Established In the Faith

(A Practical Guide to Biblical Discipleship)

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"…If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23)

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LESSON #1

DISCIPLESHIP

What if Jesus had not trained the Apostles? What if Philip never shared the gospel of Christ with the Ethiopian Eunuch? What if the Apostle Paul never went on his missionary journeys? What if Peter never fed the flock of God as instructed by Jesus Christ.

The Purpose of Discipleship is to raise up the next generation of believers. As one has been trained in the faith, so ought he to train another – and another – and another. On and on it goes until the Lord returns.

What is the purpose of Discipleship?

As was mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, Discipleship's main purpose is to train up the next generation of believers. That which has been delivered unto the Apostles by Jesus Christ has been handed down to us throughout two millennia and we MUST continue to carry the torch; passing it down to the next generation to follow **(2 Tim 2:2).**

What is the principle behind Discipleship?

In a word: "Relationships". Jesus Christ took the time necessary to cultivate His relationship with His disciples over a three-year period. What we are doing here is not as in depth. Our lifestyles just do not permit for that in modern times. This series of lessons is meant to last a minimum of 15 weeks – Some lessons may require more time. In that time, the teacher will get to know the student and the student will get to know the teacher. Bonds will be made that will hopefully last a lifetime.

This is the principle behind Discipleship. If it were looked at from the perspective of "running someone through a series of classes," the perspective would be wrong. You are not just another "number" to be trained in the faith. God knows you intimately and it is time to allow others to know you intimately as well. A relationship with another Christian is like a root which keeps the new Christian watered and grounded. If you do not allow for Christian relationships in your life, you will not grow as God would have you to grow. The Discipler and the Disciple will learn to minister and serve one another **(Gal 5:13)**.

What will Discipleship do for the Disciple?

1. <u>Dedication</u>: You cannot get through 15 (or more) lessons without dedication. Discipleship will demand that you give it the time necessary, and by that you will learn dedication.

2. Loyalty: The sad reality is that many people cannot or choose not to learn to get along. This is so even among Christians. When you spend as much time with someone as necessary to complete this series of lessons, you will undoubtedly develop loyal relationships. Coupled with the dedication to learn that which God would have you to learn, you also learn loyalty to HIM **(Luke 14:26-27)**.
3. Selflessness: In order to schedule these lessons you may have to cooperate and coordinate times. The time one may have available may not necessarily be that which you would prefer. That's okay – it may be necessary to ignore your preference in order to meet the other's need **(1 Co 16:16)**.
4. Prioritizing: One thing has proven itself time and time again; when someone commits to Discipleship there will be many distractions along the way. You may even begin to think of some things that have nearly or successfully prevented you from a scheduled meeting. Hopefully, you ignored that distraction and continued on with the Discipleship meeting. God should always come first. This is a lesson the new Christian must learn **(Matt 6:33)**.
5. Knowledge of God: Depending on your age when you received Jesus Christ as Saviour, you have lived much of your life without true knowledge of God. For years you lived with as much knowledge of God as your imagination could conceive. Now you have the Bible. Now you have truth. Let someone who has walked with God for some time, and has a working knowledge of the word of God guide you through your new walk. What could be better than cultivating your relationships with an understanding of God **(Eph 3:4)**?

What will Discipleship do for the Discipler?

1. Purpose: Seeing that it is commanded of the believer to evangelize and teach new Christians, he will be fulfilling God's demand **(Matt 28:20)**.
2. Reward: When one fulfills their duty, God rewards them for being faithful. By allowing one to Disciple you, you are helping provide a reward **(Matt 25:21)**.
3. Encouragement: There is no real way to express the feeling one gets by watching another grow in the Lord. To be a part of that is such an encouragement; it will likely be remembered for a lifetime **(1 Thes 5:11)**.

What is the ultimate goal of Discipleship?

The goal can be found in the Second Epistle of Peter. This is the goal of every believer…both the Disciple and the Discipler.

(2Pe 1:5-7) And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord to Thee

Take my moments and my days

Let them flow in ceaseless praise

Lesson One Memory Verses:

(Psalms 145:4)

(4) One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.

(Matthew 10:24)

(24) The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.

(2Timothy 2:2)

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

LESSON #2
UNDERSTANDING SALVATION

"I said a prayer…so now what?"

There are many people who have, at one point in time, said a prayer which they believe will get them into heaven. Unfortunately, there are also many people who seek the religious covering of "Christendom" but never fully understand what it is they believe. Understanding salvation is of the utmost importance in order to walk with the Lord in the full assurance of your salvation and lead a life of sanctification; a life set apart for the Lord's use. Therefore the purpose of this lesson is to bring you into a full understanding of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Why did Jesus go to the cross?

The day that you accepted Jesus Christ as your Saviour, you were likely told that you are a sinner. Each and every person (with the exception of Jesus Christ) has committed one or more sins throughout the course of his life. The Bible teaches us that, **"all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23)**. Because the "all" in that sentence includes you, you have come short of God's glory.

(Ecc 7:20) For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

(Rom 3:10) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

God looked down from His throne and saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth **(Gen 6:5)**. Because God is holy and just, he must punish the sinner **(Deut 32:4)**. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ to earth for one specific reason: to seek and to save that which was lost **(Luke 19:10)**. Jesus, out of obedience to the will of the Father **(Heb 5:8)** came to the earth, born of a virgin, to pay the penalty for the sins of man. It was the love of God that drove Jesus to the cross.

(John 3:16-17) For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

(Rom 5:8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

The Death, Burial and Resurrection of Jesus Christ

(1Co 15:3-4) For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the

scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

The word gospel means "God's word" or "God's Message" and with that carries the understanding of "good news." Therefore, God's word is good news for you and me. Yet the Bible says that the "death, burial and resurrection" of Jesus Christ *is* the gospel. Is someone's death really good news? Normally the answer would be "no", but we must remember that this was the reason Jesus came. It is good news in that His death, burial and resurrection make it possible for us to be saved! Therefore His death is *our* good news…and it is God's word to us.

Jesus Christ died to pay the ransom for your soul **(1 Tim 2:5-6)**. When He spilled His blood on our behalf, He made justification possible for each and every one of us **(Rom 5:9)**. He was buried so that He might show His glory by His resurrection. Jesus rose from the grave triumphantly, showing His power and Deity!

(Col 2:12-15) Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

This is the believer's hope! One day, like Jesus, the believer will rise from the grave and stand victorious at the Saviour's side! Over time, as you let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, you will fear death less and less; knowing that our death only means an eternity with Jesus Christ.

(2Co 5:8) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

I believe! What is my relationship to God now?

All people fall into one of two categories. They are either children of God or children of the devil **(John 8:38)**. Contrary to popular belief, when you were born, you were born into the family of the devil, not the family of God. Your birth nature is a sin nature. Up until the day that you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and became born again **(John 3:7)** you were a sinful child of the devil.

But…

(John 1:12-13) But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Your physical birth put you into the devil's family, but your spiritual birth puts you into God's family. Rejoice! You are a child of God and joint heir with Jesus **(Gal 4:7)**! You now belong to Jesus. You have been purchased with His blood. You are a son of God!

Like the son of a human father, you will be both rewarded and chastened by your Heavenly Father. You will be rewarded for your service to God in this life (which will be discussed in a later chapter) and you will be chastened by God for disobedience.

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

While disobedience brings punishment **(Gal 6:7)** obedience to God brings more blessings than can be described. You have been born again! You have every reason to rejoice. Do not be afraid to tell others that you are a "Born Again Christian". God was not ashamed to take you into His family, do not be ashamed to proclaim Jesus as your God!

Now that I've been saved, is there any way I can lose my salvation?

The question that you must ask yourself is not whether you can lose your salvation; but ask yourself what you did to earn your salvation. When you confront yourself with that question, the simple answer is "nothing". You did not earn salvation – in fact, we are all most undeserving of God's grace in our lives. The only requirement God has made is faith.

(Heb 11:6) But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

God has made it clear in His word that He desires men to come unto Him by faith. You were saved by God's grace through your faith **(Eph 2:8-9)**. The only *work* you did was a work of faith **(1 Thes 1:3)**. So then, if you did not earn it yourself, you cannot lose it yourself.

Will Jesus take away my salvation?

He will never cast you out of his family **(John 6:37)**.

Can another person take away or cause me to lose my salvation?

God is greater than all, and God would not allow that to happen **(John 10:27-29)**.

Can I cast my salvation aside?

Once again, you didn't earn it…therefore you cannot do anything to lose it. It is a free gift.

Consider this: God offers eternal life to all who believe on Jesus Christ. God would be a liar if salvation was not eternal. The very word means "forever". If the life that God offers through salvation does not last forever, then He has misled you. But God cannot lie **(Titus 1:2)**.

The Apostle Paul cleared everything up for us when he penned **(Romans 8:38-39)** through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Turn there in your Bible and match the following list up with those verses.

1. Death: When you die, salvation is still yours.
2. Life: While you live, there is no sin so great as to warrant a loss of salvation.
3. Angels: Even mighty beings cannot strip you of your salvation.
4. Principalities: Government may punish Christians for being Christians, but they can NEVER take away your future in heaven.
5. Powers: Satan is the Prince of the powers of the air…and he cannot cause you to lose your salvation.
6. Things Present: Nothing now!
7. Things to Come: Nothing in the future!
8. Height: Nothing above!
9. Depth: Nothing below!
10. Nor any other Creature: This would include anything left out of this list. There is *nothing* and *no one* who will strip you of your home in heaven.

Nothing can separate you from God's love. Remember, God so loved you that He gave His only Begotten Son for you. You are a part of the family of God. Like many children do, there may come a time when you disappoint your Heavenly Father. That does not mean you are no longer His child. You have likely angered your physical parents on more than one occasion; yet you are still one of their children and they will love you forever. So too is our Heavenly Father's love for us: ETERNAL. Your future is solid. You have been sealed by the Holy Spirit of God **(Eph 1:13)**!

Rejoice, rejoice O Christian; lift up your voice and sing eternal Hallelujah's to Jesus Christ the King!

Lesson Two Memory Verses:

(Ephesians 2:8-10)

(8) For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

(9) Not of works, lest any man should boast.

(10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

(John 3:16)

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

(Rom 5:8-9)

(8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

(9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

LESSON #3

THE WORD OF GOD

I'm a child of God…so now what?

How is the child of God supposed to live his life? Are there any demands God makes upon the life of the new believer? How does he learn about Jesus Christ? All of the above questions can be learned by reading the word of God.

The Bible is God's love letter to the Christian. In it, He teaches us how to live a life pleasing to Him and how to live a life that will ultimately be beneficial to us. We need not fear the Bible; it is a wealth of knowledge. We must read it, believe it, and live it!

What is faith?

Perhaps you have heard of men like Noah, Abraham, Joseph and Daniel. You've heard of their great stories. Noah and his family were saved from the flood that flooded the whole earth. Abraham was given a son when he was well past the years of having children. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers only later to save his brothers from starvation. Daniel interpreted the dreams of the Babylonian and Persian kings with prophetic skill and accuracy. While each and every one of them has a different story, they all have one thing in common:

THEY BELIEVED THE WORD OF GOD!

This is faith: An *active* belief in the word of God. By faith in God's word, Noah built an arc. By faith in God's word, Abraham became the child of promise. By faith in God's word, Joseph became the leader of his brethren. By faith in God's word, Daniel refused to participate in the pagan worship of the Babylonian Empire. By faith in God's word, *you* have believed on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

Now that you've accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, you can place your name among these great men of faith. By faith in the word of God, you believed that Jesus is the very Christ, the only Saviour of the world. By that faith you have been saved. You can now continue to show your faith by reading, believing and acting upon the Bible: the word of God.

God has not left us without a witness

(2Co 13:1) This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

God has set up a standard when it comes to the delivery of truth. In other words, unless there have been at least two, but better three witnesses, a statement cannot be deemed credible. It is like that in the United States court system. One witness does not carry the weight necessary to convict. But when you add a second witness, the case

becomes solid. If there is a third witness added, it becomes open and shut. It is a no-brainer.

Likewise, God has left us three witnesses that testify of God's existence.

1. Creation: Man cannot help but consider that God exists based on the magnificence of the universe. Only a fool could look at creation and still say that there is no God **(Ps 14:1; Ps 53:1)**!
2. Conscience: Everyone has an innate sense that he has done wrong before the God of creation. We feel guilty for wrong doing because our conscience bears witness of our sin nature. It is only after repeatedly ignoring the conscience that its nagging tends to go away **(1 Tim 4:2)**.
3. The word of God: The third and final revelation comes in the form of the word of God. From Genesis to Revelation, we have everything we need to live a life of godliness **(2 Pet 1:3)**.

(1Jn 5:7) For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

1. The Father=The Creation
2. The Holy Ghost=The Conscience
3. The Word of God (Jesus Christ)=The word of God (Bible)

There you have God's three witnesses. Once we have acknowledged God's existence by viewing the Creation, God sends the next witness. The second witness (our Conscience) tells us that we have done wrong and therefore must answer to the Creator God. If we respond positively to the first two, God will send the final and most important revelation of Himself: the word of God. It is here where most people stumble. This is why there are so many religions in the world. Man seeks to atone for his own sins because he has rejected the authority of the word of God which clearly teaches that Jesus, and Jesus alone, is our only hope of redemption.

If you have received the word of God as your final authority, it is because you first believed that God existed; then you felt as if you had done wrong by Him. God was then faithful to send someone into your life to deliver the message of the gospel: which is the word of God. If you have a King James Bible sitting on your lap, you have God's third and final witness of himself. It has not only revealed your need for Jesus Christ, but it will continue to reveal God's truth to you as you read and study it.

God is speaking…listen up

Prayer (discussed in a later chapter) is simply speaking to God. When you pray you speak to God. When you read the word of God, it is God speaking to you. You do not need to ask God for a sign; He has given you His word. He speaks to you as often as you wish to engage in conversation. Just remember that your conversation should be both speaking and listening. You may speak to God any time you desire. Simply pray. But in order to hear from God, you must open up His book. This is the way God speaks to people in our present dispensation. There will be more on dispensations to follow.

The Scriptures are inspired and preserved

(2Ti 3:16-17) All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Every single word of God is pure **(Ps 12:6)** and has been perfectly preserved for you **(Ps 12:7)**. You can trust that every single word was specifically chosen by God. You can trust that every punctuation mark was intentional. You can trust that every verse number was set for a reason. Remember, God has not left himself without a witness.

He preserved His word so that you might know the four things mentioned in the above verses. He has given the Scripture for Doctrine, Reproof, Correction and Instruction in Righteousness.

Doctrine: *Teaching* that which is *right*.

Reproof: *Revealing* that which is *wrong*.

Correction: *Showing* you *how* to *get it right*.

Instruction in Righteousness: *Showing* you *how* to *keep it right*.

(Mat 5:18) For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Where has it been inspired and preserved?

Unfortunately, there is a sad controversy in Christianity today. This controversy is over which Bible is the right one. Let me be forward; there is only one Bible. It is the Authorized Version: King James Bible.

When God inspired the Hebrew (Old Testament), He did so in the Masoretic Texts. When He inspired the Greek (New Testament), He did so in the Textus Receptus. But God gave His completed revelation (the word of God from Genesis to Revelation) in English and it is still preserved today in the King James Bible.

What about the "other bibles"?

One of the first things Satan did in order to deceive Eve was question the authority of God's word **(Gen 3:1)**. He continues to do so today. There are so many different versions (perversions) of the bible out there today that man does not know what to believe. This was a cunning device of the devil.

There was a time in ancient history when men gathered together to build a tower. You may have heard of that tower: it is the Tower of Babel. They chose to unify without God much like man is pushing for unity without God today. At that time however, God intervened and

confused their languages. The work on the tower had to stop because people could no longer understand one another.

Satan is nothing but a copycat. He has done the same thing with the language of the Bible. In order to prevent the Church of God from unifying and performing that which God would have it to do, Satan has caused confusion by adding more "versions" of the bible. The Church cannot unite because we are all using different "bibles" and therefore do not understand true doctrine, nor do we understand one another.

Much can be said in regards to what sort of nonsense the other "versions" have spread. Time to discuss that will not be taken here. If you desire to study this further, a great book to read is: *New Age Versions* by G.A. Riplinger. You will be quite astonished to find out what the other "versions" have done to harm Christianity.

If you desire to look into a couple of very common mistakes in the newer "versions", compare the King James Bible to the NIV, CEV, RSV and any other "version" out there. Here are some verses that will make for interesting discussions:

(1 John 5:7)

This verse was used earlier to show you the three witnesses of God's existence. The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost are all one: The Trinity. This verse is removed from the newer "versions".

(Acts 8:37)

Here the Ethiopian Eunuch proves his faith in Jesus Christ by proudly proclaiming, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Based on his statement of faith, he receives water baptism. (Discussed in a later chapter) The newer "versions" omit this verse leaving the reader to wonder why he received baptism. This leads some to think that water baptism saves you, when in reality it was his belief in Jesus that saved him.

(2 Sam 21:19)

This verse should prove without a shadow of a doubt that you cannot trust the newer "versions". Perhaps you have heard the

story…many of us have: David killed Goliath with a slingshot. Even non-Christians know this story. But here in this verse, it is said that Elhanan killed Goliath. This is in direct contradiction to other Scriptures, including the "sister verse" **(1 Chr 20:5)** which clearly states that Elhanan killed Goliath's brother, Lahmi. The King James Bible does not make that mistake.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. The other "versions" (perversions) are littered with errors. This is because they do not come from God, they come from Satan. Get yourself a King James Bible (NOT a New King James Bible…it is corrupted as well) and begin to learn the King's English. It will be tough at first, but over time you'll find it less and less difficult. Even secular historians say that the peak of the English language happened in the early 17th century. Your King James Bible was released publicly in 1611. This is no coincidence, God's language is perfect. Learn to trust Him by reading your Bible regularly.

The difference between Christianity and a Cult is its authority

All of the cults have one thing in common: their final authority does not come from the Bible. The Jehovah's Witnesses use a corrupt text (The New World Translation) which has seen many revisions over the years. The reason it has seen revisions is because it does not always line up with its founder's teachings. Therefore the Bible has been corrupted to meet their teacher's ideologies. They no longer have *the Bible*, they have a corrupted book, which is not the word of God at all.

Likewise Mormons (though they use the King James Bible) couple it with the writings of their founder. These other writings heavily contradict sound Biblical teaching. Even Catholicism (which does not use the King James Bible) couples its teachings from unsaved men (the "church" fathers) as well as Catholic tradition. But the Bible warns us to stay away from vain tradition **(Col 2:8)**.

True Christianity is Biblical Christianity. It makes the Bible its final authority. This way there is a set standard. If someone begins to teach something contrary to the word of God, he can be marked and avoided

(Rom 16:17). In the world of the cults, one man is considered the final authority. Therefore whatever he says, goes. This makes things very dangerous for the followers. If a wicked man is in charge, trouble will ensue. The Mormons have Joseph Smith, not the Bible. The Jehovah's Witnesses have Brigham Young, not the Bible. Catholicism has the Pope, not the Bible. If the Bible contradicts what man teaches, MAN IS WRONG, the Bible is not.

(Rom 3:4) God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

God went through the trouble of inspiring and preserving His word so that you might have it. Think about it! The Bible was written over 1600 years, by over 40 human authors without any contradictions. Its prophecies have proven true with 100% accuracy. If God went through that much trouble so that you might have a copy of His book, you would do well to respond by taking that book off of the shelf and reading it…over and over and over again.

Sing them over again to me, wonderful words of life

Let me more of their beauty see, wonderful words of life

Words of life and beauty, teach me faith and duty

Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life

Lesson Three Memory Verses:

(Psalms 12:6-7)

(6) The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

(7) Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

(2Timothy 3:16-17)

(16) All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

(17) That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

LESSON #4

THE DEITY OF CHRIST

Was Jesus God? Was Jesus just a man? Was He both? The word of God paints a clear picture of this complex issue. The purpose of this chapter is to show the reader the Biblical teaching that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh.

Is Jesus God?

The deity of Christ is a doctrine that separates the world of the cults from Christianity. Biblical Christianity is clear: Jesus is God. Many have and will continue to point out that the Bible is not very clear in regards to the deity of Christ. Still others will say that Jesus himself never testified to being God. We'll find in this chapter that both schools of thought are incorrect. The Bible is clear about the deity of Jesus Christ, and Christ himself made some very clear statements concerning His deity.

The Bible is clear

There are many verses that could be pointed out that show either clearly or in a round about way that Jesus is indeed the very God of Creation. We'll list a few of them later in this section and also in the memory verse section. But for the time being, we'll stick with the book of John. Here we'll find Jesus making seven statements that point to His deity.

"I am the true vine" **(John 15:1-2) I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.**

God the Father chose the title of Jehovah, which means "The LORD". This is the name that the nation of Israel came to know as the one true God, Creator and Sustainer of all. As we consider the words Jesus spoke in the above verses, the **"I am"** is Jesus' identification as God, while the **"in me"** is what every man is upon recognizing Christ as God. Just before death one of the two thieves turned to Jesus and said, **"…Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (Luke 23:42)**. When he used the word "Lord" he was calling Jesus Jehovah. Jesus is the True Vine…the True God of Israel. Even the thief on the cross knew who he was dealing with.

"I am the bread of life" **(John 6:47-48) Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life.**

There is perhaps no greater story of Godly provision that that of the nation of Israel wandering in the wilderness for forty years. For forty years, God provided for their every need. They did not go without food. They did not go without water. Even their clothing did not wear out. When Jesus was confronted with the question, **"What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee?" (John 6:30)**. Jesus began to speak of the bread provided in the wilderness from God the Father and compared that bread with **"the bread of God…which cometh down from heaven." (John 6:33)**. He is referring to Himself. Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life, the provider and sustainer of all. The world offers the leavened bread of Religion, Philosophy and Education. But Jesus is the sweet unleavened bread: offering eternal life to all who will come unto Him.

"I am the light of the world" **(John 8:12) Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.**

We live in a world where violence has become the norm. We live in a world where sex and drugs are glamorized. We live in a world where righteousness and holiness are scoffed at while sin is excused. For the most part people are not even aware that they walk in darkness. But Jesus is the light of the world. Jesus puts the spotlight on sin and that light can be painful. But once man's eyes adjust to that light and he realizes that the blindness has been lifted, it is then that he sees Christ for who He is: He is the light that went before the camp of Israel and He is the light that goes before the church, guiding us and leading us. Jesus identifies Himself with the Father of lights by calling Himself the light of the world **(James 1:17)**.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life" **(John 14:6) Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**

Though man has sought every form of peace possible, he has not found the way to achieve it. Only by seeking Jesus Christ (THE WAY) can man find peace. If man is to find peace, he must find it beyond smiles and good intentions. He must recognize Jesus Christ as the only way to peace. Peace must begin in the heart, which is a true conversion, and a true acceptance of Jesus. If man is to come to God, he must come on God's terms. That means that man must go through God: Jesus Christ. (The way, truth and life)

"I am the door" **(John 10:9) I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.**

There is a door that leads unto righteousness. There is a door that translates the ungodly sinner into a picture of holiness. Simply put, if a man seeks to be righteous, he must seek to enter the Righteous Door: Jesus Christ. The way of righteousness is by God through faith in Christ **(Rom 3:22; 2 Pet 1:1)**.

"I am the good shepherd" **(John 10:11) I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.**

Jesus was called "good" once and responded by saying, **"Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God…" (Matt 19:17)**. When we compare this statement with Christ's statement of **"I am the good shepherd" (John 10:14)** we see Christ identifying Himself with God. A Christian belongs to the Good Shepherd, who lovingly guides and directs the life of the sheep **(Ps 23:1), (Isa 40:10-11)**.

"I am the resurrection, and the life" **(John 11:25) Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:**

Who can create life but God? Who can make the impossible possible but God? Who can bring the rain or calm the storm but God? Who can defeat man's greatest fear but God? Jesus Christ rose from the dead identifying himself as the God of life.

When we couple all of these references with **"I and my Father are one" (John 10:30)**, as spoken by Jesus Christ, we see His clear identification with Jehovah…the God of the Old Testament.

Are there other verses that point to Jesus' deity?

There was a conversation between Jesus and Philip. In this conversation, Jesus is asked to show the Father to the disciples. Jesus responds quite uniquely.

(John 14:7-9) If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?

It doesn't get much clearer than this. Philip asks Jesus to show them the Father. Jesus responds by saying something to the nature of: you're looking at Him!

The very beginning of the book of John calls Jesus Christ the Word of God. Notice the capital "W". When you see a little "w" it refers to your Bible. When you see a capital "W" it refers to Jesus Christ **(Rev 19:13)**.

(John 1:1) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Let's look at an Old Testament prophecy of Jesus Christ. Notice the title He is given by the Prophet Isaiah.

(Isa 9:6) For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Safe to say, **"The mighty God"** is a clear statement in regards to the deity of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ spilled His blood that we might be cleansed by that blood and we have forgiveness of sins and a home in heaven for sure. Jesus went to the cross. Jesus was beaten with many stripes. Jesus spilled his blood, right? Okay, look at this one.

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

Let's look at one last verse. This too is very clear. As was said, there are MANY. But one last one will do.

(1Ti 3:16) And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

God was manifest in the flesh? As who? Mohammed? Krishna? Buddha? ABSOLUTELY NOT. That God manifested in the flesh was none other than Jesus Christ.

(Act 4:12) Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Jesus was fully God and fully man. Yes, this is a mystery. Yes, this is difficult to understand. But let the question be asked: Would you really think much of a God you could fully understand? He would be no different than you or me. But our God is a wonderfully complex God.

He is manifest in the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. All three are separate, yet equally God. We draw nigh unto God by faith and we stand amazed in His unique presence.

I stand amazed at the presence of Jesus the Nazarene, and wonder how He could love me; a sinner, condemned, unclean…

Lesson Four Memory Verses:

(Titus 2:13-14)

(13) Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

(14) Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

(Philippians 2:5-6)

(5) Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

(6) Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

(John 20:27-28)

(27) Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

(28) And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

LESSON #5
THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY GHOST

The purpose of this lesson is to give the reader an understanding of the nature and purpose of the Holy Ghost and to shed light on what is often considered a difficult topic.

Is the Holy Ghost God?

The simple answer to this question is "yes". The Holy Ghost is indeed God. As mentioned before, **"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." (1 John 5:7)**. The Father, Son and Holy Ghost (also known as "The Godhead" or "The Trinity") are three separate persons and yet the same, and are all God. This is a confusing matter and there is not a one of us who fully understands this mystery.

Here are some illustrations to help us better understand the Trinity at least on some level. Think of an egg. It contains a shell, a white, and a yoke. Each part can be separated, but they are still all part of one egg. This exemplifies the separate but equal nature of the Godhead. This is not a perfect picture, but it should at least help. Now think of water. Water can exist in a liquid form, a vapor form, and an ice form. But no matter which form it exists in, it is still water. This exemplifies the unity of the Godhead. It is a bit tricky, but the God of the universe is a complex Being. Let us understand that there are not three Gods in the Christian faith. There is one Lord **(Eph 4:5)**, **(1 Tim 2:5)**. He just happens to manifest Himself in three ways and can even hold conversations with another member of the Trinity.

(Gen 1:26) And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

The Holy Ghost is therefore the third part of the Godhead and is fully God – separate, yet equal with the Father and the Son **(Rom 1:20)**.

What is the ministry of the Holy Ghost?

The Holy Ghost has different ministries and different purposes. He has a seven-fold nature as found in Revelation and Isaiah. **(Rev 4:5) (Isa 11:1-2)** In order to keep things from getting too complex too soon, we'll stick to five ministries of the Holy Ghost in the life of the believer.

1. He guides us into truth: First, the Holy Ghost points to the way, the truth and the life. The Holy Ghost can never be found bringing glory and honor to Himself in the Scriptures. He ALWAYS points to Jesus. This is why He is referred to as the Spirit of Truth **(John 16:13)**. You will always know when you're in the presence of the Holy Ghost by whether or not the name of Jesus Christ is exalted. There are many churches that place the emphasis on incorrect things. The Spirit of Truth wants the emphasis on Jesus. When you find a church that places the emphasis on Jesus Christ, you've found a church that is filled with the Spirit of Truth.

2. He convicts the sinner of error: Next, the Holy Ghost is responsible for leading men to repentance. He brings sorrow and shame to the hearts of men in order to lead them to Godly repentance **(2 Co 7:9-10)**. Because God is a Gentleman, He will not force Himself upon anyone. He uses the drawing of the Spirit of God to speak to our hearts. When we hear the gospel message and feel that tug on our hearts, it is the Holy Ghost who is doing that tugging. Because God is a Gentleman, He has afforded us the right to resist that tug of the Holy Ghost. Many men have, and many men continue to do so today **(Acts 7:51)**.

3. He brings us assurance of our salvation: The third ministry of the Holy Ghost that we will mention is His act of bearing witness with our own human spirit. **"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:" (Romans 8:16)**. While we can never base our salvation on a gut feeling, we can have assurance in our hearts by trusting in the word of God. The Holy Ghost (Spirit of Truth) will bear record with our human spirit that we have trusted the truth. By this we KNOW that we have eternal life **(1 John 5:13)**.

4. He seals us unto the day of redemption: Next, the Holy Ghost will preserve our salvation. **"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph 4:30)**. The Spirit of God makes our salvation sure. The best way to understand what this sealing is like is to compare it to the jarring process of fruit. When peaches are placed in a jar and sealed, they can be placed on a shelf for many, many years to come. When the seal is broken, the peaches can

be taken out and eaten. They will taste just as good as the day they went into the jar. Likewise, when we get saved, the Spirit of God seals us unto the day that we stand before God face to face.

5. He brings the believer comfort: Finally, the Holy Ghost is called the Comforter in the Scriptures **(John 14:26)**. He is the one that settles our hearts when we meditate on the Scripture. He is the one to comfort us in our time of need. If you are having a bad day, pray and ask the Father to send you comfort. Get away from the world for a little while and open up the word of God. Turn to the Book of Psalms. Many psalms are written by grieving authors struggling with their own humanity. We can identify with them and read about how God restored their joy. Allow the Comforter to ease your troubled mind.

What is the Holy Ghost's influence in the life of the believer?

For the answer to this question we must turn to the book of Galatians. In **(Gal 5:22)** we find a list of qualities the believer should begin to manifest as he allows God to do a work in his life. Do not fear if you do not exhibit each of these characteristics. Over time they will come…IF YOU ALLOW GOD TO DO HIS GOOD WORK WITHIN YOU. Remember, the Holy Ghost *can* be resisted…not just for salvation, but He can be resisted when attempting to conform us into the image of Jesus Christ. One day we will all be conformed in Jesus' image. But it is better to allow that process to begin now – lining our will up with the will of God.

(1Th 4:3) For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

The Fruit of the Spirit:

1. Love: You should begin to have compassion towards others, especially for the lost. While you may have had compassion before, it will only grow when walking in the Spirit.

2. Joy: Think of this: Jesus first. Others next. Yourself last. The Spirit of God would have you to give your life to Christ first, others second and yourself last. This is true joy.
3. Peace: Not only do you have peace with God now that you are saved, but over time you will have peace with dying. There will be little or no fear in regards to the end of your life.
4. Longsuffering: You will patiently endure hardship and will be patient with others.
5. Gentleness: The compassion inside of you will lead you to treat people in a more sensitive manner.
6. Goodness: No longer will your mind desire that which is evil. Your flesh may still desire those things, but when you walk in the Spirit, you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh **(Gal 5:16)**.
7. Faith: Your faith will grow.
8. Meekness: This is not to be mistaken for weakness. Meekness is not Weakness – it is Humility.
9. Temperance: You should no longer have outbursts of anger the way you once did, providing you walk in the Spirit.

The term "walk in the Spirit" has been mentioned a few times. "What is it?" you may ask.

(Col 3:16) 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.

When you feed yourself with the word of God on a consistent basis, the Holy Ghost will do His work in you. You will walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

Heavenly Spirit, gentle Spirit, O descend on us, we pray

Come, console us, and control us, Christ, most fair, to us portray

Lesson Five Memory Verses:

(1John 5:7)

(7) For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

(Ephesians 4:30)

(30) And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

(John 15:26)

(26) But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

LESSON #6

BAPTISM

With so many people believing different things regarding baptism, this section seeks to set straight the Biblical teaching and purpose of baptism.

What is Baptism?

Despite what some may teach, baptism does not bring you closer to God. Baptism cannot save you. Baptism does not make you born again, or born into the family of God. Baptism is an outward picture of something that has already taken place in your heart.

(Rom 6:4) Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that <u>like as</u> Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Author's underlining)

The first time a Gentile believer in Christ is baptized is found in the book of Acts. In Chapter Eight we find Philip the evangelist dealing with the Ethiopian Eunuch. The Ethiopian is reading from the book of Isaiah **(Acts 8:30)**. Philip is told by the Spirit of God to go meet the man **(Acts 8:29)**. The Eunuch happens to be reading the 53rd Chapter of Isaiah, which is a prophecy concerning the death of Jesus Christ **(Acts 8:32-33)**. Philip goes on to explain what the Eunuch is reading, and preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ to him **(Acts 8:35)**. As they were traveling they came upon some water and the Eunuch asked Philip if there was anything hindering him from being baptized **(Acts 8:36)**. Philip just needed to know that the Eunuch believed that Jesus was the Christ. The Eunuch delivers the necessary ingredient for salvation: verbal proof that he has put his faith in Jesus Christ. The Eunuch says, **"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37)**. Then he was water baptized.

The Eunuch publicly identified with Jesus Christ in his proclamation of faith. Likewise, after we have been saved, we can take the opportunity to publicly state our faith in Jesus. We often do this at a Baptism Ceremony.

What does Baptism picture?

As we have already mentioned by quoting **(Rom 6:4)**, baptism is a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. <u>Like as</u> Jesus died and went down to the grave, so too we go down into the

water. Like as Jesus was buried physically, so too we are immersed fully in water. Like as Jesus rose from the grave, so too we rise up out of the water. Baptism is simply a picture. We identify with our Lord and Saviour by partaking of this event.

Is Baptism Necessary for salvation?

As was mentioned, baptism cannot save you. So what do you get by getting baptized? Well, you get wet. Your salvation comes from believing on the Lord Jesus Christ **(Acts 16:31)**. You have been saved by the grace of God **(Eph 2:8-9)** by *your* faith **(1 Thes 1:3)**.

Then what is its purpose?

There are two basic reasons that we are water baptized as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Public Identification with Christ: Though there will be times in your life when you will have the chance to share the gospel with others, this time in particular serves as a time when you can invite friends and family members to partake of a public event. Just as Christ is not ashamed to call you His child, so too we should not be ashamed to tell the world that Jesus Christ is our Saviour and that we have been born again. Baptism is the perfect platform to share the gospel with those of your friends and family who so desperately need it.
2. Submission & Obedience to God: When Jesus gave His command to the Disciples to spread the gospel, He also commanded them to baptize and make disciples of others **(Matt 28:18-20)**. So basically, the Lord commands it of us. This is the first command God places upon the life of the believer and it says a lot about how the new believer is going to respond to the word of God. If we choose not to obey Him in the very first thing, we are not likely going to obey Him in other things to

follow. But if we willingly partake of baptism, in essence we are saying to God, "Here is my life Lord, use it as you will!"

What is the method of Baptism?

There are two things to address here that are commonly disputed:

First, there is the idea of infant baptism. Should we baptize babies? Well, if the purpose for baptism is to publicly identify that you have made a decision to follow Christ, then how is it possible for a baby to do so? A baby cannot make a conscious decision to believe on Jesus Christ. Try as one might, there are no Scriptures to prove infant baptism. From Genesis to Revelation there is not one infant ever baptized. Why then is it done? This is a vain tradition **(Col 2:8)** created by superstitious and religious men **(Acts 17:22)**. Only those who can make a conscious decision to believe on Christ should be water baptized. This can include children who are of age to make that decision. Remember that each child is different.

Next, there is the idea of pouring water over the head or sprinkling water on the head. Are either of these methods Biblical? No, they are not. The Biblical method of baptism is full immersion. To follow through with the story we started with in the Acts, regarding Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch, we must turn there once again to see that water baptism should be done by completely submerging the body in water. Both Philip and the Eunuch went down into the water **(Acts 8:38)**. Both Philip and the Eunuch came UP out of the water **(Acts 8:39)**. There is no sprinkling or pouring here at all. In fact, you cannot find it anywhere in the Bible. Once again, it is simply tradition.

It is good to get baptized, but remember that it does not save you. It is your chance to publicly identify with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It will also show God that you mean business. You will have obeyed the very first thing He asked you to do,

and by doing so, you will prove that you are willing to follow Christ in other things as well.

Now I belong to Jesus; Jesus belongs to me

Not for the years of time alone, but for eternity.

Lesson Six Memory Verses:

(Romans 6:3)

(3) Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

(1Corinthians 12:13)

(13) For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

(Galatians 3:27-28)

(27) For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

(28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

LESSON #7
PRAYER

The Purpose of this lesson is to show the reader how to pray as the Lord would have him to pray. Many people lift up their voice to a god that they hope will hear them, but many of their prayers fall on deaf ears. Does God hear your prayers? Is there anything you can do to make your prayers more effective?

What is prayer?

Prayer is one-half of the way you and God communicate. As was mentioned in the section on the word of God, the Bible is God's way of speaking to you. Prayer is your way of speaking to God.

Prayer does not consist of particular words that operate like a magical formula. God is not a genie and is not forced to respond based on what sort of words you use while you pray. If you have been saved, God is now your Heavenly Father. You may speak to Him as you would speak reverently to your earthly father. Know that God desires to hear from you. He desires your prayers so much that He likens them to sweet smelling incense **(Rev 5:8)**.

Does God hear everyone's prayers?

As was mentioned earlier, there are two families that every human being fits into. He is either a part of the one family, or he is a part of the other. Those two families are: the Family of God and the Family of the Devil.

Once you have been saved and become a member of God's family, the prayer line has been open to you. You have been granted the right to come before the throne of God and make your requests known.

(Heb 4:16) Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

On the flip side, God is not interested in the prayers that come from the members of the Devil's family. This may be shocking and you may not understand why, but God does not hear the prayers of the wicked.

(Psa 66:18) If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

(Isa 59:2) But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

But once we have been saved, God is very interested in hearing from us. We are told to pray without ceasing **(1 Thes 5:17)**. We are told that the fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much **(James 5:16)**. We are told that we should let our requests be made known unto God in all things and with thanksgiving **(Phil 4:6)**. But these commands are for God's children only.

Are there any rules to prayer?

Here we will discuss two "do not's" as found in the word of God along with a list of "do's" as found in what is commonly called the Lord's Prayer.

Do Not:

1. Let your prayer be for show: We should not pray so that others will think highly of us. Prayer is not so much of a boastful thing in today's day as it was back in Biblical times. There was a day when the godly man was more respected than most. By making long prayers for all to see, he would show just how much of a godly man he was. However, the True God can see right to the heart of man **(1 Sam 16:7)**. When someone is praying in order to make himself look more spiritual, God is not fooled. We should not approach God with self-righteousness or to appear to be something we are not. The following story is a perfect picture of what not to do when praying

(Luke 18:9-14) And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified

rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

2. Pray vain repetitious prayers: Sometimes we simply get into the habit of praying. Rather than speak from our hearts to God, we simply say some meaningless words just to get us through the prayer that we may not feel like making. We are human…and it will be in our nature not to want to pray as often as we should. We must do our best to fight the urge not to pray, while making sure our prayers are not empty or repetitive.

(Mat 6:7) But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Do:

1. Begin with praise.
2. Pray for the coming of God's Kingdom.
3. Pray for God's will to be done, and not your own.
4. Pray for daily provisions…and thank Him for them.
5. Pray for forgiveness of daily sins.
6. Pray to be delivered from the temptations of the devil.
7. End with more praise.

All of these things can be found when examining what is commonly called the Lord's Prayer. This is a model prayer. You are not to simply repeat it over and over again. Remember, God is not looking for vain repetition. This is HOW we should pray, not necessarily WHAT we should pray. It is a guideline and can be found in **(Matt 6:9-13)**.

Why should I pray?

Here is a list of a few reasons why we should pray:

1. Prayer keeps us focused on spiritual things rather than carnal things **(Rom 8:6)**.

2. God responds to prayer. Perhaps not always as quickly as or in the manner in which we would desire, but God does indeed answer prayer **(James 4:2-3)**.
3. By prayer we receive forgiveness of daily sins **(1 John 1:9)**.
4. It is a part of the armor of God. It is necessary for protection against the Devil **(Eph 6:18)**.

What is fasting?

Though overlooked in Christianity today, fasting is the practice of abstaining from food for a period of time in order to temper your flesh and show God that you mean business concerning your prayer. While no one can be sure just why fasting is so effective, it certainly can bring more power to prayer. Even better, it teaches you to control your flesh by denying it. The more you teach your body to deny what it lusts after, the better. There are many Biblical characters we can look to who offered up prayer, coupled with fasting.

King David **(2 Sam 12:15-23)**.

The Nation of Israel in regards to their sin **(Isaiah 58:6)**.

Jesus Christ **(Matthew 4:1-2)**.

The Apostle Paul **(Acts 14:23; Acts 27:33)**.

Prayer is a must for the believer. Yet many spend each day without considering speaking to God. We are all guilty of this. Perhaps it is our sin nature, but there is often something that gets in the way of spending time in prayer with God. Think about it this way: The Creator of the Universe is willing to hear from you. Why would you not want to speak to him?

What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!

O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear

All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!

Lesson Seven Memory Verses:

(Psalms 69:13)

(13) But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O LORD, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation.

(Ephesians 6:18)

(18) Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

(Philippians 4:6)

(6) Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

LESSON #8

THE LORD'S TABLE

The purpose of this lesson is to acquaint the new believer with the Biblical reasons for observing what is commonly called: Communion. We will learn the Biblical purpose for Communion as well as who should participate in this observance.

What is the purpose of observing the Lord's Table?

Once again, we have stumbled upon a doctrine that is viewed quite differently in different churches. For instance, Catholics pay special attention to this practice as it is a main part of their Mass. But there are three Biblical reasons for observing the Lord's Table:

1. The Lord asked us to: Have you ever asked a question of someone only to receive the response, "Because I said so"? Christians would do well to stop asking God why and just begin doing that which He asked of us **(Luke 22:19)**.
2. It is a memorial of the Lord's passion: In the above referenced verse we not only find the command, **"this do"** but we also find a reason: **"in remembrance of me."** Human beings memorialize all sorts of different things. Christians also tend to do the same. The one thing we *should* be memorializing is the atoning work that Jesus Christ did for each of us. Partaking of the Lord's Table is a somber event, not meant to make us more spiritual and thereby placing the emphasis on self, but is done for Christ – placing the emphasis where it belongs **(1 Co 11:26)**.
3. It is yet another public identification with Christ: While this event is not something you would invite guests to, this event is something you publicly participate in with fellow believers **(1 Co 11:34)**. There is a unique fellowship Christians have one with another as we partake of the Table together. This is why so many pastors give a warning to all who partake. This warning is usually centered around not having any ill will towards a brother or sister in the Lord.

Who should participate in the Lord's Table?

There are two titles often given to "Communion" services. These titles are: "Open Communion" and "Closed Communion". In the "Open Communion" services, anyone entering the church building is allowed to partake of the "Communion". This, however is not Biblical.

In the context of **(1 Co 11:20-34)** which is the section of Scripture from which we learn about the Lord's Table, we find that ONLY BELIEVERS are to partake of this event.

(1Co 11:29) For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

To eat or to drink unworthily is described as **"not discerning the Lord's body."** ***Christians*** are the members of the Lord's body **(Eph 4:25, 5:30)**.

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

Now if the Lord's body is made up of believers, then to not discern the Lord's body is to not know what it means to be a believer. Therefore, that person would not be saved. According to **(1 Co 11:29)**, which is quoted above, the person partaking of this eats and drinks damnation to himself. This is only further proof that the reference is to non-Christians. How can a Christian who is sealed by the Holy Ghost drink damnation?

(1Th 5:9) For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

We therefore conclude that the "Communion" service that should be conducted should be a "Closed Communion". This makes it more likely that *only* Christians will partake; if the Lord's Table is not offered to visitors.

Am I really eating Jesus' body and drinking His blood?

There are those who teach that when we partake of the "elements", those "elements" turn into Jesus' physical body and literal blood once consecrated by a priest or minister. This is not Scriptural and is actually heretical.

1. <u>Jesus lets us know that partaking of this event was a spiritual thing, not a physical thing</u>: **"It is the spirit that quickeneth;**

the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63). Jesus said it Himself, **"the flesh profiteth nothing…"** We are not partaking of the literal flesh of Jesus Christ. We are partaking of a spiritual event meant to memorialize our Saviour's passion.

2. Does it make sense that God would want us to partake in cannibalism? When Jesus began talking about "Communion" to the Disciples, they began to get confused. They said, **"This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" (John 6:60)**. Not only does it go against human nature to partake in cannibalism, but it is forbidden by God in the Old Testament Law **(Lev 17:11-12)**. This is why many of Jesus' Disciples left Him. What Jesus taught was misunderstood even then **(John 6:66)**. Had they listened carefully, they would have realized that Jesus was speaking a spiritual truth regarding his coming "broken body" and "spilled blood" that would be beneficial for the entire world. He was not asking them to literally eat Him. This is why He said, **"the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit…" (John 6:63)**.
3. The practice of ritualistically offering Jesus' body as a sacrifice puts Christ to shame! **"If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Heb 6:6)**. Jesus made it clear that He died one time, for the sins of the whole world.

(1Pe 3:18) For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

(1Jn 2:2) And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

How often should we partake of the Lord's Table?

Many celebrate once a week. Some celebrate once a month or once a year. There is no set time in the Bible. It simply tells us that **"as oft as ye…" (1 Co 11:25)** partake, do it as a memorial of Christ's death.

Is this a part of my salvation?

Like Baptism, this is something done *after* salvation. If only Christians are allowed to partake, then IT MUST be after salvation and therefore has nothing to do *with* your salvation.

No matter how often you partake, partake of all things decently and in order **(1 Co 14:40)** and make the Lord's Table about HIM.

Thou art the bread of life, O Lord to me

Thy holy word the truth that saveth me;

Give me to eat and live with thee above

Teach me to love Thy truth, for Thou art love

Lesson Eight Memory Verses:

(1Co 11:23-26)

(23) For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:

(24) And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

(25) After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

(26) For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

LESSON #9

SIN IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER

The purpose of this lesson is to teach the believer about his dual nature. He will learn why battling sin can be such a difficult struggle, but will also learn some practical things to do in order to keep a clean life before God.

What is sin?

All sin can be broken down into three main categories: The Lust of the Flesh, The Lust of the Eyes, and The Pride of Life.

1. The Lust of the Flesh: These are the sins that please the flesh. We could refer to them as "sensual" sins. When Eve was tempted by the serpent in the Garden of Eden, she saw that the tree that God has specifically told her not to eat of was good for food **(Gen 3:6)**. Perhaps she was hungry. In order to fulfill that which her flesh wanted, she disobeyed God.
2. The Lust of the Eyes: These are sins that appear attractive to us. We could refer to them as "covetous" sins. There were plenty of trees that Eve could have eaten from in the Garden of Eden besides the one specific tree that was forbidden. But it was **"pleasant to the eyes" (Gen 3:6)** and therefore Eve chose not to resist.
3. The Pride of Life: These are sins that deal with our ego. We could refer to them as "self first" sins. Without considering that God had forbidden the fruit and without thinking of what sort of consequences her disobedience would cause, Eve partook of the forbidden fruit because the tree was **"to be desired to make one wise." (Gen 3:6)**.

Besides these three specific categories that explain the different kinds of sins, there are other verses to help us understand what sin is.

1. Sin is any unrighteousness. **"All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death." (1Jn 5:17)**
2. Sin is breaking God's Law. **"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." (1Jn 3:4)**
3. Sin is that which is done apart from faith. **"And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom 14:23)**

If Jesus paid the penalty, am I free to sin?

Many people get this one mixed up. Yes, we have been granted liberty in Christ **(Gal 5:1)**, but this liberty is often mistaken to mean that we can just go back out into the world and commit any sin we so choose. This liberty in Christ is not freedom *to* sin, but rather freedom *from* sin. This is in the sense that, now that you are a child of God, you are no longer bound by sin. Yes, your sin debt has been paid by Jesus Christ. The ordinances of the law that testified of your guilt have been nailed to the cross **(Col 2:14)**. This does not give you liberty to do whatever you want now that you are forgiven.

(Rom 6:2) God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

If I don't want to sin, why is it so hard to fight sometimes?

Welcome to the agony of the Christian mindset. Now that we are saved, we have two natures within us. We have the original nature (Adam's sinful nature) warring against our new nature (Jesus' righteousness). These two natures are contrary, one to the other. In your mind you will desire to do that which is right before the Lord, yet the carnal part of yourself will still seek out sinful things. Before you go assuming that you are the only one to struggle with sin, you must consider the Apostle Paul (the greatest missionary ever!) when he wrote: (**Rom 7:14-25)**. Turn to these verses in your Bible and read them. They will help you to understand that we all struggle with sin…even the great Apostle Paul. Notice that he ends this section by thanking God through Jesus Christ for saving him.

While it would have been nice for God to take us right to heaven the day that we received Christ as Saviour, He chose not to. Rather, He chose to leave us here so that we might tell others about Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, while we abide here, we are left in these bodies of ours which are prone to sin. We wait for the day when God will remove our sinful flesh, and we will be given new bodies that are not corruptible.

This means that they will not give in to sin and they will not fall apart, as do our present bodies.

(Rom 8:23) And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

(1Co 15:53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

Will God judge the sins I commit after being saved?

Let's start be repeating, "Once saved, always saved." You cannot lose your salvation for sinning too much. So God will not judge your sins in the sense of sending you to heaven or hell. But God now treats us as children; for we *are* His children. Therefore He chastens us when we get out of line. If we choose to live a life filled with sin, there will repercussions in this life.

(Gal 6:7) Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

But…

(1Jn 1:9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The best thing to do is to keep a short list with God. When the time comes that you have sinned, it is best to turn to God immediately and ask for forgiveness. As was quoted, He is faithful and just to forgive. Sometimes the forgiveness will come with punishment. For instance, when a child does that which is wrong, though he may be punished for his disobedience, he is still a son and still forgiven. Though he is forgiven, he may have to endure some sort of punishment that the parents see fit to deliver. So too, sometimes God sends punishment. Sometimes He allows our sorrow to be punishment enough. Because it cannot be stated how God will determine to deal with every one of his children when they partake in sin, it is best to not partake of the sin to begin with.

What can I do to overcome sin in my life?

1. Accept responsibility for your sin. Do not make excuses and do not blame anyone else **(Pro 28:13)**.
2. Do not allow sinful thoughts to take control over you **(2 Co 10:5)**. It has been said that, "though you cannot prevent a bird from flying over your head, you can keep it from nesting there!"
3. Do not put yourself in a place that you know will bring temptation **(Rom 13:14)**. For example, if you desire to quit drinking, spending time at the bar will only put you in the place of temptation. Stay as far away as possible. (By the way, even if drinking isn't a problem for you, stay away from the bar!)
4. Hide God's word in your heart. When temptation arises, quoting a verse may help you defeat that temptation **(Ps 119:11)**.
5. Separate from those who will cause you to stumble **(2 Co 6:14)**. Spending time with those who regularly partake of sinful activities will only be temptation to you. This will be a difficult task as you will likely lose old friends. But you will replace those people with real friends (brothers and sisters in the Lord) who will encourage you to do that which is right. A friend who encourages you to sin against God is really no friend at all.
6. Pray **(Luke 11:4)**! Ask God to deliver you from temptation. You serve a faithful God. If *you* want out of a sinful situation, He will get you out. The key word in that sentence was "you". If you want to partake, you likely will. It is good to ask God to begin conforming your will to His.

My sin – O the bliss of this glorious thought,

My sin – Not in part but the whole,

Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more,

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

Lesson Nine Memory Verses:

(Psalms 119:11)

(11) Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

(1John 1:9)

(9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

(2Co 6:17)

(17) Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

LESSON #10

THE FIVE JUDGMENTS

So many people think that when they die, they will stand before Peter, who will go on to ask them why they deserve to be allowed into heaven. This is a fairytale judgment.

But there is a real judgment coming. For the non-believer, it is called the Great White Throne Judgment. For the believer, they must stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The purpose of this lesson is to teach the new believer of the five judgments mentioned in Scripture, as well as to teach them about the judgment they will have to endure.

What are the five judgments found in Scripture?

1. The Judgment of Sin: This judgment has already taken place. The place of this judgment was the cross of Calvary. It was placed on the shoulders of Jesus Christ, who was nailed to the cross. All sin was nailed to the cross. This included the sins of the born again man and the sins of the lost man. Jesus is the propitiation for all of the world's sins **(1 John 2:2)**. However, all are required to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ in order to have that judgment taken from them. For those who trust Christ, their sins have been nailed to the cross and they will not stand in judgment for them. For those who reject the free gift of salvation, the Judgment of the Wicked awaits.

2. The Judgment of Israel: This judgment is for all Jews have rejected Jesus Christ as their Messiah. It is known as the time of **"Jacob's Trouble" (Jer 30:7)**. Israel will suffer great judgment during this time as the antichrist tricks them into a false peace treaty, false worship, and forces them into hiding when the peace treaty is broken. There will be no greater time of distress upon the nation of Israel than that which will be poured out upon them during the time of the Great Tribulation **(Matt 24:21)**.

3. The Judgment of the Nations: This judgment is for all nations that survive the Great Tribulation. Jesus Christ will return, destroy the antichrist, bind Satan, and call all nations unto the valley of Jehoshaphat **(Matt 25:31-33)**. There He will plead with the nations **(Joel 3:2)**. But He will not plead with them as one who begs. The Lord will let them know what the verdict is. They will either be guilty or innocent based upon how they treated the Nation of Israel **(Matt 25:40)**.

4. The Judgment of the Wicked: This judgment will take place when the heavens and the earth are done away with **(Isa 34:4)**. Every mouth will be stopped and all those required to partake of this judgment will stand guilty before God **(Rom 3:19)**. There is no hope for the person who partakes of this judgment. There is no

forgiveness granted. There is no mercy handed out. All mercy was offered through Jesus Christ, but those partaking of this judgment will have rejected that mercy. What awaits this sad group of people is the Lake of Fire – where the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever **(Rev 14:11)**.

5. The Judgment Seat of Christ: This judgment is for believers only. It is at this place of judgment that the believer's works are judged after coming to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Sin is not the subject of this judgment. But this judgment exists so that Christians might receive rewards or suffer the loss of rewards.

(1Co 3:11-15) For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Sin has already been judged at Calvary, so the Christian does not need to worry about sin any longer. But all that we will have done after salvation will be judged. Did we live for Christ? Did we bother to evangelize? Did we get involved in ministry? Did we partake of all of these things for our own glory, or for the Lord's glory?

For those who have put Jesus first in all things; they will receive rewards. We just may be shocked by those who receive more rewards than we would have thought they should receive. We may be even more shocked to find those who we would think might have rewards poured upon them, but find them walking away with very little or nothing. Only God knows who serves Him from the heart, because only God can see into the heart of man **(1 Co 28:9)**.

What will our rewards be?

1. ***Crowns***: There will be five types of crowns given out at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The Crowns are as follows:

1. The Crown of Life **(Rev 2:10) (James 1:12)**: Very few Christians will receive this crown, for it is the crown of the Martyr. Only those who have been killed for their faith in Christ will receive this crown and it is probably the greatest crown anyone could possibly receive.
2. The Crown of Glory **(1 Pet 5:2-4)**: This crown is given to the "elder" or perhaps the "teacher" of God's word. Not everyone that carries the office of "elder" will receive this crown as there are some exclusions found in the above mentioned verse. The elder or teacher who lords over God's heritage or takes a position for money alone will not receive this crown.
3. The Crown of Rejoicing **(1 Thes 2:19-20) (Phil 4:1)**: This crown will be given to those who lead others to Christ. In fact, it may not be a crown at all. The reward just may be standing next to someone, arm in arm, who has been saved by your testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. The Crown of Righteousness **(2 Tim 4:8)**: Do you desire the Lord to return? There are many Christians who fear the Lord's return. Perhaps it is because they are living in sin or because they just enjoy living in the world more than they should. Either way, they will not receive this crown. This crown is given to all who **"love"** Christ's appearing.
5. The Incorruptible Crown **(1 Co 9:25-27)**: This is the crown given to those who withstand temptation and do not yield their bodies to a life of uncleanness, sin, or amusement. It would be a curious thing to attempt to guess the percentage of Christians who will actually receive this crown. Only God knows.

2. ***Cities***: There is a parable found in the book of Luke that teaches that those who labor for the Lord in this life will receive authority over cities during Christ's Millennial Reign. The story can be found in **(Luke 19:12-26)**. Turn there in your Bibles. This parable shows the Christian the

importance of taking that which the Lord has given you, and using it to multiply His kingdom. If we are faithful with even one talent (pound) He has given us, we will have the right to rule cities in His Reign to come. People spend way too much time working on their earthly retirement! If we invest our lives in Christ's work, the rewards are far greater and will last for eternity!

3. ***Christ***: The greatest reward of all is Jesus Christ Himself. Imagine the day when you (for the first time ever) get to see the face of your Saviour. You are forever His and He is forever yours **(Gen 15:1; Rev 22:12; Col 3:24)**!

Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne:

Hark! How the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own

Awake, my soul, and sing of Him who died for thee,

And hail Him as thy matchless King thru all eternity

Lesson Ten Memory Verses:

(Psalms 58:11)

(11) So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

(Revelation 22:12)

(12) And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

(2 Corinthians 5:10)

(10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

LESSON #11

THE LOCAL CHURCH

The Purpose of this lesson is to teach the new believer the importance of finding a good Bible believing church. The new believer will learn the purpose of the church and what his/her involvement should be in its ministries.

What is "The Church"?

When it comes right down to it, most people consider "The Church" to be the Roman Catholic Church. Another large percentage view "The Church" as a building where believers assemble. Both are wrong.

(Act 8:1-3) And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against <u>the church</u> which was at Jerusalem; and <u>they</u> were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havock of <u>the church</u>, entering into <u>every house</u>, and haling <u>men and women</u> committed them to prison. (Author's underlining)

Given the above verses, we can see clearly that "The Church" is not a building or an organization; "The Church" is people – more specifically, Christian people.

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

God did not purchase a building with His blood. Nor did God purchase an institution or an organization with His blood. Rather, God purchased the souls of every man, woman and child who comes to Jesus Christ by faith. This is "The Church": the body of believers. [a.k.a. "the saints" **Eph 6:18; Phm 1:5-7**]

What is the purpose of the Church?

The Church has a three-fold function:

1. <u>Exalt God</u>: We are to gather together in order to sing praises unto God before one another **(Ps 22:22)**. Above all things, God is to be glorified when we gather together. God alone is worthy **(Rev 4:11)**.

2. Edify the Saints: When we gather together, we are to encourage one another with good news of how God is working in our lives. We are to weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice **(Rom 12:15)**. We are to do all things so that others might be encouraged **(1 Co 14:26)**.

3. Evangelize the Lost: This is probably the most neglected of the three ministries of the local church. As Christ commanded the Apostles, so too we are commanded to go out into the world and declare the gospel of Jesus Christ to others **(Mark 16:15; Col 1:23)**. We are supposed to win the lost and then bring them into the church house.

What should be my involvement in the local assembly?

The "local assembly" is another name for "the Church". We call it "local" because there are many churches all across the world with like-minded believers in Jesus Christ; when a church is in our vicinity, we call it the "local" assembly or gathering.

When you find a Church to join unto, there should be three general stages of involvement:

1. Children: When you join yourself unto a church, whether as a new believer in Christ, or as someone who has known the Lord for quite some time, the initial stage is that of "Observation" & "Learning". Many churches run things in different manners. As long as what they do and teach is Biblically sound, they have liberty in other things. For example, some hold a mid-week service on Wednesday nights, while others hold a mid-week service on Thursday nights. This is a liberty they are free to take. But when you join a local church, the initial period should be one of "Observation"; especially as a new believer **(2 Tim 2:15).**

2. Adolescents: As you spend some time there and begin to grow in the Lord, "participation" will be necessary. To what level you wish to participate is between you and the Lord; but the more the

better. Like an adolescent, your confidence will grow and you will be seeking opportunities to participate. This stage is the turning point between the first and third stages. If stage two is never reached, stage three will also be an impossibility **(James 1:22-25)**.

3. Adults: Eventually God requires us to grow up. We will no longer be satisfied watching, and we may want to participate on a higher level other than that of the adolescent. The time may come in our lives when we are called to lead. This leadership may be as simple as one who leads activity clean up crews, to those who teach in the Sunday School classes, to the pastor behind the pulpit. When you've reached "Church" leadership, you've reached the final stage. Don't worry, your journey is not over until the day that you meet the Lord. There is always room for growth – even in pastors **(2 Tim 2:2)**.

What should I be looking for in a local assembly?

There are a number of things one should look for in a local assembly. You are free to be as picky as you need to be; after all, in order to serve from the heart, you will need to feel that you can get behind the work being done. But take caution; you will never find a perfect church. If it was perfect, it would cease to be perfect the moment you entered in. Perfection is to be found in Jesus Christ alone. Here are some things that are extremely important in finding a good local assembly. Ignoring these will cause you trouble.

1. Does the local church use the Authorized Version of the Bible? (The King James Version) If not, they do not have the Bible God would like them to have in their hands and this may mean that their doctrine (teaching) may be out of line.
2. If the local church uses the King James Bible, do they actually believe it is the infallible, inspired and preserved word of God? Many people give lip service to God's word, but then spend more

time teaching their own personal traditions. The Bible must be the FINAL AUTHORITY – even over the pastor **(1 Thes 2:13)**.

3. Does the local church teach salvation by God's grace through our faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST alone **(Eph 2:8-9)**?
4. Does the local church evangelize? (Do they go out and win others to Christ?) This includes street and personal evangelism **(Matt 28:19-20)**.
5. Does the local church support missions or Bible distribution **(Phil 4:17)**?
6. Does the church act more like a secular social club than they do a church? In other words, is there more emphasis on appearance, music and parties than on the word of God and Evangelism? This may be a well-meaning group of believers who are simply out of balance. Even so, if they act but a *little* different from the lost world, it might be best to steer clear **(2 Co 6:17)**.

If the local assembly partakes of all of the above mentioned (except #6) on some level, they are likely a good body of believers to join up with. You will have to spend some time viewing things for a little while. Make no hasty decisions and PRAY for God's will.

What is fellowship?

Fellowship is more than friendship. Fellowship is a biblical relationship that goes beyond friendship. All born-again Christians are a part of the same family. We should *view* ourselves as family.

A local assembly should be warm and inviting. It should exemplify family and friendship. It should exude the love of Jesus Christ. It should exalt the word of God.

All believers should put their love of Christ before their love of self. Then the believer should put his brother next – even before self.

The relationships should be "God" and "word of God" centered – with love, honesty and humility.

(1Co 13:13) And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

I'm so glad I'm apart of the family of God

I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood!

Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,

For I'm part of the family, the family of God

Lesson Eleven Memory Verses:

(Acts 2:46-47)

(46) And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

(47) Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

(John 13:35)

(35) By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

LESSON #12
STEWARDSHIP

The purpose of this lesson is to learn the three basic areas of our lives in which God calls us to be faithful stewards.

What is biblical stewardship?

The idea of stewardship is something that has been lost, not only in modern America, but also in modern Christianity. The first time the word "steward" shows up in your King James Bible, Abraham is talking about his servant Eliezer **(Gen 15:2)**. This Eliezer was the man who was set over all of Abraham's household. In other words, he was like the General Manager of Abraham's house. He was put in charge of that which did NOT BELONG TO HIM. Two other verses to support this idea are as follows:

(1Ch 28:1) And David assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that ministered to the king by course, and the captains over the thousands, and captains over the hundreds, and the <u>stewards over all the substance</u> and possession of the king, and of his sons, with the officers, and with the mighty men, and with all the valiant men, unto Jerusalem. (Author's underlining)

(Tit 1:7) For a bishop must be blameless, as the <u>steward of God</u>; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; (Author's underlining)

We might also consider the parable that Jesus spoke of in Matthew Chapter twenty-one **(Matt 21:33-41)**. There are both "servants" and "husbandmen" mentioned in this parable. The "husbandmen" represent evil "stewards" who abuse the Master's vineyard which they were put in charge of; and the "servants" are the good "stewards" coming to claim the fruit of the vineyard to bring back to the Master. So what does that have to do with us?

There are three basic areas that God has put us in charge of that do not belong to us. If we consider things honestly, there is nothing in this world that belongs to us. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof **(Ps 24:1)**. But the three things we have been entrusted with which will be discussed in this chapter are Stewardship of the Gospel, Stewardship of the Family, and Stewardship of the Finances.

Stewardship of the gospel of Christ

(Mat 28:18-20) And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. (19) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (20) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

(Mar 16:15) And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

The above mentioned verses are often quoted and well known among Christian circles. The sad reality is that while they are known and quoted, they are rarely lived. These verses, while given as commands directly Disciples of Jesus Christ (The Apostles), belong to us as well. All of God's children are required to share the Gospel that with others. Freely you have received, and freely you should give **(Matt 10:8)**.

There are a few different ways you can be a faithful steward of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. First, you should share the good news with your family. They are the first people God has put into your life and likely those you hold the dearest to you. They will also be those who will more likely reject the message you bring **(Matt 13:57)**. Next, you can share the gospel verbally with friends and co-workers. You will likely see these people more than you see family. They will not only need to hear the gospel come from your lips, but they will need to see that Jesus made a change in ***your life***. This is what Christians commonly call a "Testimony": Telling someone what Jesus did for you and how He saved you; this *should* be coupled by the life you are living. When they see a change, they will be curious about what happened to you.

Thirdly, you can pass gospel tracts out to strangers. Some are bold enough to approach a stranger on the street and offer a gospel tract. Others who are a shy pass them out while in drive-thru windows at coffee houses or at fast-food restaurants. Still others leave gospel tracts in bathrooms and phone booths because they fear coming into contact with people. At least the tract is getting out. Do that which is

comfortable at first. Just remember that it is important to challenge your fears head-on from time to time. Many people have gotten saved by reading gospel tracts. It is not your job to pray a prayer of salvation with everyone, it is your job to share the seed of the word of God with them. Getting the gospel out by handing out tracts can be an effective way to share the gospel with others **(Mark 4:3)**.

Another way of sharing the gospel is at a public gathering. This is a difficult thing for most, but once they have tried it, they often fall in love with it. It is street preaching. By preparing a short gospel message and delivering it to those waiting for a bus, or lined up at a public place, or at some public gather, you have the opportunity to share the gospel with a large group of unsaved people **(Isa 58:1)**. While the ministry of teaching and preaching is biblically up to men, women can and should partake in public ministry. They can pass out tracts, hold up scripture signs and approach people one-on-one in conversation relating to the gospel.

Over time you will learn effective ways to share the gospel with others. But stay away from what is commonly called "lifestyle evangelism". This is the idea that you do not have to say anything to anyone, and that you should just let your lifestyle be an example of Christ. This is ridiculous at best. Think about it – did ***you*** get saved this way? Did you see someone living a godly life and think to yourself, "I must believe on Jesus Christ in order to go to heaven!" No, someone had to tell you that. Someone had to share the word of God with you. You cannot be saved by watching someone's life. But you can be saved by hearing and believing the word of God **(Rom 10:8, 17)**.

Stewardship of the family

When you consider your husband or wife, you should consider that person as someone God specifically placed in your life. God gave you the privilege of finding a special person to spend your life with.

(Pro 18:22) Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.

That special person should be loved and treated with honor and respect. While the role of the husband differs from the role of the wife, both are called to family stewardship. Here are just a few things the Bible mentions about husbands and wives.

Husbands:

1. Responsible to teach the wife in spiritual matters **(1 Co 14:35)**. Sadly, most men have this thing backwards in modern Christianity. Men need to grow up and take the spiritual reigns of the family as well as the physical reigns.
2. Responsible to love his wife AS CHRIST loves the Church **(Eph 5:25)**. This is a tall order, but one men must strive for. Christ put his Church first…this is the least the husband can do for the wife.
3. Responsible to do all duties without letting bitterness creep in **(Col 3:19)**. Men often come home from work tired and aggravated, only to come home to a wife who needs him to take care of some other responsibilities. While he cannot keep his wife from needing him, he can keep himself from becoming bitter against those things she needs him to do.
4. Responsible to understand your wife **(1 Pet 3:7)**. Though we speak the same actual language, somehow men and women communicate differently. For the most part, men tend to be less verbal, more direct and to the point. Women tend to speak in such a manner that it requires the man to have to figure out what she is trying to say. Communication is a key part of any relationship, but here the brunt of it falls on the shoulders of the man.

Wives:

1. Responsible to submit to the husband's authority **(Eph 5:22)**. Women are required to allow the husband to be the decision maker without trying to control or manipulate him. Men should

give their wives a good leader to follow; but whether the man is a good leader or not, the wife is told to submit to his authority.

2. Responsible to live by example **(1 Pet 3:1)**. Women are usually more spiritually minded than men. This is a sad reality. But rather than nag the husband about his lack of godliness, she is required to live a godly life herself, and thereby show her husband what it means to walk with the Lord.

3. Responsible to do good by her husband **(Pr 31:12)**. Much could be said here, but we will focus on one thing. One of the worst things a wife can do to her husband is correct him in front of others, or cut him down in front of others, or speak poorly of him to others…whether he is present or not. The best way to do good by him is to honor him with your lips and defend him before others, not cut him down.

4. Responsible to work **(Pr 31:13-16)**. It is a very popular teaching (especially in fundamental Baptist circles) that women should not work. This is not Biblical. Women can and should work. While this does not mean that they should become the sole breadwinner in the family, if at all possible, they should help meet the financial needs of the household, especially if there are no children to take care of. If children become a part of the picture – barring extenuating circumstances – the *best* work the wife can do is stay home with them if at all possible.

When it comes to raising children, there are a few Biblical points we can make:

1. Raise your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord **(Eph 6:4)**. This means that your children should hear about the Lord from their parents. They should pray together, read the Bible together and go to church together. The parent must be the best example of Jesus Christ the child will witness in any human being.

2. Raise your children to listen and obey **(Pro 4:1; Col 3:20)**. People tend to listen to and obey those they trust. A parent

should be the most trustworthy person a child will ever know. Coupled with Bible knowledge and respect of their parents, children will more likely obey their parents when they are able to trust them.

3. Do not provoke your children to anger **(Col 3:21)**. All children are different and there are different things that cause a child to be angry. Demanding too much of them or putting unneeded pressure on them will cause children to get angry. This does not, of course, mean that children should be given whatever they want in order to appease them. It simply means that if at all possible, do your part not to add something to their lives that might ignite unnecessary anger. This verse speaks directly to the fathers and would be good advice for mother too.
4. Provide an inheritance **(Pr 13:22)**. Whether this is help with educational expenses, the family business, or money upon death, your children should receive some financial or physical help that will better enable them to live a good life.

All of these demands on the family are really not demands at all. God does not put things into the Bible to make things difficult for us. Rather He puts things in His word to give us a better life. If we trust Him as our Parent, then it should be easy to listen and obey that which He instructs us to do. None of us meet all of these things. Some are better in one area than others. These are simply some goals we should all try to meet from a sincere heart and with much prayer.

Stewardship with finances

When "Stewardship" is discussed in most modern churches, they are almost always referring to finances. The carnal church will always think carnally. The spiritual church will think spiritually.

First, it is good to give financially. There are plenty of reasons to give financially to the local assembly:

1. The church building gives you a place to meet, worship, pray, hear the word of God, counsel and fellowship. It takes money to pay for a building and to meet expenses. Unless you want to lose all of those things, you should contribute financially **(2 Co 8:4)**.
2. We should give out of our thankfulness to God for providing for all of our needs – especially out of thanksgiving for salvation. **(2 Co 9:15)**.
3. God will reward the faithful giver **(Phil 4:17)**. Please understand that this does not mean that God will shower money down on you. You should never give in order to get. But God will reward the faithful giver if his giving comes from a sincere heart. That reward will likely come at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Look for it there, not here to prevent yourself from thinking carnally.

How much should I give?

The "Tithe" has become the Biblical standard in most churches. The "Tithe" is 10%. We can read about how Abraham gave 10% of his possessions in **(Gen 14:20)**. The Jew under the law was to give 10% of his possessions **(Mal 3:10-12)**. While there is not a reference in the New Testament, addressed to the body of Christ, that teaches us we must give 10%, it is not a bad idea. If you can afford to, give more. If you can afford less, give less. The idea is that God loves a cheerful giver. The important thing is that the giving comes from the heart**.**

(2Co 9:7) Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

Many churches make more of this than they should. This is because they have over-extended their finances and through poor leadership have hurt the financial state of the church. Good leadership will be faithful with the money you give. This should make you want to support the church that much more. When the work is done for the Lord and you partake of that, there is not only reward at the Judgment

Seat of Christ, but there is reward in your heart: It feels good to give. If it does not feel good, check your heart – there may be something wrong.

Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord, to Thee;

Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold

Not a mite would I withhold

Lesson Twelve Memory Verses:

(1Corinthians 4:1-2)

(1) Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

(2) Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

(1Peter 4:10)

(10) As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

LESSON #13

DEALING WITH THE LOST WORLD

The purpose of this lesson is to teach the new Christian what to expect from, and how to deal with the opposition of the lost world.

You are a Pilgrim…this world is not your home

The first thing that Christians need to understand in regards to dealing with the lost world is that this world is not their home. We work in the world, we worship in the world, we eat and sleep in the world – but this world does not belong to us!

(1Pe 2:11) Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

The instruction of the above quoted verse makes it evident that we are to abstain from fleshly lusts. However, something to note is that we are considered strangers and pilgrims. We are travelers through a world that is not ours. We travel as ambassadors for Jesus Christ.

(2Co 5:20) Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

God did not take you to heaven the moment you got saved so that you might tell others of His marvelous grace. You cannot do that from heaven. So God has left you here. But the reality is that heaven is your home; the earth is not. You are here for the sole purpose of giving the message of the above verse: **"…be ye reconciled to God." (1 Co 5:20)**.

What is my responsibility to my "lost" family?

It has often been said that "You can choose your friends, but you can't choose your family." This is true, and therefore the ground you tread here is a difficult one.

You have the same responsibility to your family as you would with anyone else when it comes to the gospel of Jesus Christ. You must let them know that to die without Jesus Christ means an eternity in the Lake of Fire. With that being said, we must also consider that there are good ways and bad ways to do this. We often tell others that which is "correct" but forget how to go about this in the "right" way.

For example, I once preached a message on a street corner the day before Easter. The message was about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this message I briefly mentioned a few of the "Easter" traditions: eggs, candy, and chocolate bunnies. I went on to say that these traditions are fun and enjoyable, but then I turned things around to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. There was a man waiting for a bus who listened to the message and within moments he was hollering, "There he goes – tellin' us we're all sinners and that the Easter Bunny is evil!" Now, I didn't say that at all. What I said was that the traditions were fun – but that Easter is about more than traditions. This man heard what he *expected* me to say…not what I *actually* said.

This illustration is given to help you understand that people are going to hear what they want to hear. We will do well to not give them any ammunition. In this message I said nothing of offense save for speaking of the cross of Calvary and the blood of Jesus Christ: always an offense to people. But I was not rude, crude or even judgmental of the Pagan Easter Celebration. This man might not have understood that, but when he got up and started heckling me, his wife/girlfriend grabbed his arm and told him to sit down and shut up. She went on to listen to the message. I watched her – there was something registering. After the message I approached them both and even apologized to the man for offending him. He looked embarrassed. I handed him a tract, and he turned away. I looked at his wife/girlfriend and offered her a tract, which she took with a smile.

This is how we must approach family: with GRACE and TRUTH. We should answer their questions honestly, but we must not be rude. Sadly, family will likely be our biggest opposition. When you stop attending all of the family activities that you once partook of (for Biblical reasons) they will take that to mean that you think you are better than they are. No matter what you say, this is likely how they will see it. Try not to get frustrated. Share the gospel with love and be direct when needed.

(Rom 2:4) Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

What is my responsibility to my "lost" friends?

Your responsibility to your friends is to actually be a friend and warn them of the coming judgment. Again, you must not be rude or abrasive. Be as honest as possible without hurting anyone. If someone is offended, let it be of Jesus Christ and His cross, not you and your personality.

While there are times when you will have to withdraw from family; or more likely certain family activities, there will be a greater likelihood of having to withdraw from certain friends. As was mentioned in a previous chapter, putting yourself in the place of temptation will not help you to live the life God wants you to live. It will cause you to sin. Unfortunately, many friends will also put you in the place of temptation and sin.

You must understand that they are not always doing this on purpose. They do what they do because they are lost and do not know the Lord. But remember that these friends of yours will likely know you better than your own family. You have probably been more intimate with them and they know all of your faults and weaknesses. More specifically, they know the areas of your sin, whereas your family does not probably know the full extent of your lifestyle. Friends know because we usually choose friends that fit our lifestyle. Friends sin together.

With that being said, this gives you an opportunity to show them the REAL change Jesus has made in your life. They might throw statements out there like, "Don't preach to me! I know who you really are!" They may point out all of the things you used to do. Take it slow and understand that they do not understand the change that has taken place in your life. Give it some time…show them by example and speak the word of God to them.

If they reject, you will be confronted with a very difficult decision. You will either have to choose your friends and their lifestyle or choose the Lord and His truth. It may hurt, but it is better to choose the Lord. Friends often come and go, but the Lord will never leave you nor forsake you **(Heb 13:5)**. Be encouraged, if you spend time at church with other born-again Christians, you will make new friends. They will be the closest and best friends you will ever make!

What is my responsibility to my "lost" co-workers?

This one is really simple. Share the gospel with them, and be the very best worker you can be. Exemplify Christ in word and in deed. Show up on time. Do what is asked of you. Offer yourself before you have been asked. Do not take that which does not belong to you. Let the light of Jesus Christ shine in a dark place.

(Eph 6:5) Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

What is my responsibility to my "lost" spouse?

I thank my God that my wife is saved and on her way to heaven. I cannot imagine the heartache of being married to an unsaved person. Not only will there be great differences in how you handle daily matters, but knowing that the unbelieving spouse will spend an eternity in the Lake of Fire would be very difficult to bear.

First, a Christian must never marry a non-Christian. This is a recipe for disaster and is forbidden of the Lord **(2 Co 6:14)**. But there are times when a wife or a husband gets saved after they have already been married. What are they to do then?

If this is the case, we must faithfully give the gospel of Christ to the unbelieving spouse on a consistent basis. This does not mean on a "nagging" basis. Nagging is rarely successful in physical matters and is NEVER successful in leading someone to Christ. You cannot nag

someone into salvation! But as was quoted in the last chapter on "Stewardship", the believer can win over the unbeliever by their conversation **(1 Pet 3:1)**. The word "conversation" does not mean dialogue between two or more parties only; it is a word that means action *and* speaking. Just as you can converse with a certain look or facial expression or an arm-wave; this is the sort of conversation this verse is speaking of. It is your *entire* way of communicating. Find ways to communicate the gospel to the unbelieving spouse. This will be greatly difficult. But remember that God is faithful and will help you through this very stressful situation.

You do not have a license to leave your unbelieving spouse. Many assume that they can just get a divorce and go find a Christian to marry. The Lord would frown down upon this as there are only a few reasons divorce is permissible. The Lord would have all marriages last forever. **(Mark 10:9)** Divorce is not an option UNLESS the unbeliever chooses to leave. This is permitted by Scripture.

(1Co 7:15) But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

For all of these groups of people we must diligently pray. Do not compromise the gospel for the sake of peace, but do not use the gospel as a means of discord. One of the greatest challenges you will find in your life is how to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ to those around you. Over time, you will find what works and what does not work. Just be faithful to the gospel and God will be faithful to you.

Rescue the perishing, care for the dying

Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave

Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen

Tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save

Lesson Thirteen Memory Verses:

(Jude 1:22-23)

(22) And of some have compassion, making a difference:

(23) And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

(Rom 10:14-15)

(14) How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

(15) And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

LESSON #14
DISPENSATIONS

The purpose of this lesson is to teach the new Christian the different ages of Biblical history, their meaning and how they affect our interpretation of the word of God.

What is a Dispensation?

A dispensation can also be called an Age. A Biblical dispensation is a period of time in which there is a different objective God is reaching. These ages then reveal what God is doing here on earth to fulfill His purpose.

(Eph 1:9-10) Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: (10) That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

In each dispensation God reveals His word to man. Man is then judged on his response to the word of God. Salvation is based on responding to the word of God in EVERY dispensation, despite what others might teach. Therefore salvation is by God's grace (always) through man's faith (always) which is proved by works to follow (always).

What are the different dispensations found in the Bible?

There are some that divide the different ages found within the Bible in slightly different ways. There is wrong division that causes a great deal of damage and there is wrong division that is not much of a deal. Some see 12 divisions, some see 9 divisions and others see 7 divisions. What is important is how salvation is taught in these dispensations. We will look at 9 divisions or dispensations.

1. Eternity Past: God always was and always will be. Before there was an earth, God existed. Before there was a universe, God existed. There are some things we can learn about this age as found in the Bible, but it will take some work finding them **(Isa 57:15)**.
2. Age of Innocence (Edenic Age): This is the Age in which Adam was made. It was likely a very short amount of time. He was given dominion over the earth. The word of God stated that, **"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou**

shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen 2:17). This was the test God gave man. We know the outcome: man failed. The judgment was spiritual death and eventually physical death.

3. Age of Conscience (Antediluvian Age): This age takes place from the fall of Adam to the flood in Noah's day. It covers a time period of over 1,650 years. Man was asked to do good, based upon the conscience he had inherited through Adam and to perform blood sacrifices to God **(Gen 4:4)**. Man did not choose to obey his conscience as wickedness abounded. The first murder took place during this time. The judgment came in the flood.

4. Age of Human Government (Postdiluvian Age): This age takes place just after the flood. God told Noah to be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth **(Gen 9:1)**. Man's failure came at the tower of Babel, where they unified rather than multiplied over all the earth. The judgment came with God dividing the people and their languages. This time period lasted over 400 years.

5. Age of Promise (Patriarchal Age): This is a time period of 430 years, from the call of Abraham out of Ur to the Exodus of the Jews out of Egypt. The word of God came to Abraham concerning the promise of the land of Canaan. When Abraham went to Egypt during a famine, he overstayed his welcome. In other words, rather than heading back to the land of promise, the descendants of Abraham chose to stay in Egypt. The judgment came in the form of slavery in Egypt.

6. Age of the Law (Legal Age): This time period extends over 1,500 years and begins with the Exodus of Egypt and extends until the time of Christ. (More specifically the death of Christ) The word of God came in the form of the Mosaic Law. Man was governed by over 600 laws, the head of which were the Ten Commandments. Man has broken every single law **(James 2:10)**. The judgment came throughout this Age as the Jews were

dispersed into the Babylonian, Assyrian, Persian, Grecian and Roman Empires. The final part of this judgment came at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

7. Age of Grace (Church Age): This time period is roughly 2,000 years in length and began on the day of Pentecost. This Age is the Age we live in. The word of God for this age is: **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved…" (Acts 16:31)**. This Age will fail as well. While many have believed on Jesus Christ, many more have rejected the gospel. The Judgment of this age will come at the Great White Throne which was discussed in the chapter dealing with the five judgments.

8. The Messianic Age: This age could be divided into two parts, but we will deal with it as one unit. It will begin with the Rapture of the Church (discussed in the next chapter) and will end 1,000 years after the return of Jesus Christ. During the "Tribulation" portion of this Age, man must refuse the mark of the beast and be martyred. To take the mark of the beast will bear the same judgment as rejecting Christ: The Great White Throne. The Age will end in complete human failure as man will march against the city of Jerusalem to fight against the King, Jesus Christ. Even during a time of peace such as the world had never known, man will still reject Christ. It is truly a sad way to end human history.

9. Eternity Future: As was mentioned, God always was and God always will be **(Rev 1:8)**. We are told of a new heaven and a new earth to come **(Rev 21:1)**. We are told that there will dwell in it no unrighteousness **(Rev 21:27)**. There will be no sin, no rebellion, and Christians will dwell with Christ for all of eternity. The human race in general has a sad outcome – but for the Christian, the future could not be brighter.

Why is this such a big deal to know?

Knowing these dispensations helps us to interpret the word of God with better accuracy. This way we can perform that which God has

asked of every Christian: RIGHTLY DIVIDE THE WORD OF TRUTH **(2 Tim 2:15)**.

There are three applications to all Scripture:

1. Historical: The Bible gives a complete and accurate history. For example, when God refers to Adam in the Garden of Eden – there actually WAS a man named Adam. This is a literal historical event and is as sure as sure can be **(John 17:17)**.
2. Spiritual (Inspirational): This is the way God uses Scripture to speak to individuals personally. For example, let's say that you are reading the story of Jesus and the woman at the well. As you read, you see how Jesus shares the gospel with her. You think to yourself, I should witness like that! God inspires us to do right and make changes in our lives based upon what we read in the Scriptures. **"Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth." (1Sa 3:9)**.
3. Doctrinal: This is the trickiest of the three applications. To find the doctrinal application of a particular Scripture is to find God's hidden treasures **(Pr 25:2)**. The key to finding the doctrinal meaning of a text is to look for Jesus in that text. For example, when we look at the night the Jews celebrated the Passover in Egypt, we see a picture of Jesus Christ. A lamb was to be killed. Jesus is the Lamb of God that was killed for the sins of the world **(John 1:29)**. There is much more that could be looked at, but for the sake of time, the doctrinal application of the Passover is that Jesus (the Lamb of God) would have to be killed in order for the Judgment of God to "pass over" man. Always look for Jesus in the Scriptures!

Jesus said: **(John 5:39) Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.**

Knowing the different Dispensations helps you to understand why God says certain things in His word the way He does. It helps us not to misapply certain verses to our own lives that are not specifically written to us. For example, the Church Epistles are written specifically

to the Church. We can apply those verses to our lives in order to know how to live.

For example, a misapplication of God's word would be as follows:

1. God told Noah to build an ark.
2. So in order to escape the coming judgment, *I* should build an ark.

The truth is that God told NOAH to build an ark and He did not tell you to build one! You live in the Age of Grace and your truth (Doctrine) is: **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31)**.

Holy Bible book divine, precious treasure thou art mine

Mine to tell me whence I came, Mine to teach me what I am

Lesson Fourteen Memory Verses:

(2Timothy 2:15)

(15) Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

(Colossians 1:25)

(25) Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

LESSON #15

THE RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST

When will Jesus return? How should I live my life while I wait for my Saviour? What is the rapture? The purpose of this lesson is to answer common questions about the return of Jesus Christ.

The hope of the believer

Some people hope that the weather will be nice. Some hope that they will get a raise at work. Others hope that they will have enough money for retirement. But the Christian's hope should be in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Col 1:4-6) Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:

One day each believer will get to see the Saviour face to face. On that day every mocking facial expression, every crude comment, every look of distain that we have suffered will all be worth it. When we see Jesus we will no longer care about what kind of persecution we endured for the name of Christ.

This should be what every believer is looking forward to. Some do not look forward to Jesus' return because they are not living a life pleasing to Christ. Others simply cannot give up the pleasures this world has to offer; though they consider not of the pleasures of eternity. Others still because they do not know the Lord. Therefore His return is a feared thing. But to the Christian, living right and partaking in the work of the ministry, the return of Jesus Christ is the blessed hope **(Tit 2:13)**!

What is the rapture of the Church?

The "Rapture" of the Church is yet again another controversial subject matter amongst those who claim to be Christians. Some "Christians" believe there is no such thing as the "Rapture" because the word "Rapture" cannot be found in the Bible. The word "Trinity" cannot be found in the Bible either, but we believe in the idea of the Trinity based on Scriptures. We have given the Godhead that title as an

explanatory term. So too, we give the "catching away" of the saints an explanatory term: the Rapture. The following are proof texts:

(1Th 4:13-18) But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

(1Co 15:51-55) Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

The Rapture of the Church therefore is the mysterious event that will happen just prior to the Tribulation period. Jesus will return in the clouds while those Christians who are alive at the time will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. This will be the period in which the Judgment Seat of Christ takes place. Seven years of tribulation will take place on earth while we go through the Judgment Seat of Christ; after which we will return with Jesus Who will set up His earthly kingdom lasting for 1,000 years. From that point on, all Christians will be with the Lord forever.

Three Raptures?

There are three different "Raptures" that are not to be confused with one another. It is here that understanding Dispensations will help us rightly divide the word of truth. They are as follows:

1. The Firstfruits: When Jesus rose from the grave, He brought with Him all those who had died in faith before Him. Before Christ it was impossible for man to go to heaven. Those who held faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob went to a place called "Abraham's Bosom" **(Luke 16:22)**. The Lord descended down into the lower parts of the earth and led the faithful in Abraham's Bosom out of their captivity **(Eph 4:8-10)**. Those that came out of the depths of the earth with Jesus appeared to others after His resurrection **(Matt 27:52-53)**.

(1Co 15:20-23) But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. (21) For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. (22) For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. (23) But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

2. The Harvest: As was mentioned, just prior to Christ setting His kingdom up on earth, He will call the Christians. They will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. This is the main part of the three-part "Rapture" and there will likely be the largest number of people in this group; for in it will be all those who have died "in the Lord" over the last 2,000 years.

3. The Gleanings: The third and final part of the "Rapture" takes place just before the end of the Tribulation period. God will call those out of that mess just prior to His return to set up His kingdom. All of the saints throughout history will then appear with the Lord as He returns to destroy the antichrist. **(Matt 24:40-41)**

What is the timeline of these events?

(Chart is not drawn to scale)

The above timeline is but a simple timeline that will allow you to see the order of events.

What is this Tribulation?

The Tribulation is a period of seven years that takes place after the "Rapture" of the church and just after the signing of a peace treaty between Israel and the antichrist. The details of this period can be found in Matthew chapter twenty-four. Without going into any great detail, this time period will be the worst mankind will have ever known. The focus will once again be on the nation of Israel, which is why it is called the time of "Jacob's Trouble" **(Jer 30:7)** but it will effect the entire world.

If you would like detailed information regarding this event, there is a great commentary on the book of *Revelation* by James W. Knox. You can also check out another work of mine called *A Shallow Dive in Deep Waters* which addresses this topic on a deeper level.

What is the Millennial Reign of Christ?

After Jesus returns to destroy the antichrist, He will set up His Kingdom which will last for a thousand years **(Rev 20:4)**. He will rule and reign from Jerusalem which He will restore. Nations will be judged based on their treatment of Israel during the Tribulation period – and perhaps before then. (Mentioned in the Five Judgments chapter) Unlike the Tribulation, the "Millennial Reign of Christ" will be a time of peace. Warfare will cease **(Isa 2:4)**. Man will even be at peace with God's creation **(Isa 11:6; 65:25)**.

When exactly will all this take place?

No one knows for sure – it is a mystery. We have ideas based on prophetic passages dealing with the nation of Israel that tell us that the return of the Lord is coming soon. His return has always been imminent. In other words, it could happen at any time. The Lord Himself said that no one knows the hour **(Matt 24:36)** in which He will come and that when He does, it will be like a thief in the night **(2 Pet 3:10)**. Every morning when we wake we should expect that "today could be the day!" This helps to keep us mindful of spiritual things **(1 John 3:3)**.

How should I live my life if the Lord could return at any time?

Whether His return is today, tomorrow or years to come, we should live our lives as unto the Lord. We must work and earn a living and plan for the future…it is not wrong to do these things, in fact it would be wrong *not* to do these things **(2 Thes 3:10)**. But this should put a sense of urgency within us. We do not want to see our relatives have to go through the Tribulation period and end up in a lake of fire. We must tell them about Jesus and His power to save.

This study is a very deep study. Do not be frustrated at its difficulty. Ask as many questions as you need to ask and know that you do not need to understand everything.

When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound

And time shall be no more

And the morning breaks eternal, bright and fair

When the saved of earth shall gather

Over on the other shore

And the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there!

Lesson Fifteen Memory Verses:

(Titus 2:13)

(13) Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

(1Thessalonians 4:13-14)

(13) But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

(14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

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