asked for the opportunity to share in God's work through giving.
 - v. 5 -- "... first they gave themselves to the

Lord... " The key to good stewardship is first of all belonging completely to God. Then we can truly give unselfishly.

- b). God is interested in how we spend the remainder of our money after we give our tithes and offerings.

Luke 15: 11- 32 contains the parable of the prodigal son. The prodigal son was the object of Christ's lesson not just because he left home, but also because he wasted his resources in riotous living.

Luke 16: 1- 3 shows the shrewd steward was punished for wasting his master's goods.

5. How we used our gifts -- "As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" (I Peter 4:10). The spiritual gifts we possess should be used for God and the spreading of the Gospel. We will give an account of how we used our gifts.
6. How well we witnessed -- "But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please men, but to please God who tests our hearts" (I Thessalonians 2:4).

God has entrusted the Gospel to us and we must share the "Good News." We will answer to God one day as to how well we invested this gift.

IV. GOD IS INTERESTED IN OUR ATTITUDE AS WE GIVE

"Each one must do as he had made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7

V. GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF US AS WE GIVE TO HIM

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well." Matthew 6:33.

VI. THE CHIEF QUALITY REQUIRED OF A STEWARD IS FAITHFULNESS

"Moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy."
(I Corinthians 4:2)

Stewards are not rewarded for their production, as seen in the parable of the talents. The steward who increased five talents was rewarded the same as the steward who increased two talents. The stewards were rewarded for their faithfulness to the task.

YOUR MOVE:

Section III of this lesson teaches we will have to account for six expressions of stewardship, according to the Bible. Rate yourself in regard to each area of stewardship responsibility on the scale below:

STEWARDSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES	MY RATING
	Low High
1. How I use my time	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. How I serve God	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. What I talk about	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. How I spend my money	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. How I use my spiritual gifts	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
6. How I witness to others	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

